Newsletter 2025 No.2

Advancing Skills for the Agri-Food Ecosystem Partnership

NEWS

Agrifood Pact for Skills Annual Event

On 13–14 May, over 100 stakeholders from across the agri-food value chain gathered in Brussels for the annual **Agrifood Pact for Skills event**: *"Building Skills*

for Tomorrow: Empowering the Agrifood Workforce".

The two-day event offered a dynamic platform for **businesses, education and training providers, policymakers, and social partners** to exchange knowledge, showcase achievements, and reinforce collaboration in addressing the sector's most pressing skills needs.

Key highlights:

- **Policy dialogue** on how EU strategies can support skills development through strong public-private cooperation.
- **Future-oriented insights** on skills foresight, digital and green transitions, and making the agri-food sector more attractive to younger generations.
- **National best practices** from Ireland, Portugal, Italy, and the Netherlands, highlighting regional approaches to training and workforce innovation.
- The **official launch of the Agrifood Pact for Skills Observatory**, a key milestone to monitor skills trends and coordinate action.
- Updates from **EU-funded projects** actively supporting the Pact:
  I-RESTART, AgriFoodSkills, AgriFood4Future, Geek4Food, and *Social Dialogue for Skills*.

The event confirmed the importance of cross-sector collaboration to build a **resilient, future-ready agri-food workforce**.

Let's keep building skills for tomorrow, together!

Pact for Skills Annual Survey 2024

Results from the 2024 Pact for Skills Annual Survey have shown that more than 6.1 million people have been trained under the Pact for Skills. This significant achievement is a step on the way to reach the goal of upskilling over 25 million people by 2030.

The survey also shines a light on how Pact members across Europe have taken practical steps to close skills gaps and deliver on the objectives of the [Union of Skills](#), providing training, investing in skills development and building partnerships across key sectors.

Furthermore, the annual survey revealed that Pact members developed or updated nearly 48,000 training programmes in 2024, and more than 42,000 stakeholders joined skills networks supported by Pact members.

[For more information, click here.](#)

I-RESTART Project launches survey on Regional Skills Partnerships

The Erasmus+ funded [I-RESTART project](#) has launched a survey to explore how organisations across Europe can contribute to the development of **Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs)** in the animal production, food industry, and veterinary sectors.

The survey aims to:

- Identify current **gaps, ambitions, and opportunities** for regional collaboration;
- Co-create a **value proposition for RSPs** to support local training ecosystems.

While Large-Scale Partnerships (LSPs) operate at the EU level, RSPs focus on collaboration among regional or local actors to meet specific skills needs more effectively.

All Pact for Skills members and stakeholders are encouraged to take part and help disseminate the survey.

The results will help inform the design of inclusive and effective skills partnerships across Europe.

[Take the survey here](#).

EIT Food launches Skills Academies to tackle workforce gaps in the food sector

[EIT Food](#) has unveiled its new EU Skills Academies, a flagship initiative designed to tackle the growing shortage of qualified workers and accelerate the green- and digital-transformation of Europe's agri-food sector. The announcement was made during the Agrifood Skills Pact Annual Event in Brussels.

Across Europe, the food chain is reaching a tipping point: fast-moving technological change, climate pressures and an ageing workforce are reshaping job profiles faster than traditional training systems can adapt, threatening the sector's competitiveness and resilience.

The programme will begin with two sector-driven "skills alliances":

- **Biotechnology Academy** – building capacity at the intersection of food, biotech and health.
- **Resilient Agriculture Academy** – supporting regenerative practices, digital innovation and climate-resilient farming.

Each academy aims to train **100,000 learners** through modular courses, micro-credentials and customised up- and reskilling pathways that align with the EU Pact for Skills in Agrifood.
[For more information, click here.](#)

FOODPathS Podcast Series

The **FOODCastS** podcast series was launched during the [FOODPathS Festival](#) in May, offering a fresh and engaging way to dive into the world of sustainable food systems.
The first episode explores why transforming our food systems is urgent and what it takes to create meaningful change, touching on challenges like sustainability, the role of industry, and the value of local knowledge.
The second episode introduces the Planetary Health Diet, discussing its health and environmental benefits, and includes reflections from people who tried the diet for five days.
Two episodes are now available on Spotify.
[For more information, click here.](#)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Develop and deploy new curricula and knowledge exchange practices relevant to bio-based systems

As part of the 2025 call of the Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking (CBE JU), this funding opportunity supports the development and implementation of innovative education and training programmes for the circular bio-based sector. The aim is to address pressing skills gaps by fostering collaboration between education providers and industry stakeholders. Projects are expected to create new curricula and knowledge exchange tools that reflect the needs of the evolving labour market and emerging bio-based technologies.

The action will contribute to a better alignment between skills demand and supply in the bioeconomy by supporting reskilling and upskilling initiatives. Particular attention is given to enhancing the visibility of bio-based careers and to promoting participation from widening countries and regions with untapped potential.

More information is available here.

Other funding opportunities

There are relevant funding opportunities for skills under current programmes running from 2021 until 2027. Those include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the Just Transition Fund (JTF), and Recovery and Resilience Facility funds.

Further information is easily accessible through the Pact for Skills funding opportunities website.

KEY PROJECTS

The AgriFoodSkills project is advancing skills development across the agrifood sector through the Pact4Skills Observatory, a dynamic knowledge hub that

monitors key initiatives, provides tailored training programs, and connects stakeholders across the Pact4Skills community.

Earlier this year, the Policy Forum 2050 held its inaugural session in Rome, uniting experts and policymakers to shape the Observatory's vision. The Forum's mission is to support long-term strategies that prepare the agrifood workforce for the evolving demands of tomorrow. Going forward, it will serve as a biannual platform for strategic dialogue and collective action.

On May 13–14, 2025, professionals from across Europe gathered in Brussels for the annual event "Building Skills for Tomorrow: Empowering the Agrifood Workforce."

This event reaffirmed the Observatory's central role in fostering cross-sector collaboration and equipping the workforce with the skills to thrive.

The Erasmus+ project **I-RESTART** (Inclusive Reskilling and Upskilling Toward Competitive Agrifood and Veterinary Sector) is a key contributor to the Agri-food Pact for Skills. Running from 2022 to 2026, the project brings together 29 partners from 11 European countries, including universities, training providers, associations, and industry stakeholders. It addresses evolving skill needs in animal production, the food industry, and veterinary sectors, with a special focus on sustainability, digitalization, entrepreneurship, and One-Health. Insights from focus groups, EU-wide surveys, and scenario analysis inform the design of over 1,000 hours of training across 12 thematic areas. Please access the training materials here.

I-RESTART supports the Green Deal transition and helps equip the agri-food workforce and students with the skills needed for a more resilient and innovative sector.

The **AgriFood4Future** project has reached a key milestone at the end of its second year, marking steady progress in supporting the green and digital transition of the agri-food sector. Several new learning and innovation opportunities are now available.

Training opportunities

- **MOOC on Digital Skills in Agriculture**
  A free online course designed for anyone interested in learning how digital technologies are transforming the agricultural sector (More information here).

- **Capacity Building for Farmers – 2nd Edition**
  Running from October to December 2025, this asynchronous training features expert insights on smart farming, soil health, sustainability practices, and agrifood entrepreneurship (Apply here).

- **Summer School in Smart Farming**
  A blended learning experience combining online sessions (30 June–11 July) and in-person field visits in Portugal (23–27 July) to explore regenerative agriculture practices. Open to agrifood students and professionals across Europe.
  Apply by **29 June** to secure your spot!

Innovation support

- **Test-Farm Innovation Program**
  A hands-on programme connecting European start-ups with farms to test agri-tech solutions (Apply here).

- **Open Innovation & Challenge-Based Programme**
  Currently in the scouting phase for solution providers and challenge owners. The initiative supports pilot collaborations for real-world impact (Apply now).

On May 20-22, the [FOODPathS Festival](#) brought together over a hundred participants in Brussels and online, including researchers, policy-makers, educators, civil society organisations, funders, and food industry representatives, all working towards the same goal: building more sustainable food systems for Europe and beyond.

Over three dynamic days, participants joined field visits, keynote talks, poster sessions, and in-depth discussions focused on the Prototype of a Partnership developed by the FOODPathS project. Sessions explored how to build long-term collaboration across sectors and highlighted key enablers like inclusive governance, education, observatories, and aligned funding mechanisms. Real-life case studies and tools developed by FOODPathS were shared and discussed.

Key takeaways included:

- Systemic transformation must connect climate, health, and livelihoods, and it starts with education, engagement, and local action.
- Effective partnerships are built on trust, co-creation, and inclusion.
- Cities play a leading role in translating global goals into local solutions.

Would you like to learn more? [Watch the recordings and download the presentations](#)

INTERVIEW: GEEK4FOOD

Bridging the skills gap in Agri-Food: GEEK4Food and how AI can help addressing skills gaps

The Agri-food sector is undergoing rapid transformation and facing labour shortages. However, as industries evolve, so do the skills required to thrive within them. One major challenge is the disconnect between industry needs and the education sector's ability to respond swiftly. The [Geek4Food](#) project, a forward-looking Erasmus initiative, aims to leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to identify emerging skills gaps and connect professionals with relevant training opportunities.

AI-powered skills identification

Traditionally, skills identification in the agri-food sector has relied on methods like focus groups, expert panels, and literature reviews; processes that are time-consuming and often reactive rather than proactive. Geek4Food aims to change that by using AI to scan vast amounts of job market data across multiple languages and regions, extracting real-time insights on skills in demand.

Implementing AI-driven solutions comes with its own challenges. In its early stages, the AI model struggled to distinguish between highly specialised agri-food roles and broader food industry jobs, often misidentifying relevant skills. This highlighted the need for rigorous training and continuous refinement of AI algorithms to improve accuracy and sector relevance.

Furthermore, while AI can accelerate skills identification, traditional research methods, such as focus groups and expert validation, remain essential. These methods help interpret AI-generated insights, question unexpected findings, and provide context that algorithms alone cannot.

From data collection to education

There are two ways in which Geek4Food aims to equip the agri-food sector with skills:

- **Market-driven skills identification**: AI scans job postings, market reports, and other sources to detect emerging skill demands.
- **The Geek4Food Skills Pass**: a tool that enables individuals to explore career pathways based on their current qualifications and the market demand.

The goal of Geek4Food is not just to identify skills gaps but to connect professionals and students with educational opportunities tailored to industry needs. While the project itself does not create training courses, the AI-powered skills platform currently under development should serve as a bridge between existing training providers and potential learners. Universities and institutions can list their courses on the Geek4Food platform, making them visible to those looking to upskill in agri-food sectors. Learners, workers, job seekers can upload their profiles on the platform and gain access to a range of learning resources and discover job opportunities tailored to their skills and goals. Employers can create a Business Passport to find qualified candidates based on skill matching, and policy makers can gain industry insights. Moreover, by redirecting the learner to nearest training opportunity, Geek4Food ensures the relevance of the local dimension of skills development.

Looking ahead: What does success look like?

As Geek4Food moves forward, its success will depend on sustained funding, stakeholder engagement, and wider adoption of AI-driven skills forecasting. The project's long-term vision includes building a robust platform populated with valuable labour market insights, training opportunities, and engagement with policymakers. The Geek4Food team hopes that by making the sector's career pathways more visible and attractive, they can also address the declining number of young professionals entering agri-food careers.

HOW TO JOIN THE PACT

It is important to quote the Agri-food LSP registration number on the application. The number to quote is **916.**

Download the guidelines.

SHARE WITH US

Please complete this form to share your events, news, or project outcomes with the Pact for Skills members.