

EMFF Operational Programme 2014-2020

Seafood Processing Innovation Scheme



1. Objective

The objective of the Seafood Processing Innovation Scheme is to foster increased innovation in the seafood processing sector and enhance the competitiveness of the sector.

The sector is characterised by a large number of micro and small enterprises, with a small but growing number of non-SMEs. It suffers from low profitability, low levels of innovation and new product development and insufficient strategic business planning. High levels of commodity sales fail to maximise the value of this raw material supply.

The EMFF Operational Programme Strategy for Ireland outlines a number of areas of investment to achieve this objective:

- 1) Add value to fish through processing, presentation, packaging and prioritising supports for secondary processing.
- 2) Promote innovation and new product development.

2. Legal Basis

The legal basis for the scheme is based on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Regulation (508/2014) covering the period 2014-2020, in particular article 26. The EMFF is intended to support the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and is considered the financial instrument of the CFP. The EMFF is solely concerned with measures that are co-funded by the EU. The scheme will be administered by Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM).

3. Who's Eligible?

- Individual Seafood Processing Enterprises
- Enterprises planning to enter seafood processing industry

4. What's Funded?

The scheme supports projects that seek to promote business innovation, processing and new product development, i.e. projects aimed at developing or introducing new or substantially improved:

- a) Products
- b) Equipment rental (note this scheme is not for capital investment projects)
- c) Value adding Processes and Techniques
- d) Management & Organisation Systems

5. Eligible costs

The scheme will be limited to the following eligible costs.

- a) Hiring of an Innovation Specialist.
 - i. Eligible enterprises are permitted to employ one innovation specialist (based in Ireland) to carry out specific purpose EMFF aligned projects specializing in applying innovation processes covering the opportunity/need, technical feasibility and commercial viability of the project. Grant aid for the innovation specialist must be applied for as part of the application for grant aid for the specific project. Therefore, the innovation specialist cannot be the only item of expenditure in an application.
 - ii. Grant aid for the innovation specialist will be capped at €50,000 per project and will go towards salary inclusive of Employer PRSI. Any additional costs such as bonuses and expenses are not eligible and will be borne by the company.

- iii. The scope of the Innovation Specialist should match the scale and duration of the project (minimum of 1 year and up to a maximum term of 18 months or the close of the EMFF programme – whichever is earlier).
 - iv. The innovation specialist must have a recognised qualification not less than Level 8 on the National Vocational Qualifications Framework (<http://www.nfq-qqi.com/qualifications-frameworks.html>), or recognised equivalent in a discipline related to food technology/engineering or commerce/finance and a minimum of 3 years' experience in a relevant field.
 - v. The applicant company will be required to define the goals of the position and provide a copy of the unsigned contract for the innovation specialist position at the time of application. When making a claim, the applicant must then provide a copy of the signed contract, an end of project report detailing the outcome of the work undertaken by the innovation specialist against the specified goals outlined in the application, a copy of the specialist's CV and third level qualification certification.
- b) Subcontractor costs (cost of external consultancy and subcontracted services essential for the delivery of the project e.g. recipe development, micro testing, organoleptic testing, nutritional analysis, pilot trials, technical development of packaging or pre-audit gap assessment for BRC, Organic and ISO standards).
 - c) Equipment rental for the project period (maximum 4 months). Rental of machinery must be from an establishment whose core business is the supply/rental of said equipment.

6. Ineligible Costs

The following costs will not be eligible for support under this scheme.

- a) Salary costs of permanent/core staff members.
- b) Expenditure for the purchase or lease of land or buildings.
- c) Value added tax.
- d) Interest on debt, except in the form of an interest rate subsidy or guarantee fee subsidy.
- e) Operational costs.
- f) Costs related to marketing and promotional activities.
- g) The cost of existing product, stock or raw material used as part of the project.
- h) Costs related to staff training.

7. Support Rates

SME Industry projects	Up to 50% capped at €100,000 per project
Non-SME industry projects	Up to 30% capped at €100,000 per project

Note: The actual amount of grant aid and grant rate awarded is at the discretion of the Board.

8. How do I apply?

Apply on-line at <https://bim.flexigrant.com/>

9. Application Criteria

The following common criteria shall apply to all applications for industry and public projects.

- 1) Applicants can only have one active application at a time. An applicant cannot submit a second application under this scheme until the previous application has been claimed and grant aid paid.
- 2) Projects must be aligned with the objectives of the scheme, must be an integral part of the strategic development plans of the company, must represent a cost-effective use of investment support funds and must demonstrate an ability to upscale production.
- 3) Applications for financial aid must be submitted to BIM on the official application form together with the following information and attachments:
 - a) Title of Project
 - b) Rationale for the Innovative Project or Business Development
 - c) Key objectives of the Project
 - d) Main challenges in the Project
 - e) Expected outcomes and Potential Value
- 4) Applications must be submitted to BIM and acknowledged by BIM before any payments are made to suppliers. Should the application be approved, any payments made prior to the date of acknowledgment of receipt of the application will not be eligible for grant aid.
- 5) All items of expenditure must comply with the procurement rules as set out in the terms and conditions.
- 6) Applicants must be in good standing with DAFM and must comply with the Department of Finance tax clearance procedures, as appropriate, at the time of grant payment.
- 7) Applicants must comply with conditions of any subsequent letter of offer.

For full terms and conditions of the scheme, see Section 13 of this brochure.

10. Evaluation Process

Projects will be selected for funding via open calls for proposals.

Industry projects will be selected for funding as follows.

Step	Description	Carried Out By
1. Open call for proposals	Applications can be submitted via the on-line application form at any time.	Applicant
2. Eligibility Check and Evaluation	To ensure compliance and to assess validity.	BIM
3. Assessment Scoring or Appraisal	<p>To assess project potential.</p> <p>Project scoring of industry projects will be conducted using Project Assessment Criteria. Projects must achieve a minimum total score of 15 out of 25 to be considered for support by the Project Approvals Board.</p> <p>Projects will be scored against the following assessment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Planning and Objectives: Projects must be well defined and consistent with the applicant's business plan. The project must have clear milestones, a reasonable timescale, meet all legal requirements, and management and technical resources should be assigned. Project costings should be well defined and transparent. Contingency planning should be in place and adequate funding to deliver the project. - Marketing Capability: Projects should be in line with the company business plan objectives and an advance market research report should be completed. The company should demonstrate good marketing capability with strong marketing investment, in line with the requirements of the project. - Track Record: Applicants should show their track record in the sector in terms of commercial/technical viability and their ability to plan/fund projects and that they are growing their business. They can show evidence of commercialising previous projects and increasing sales as applicable. - Impact of Funding: The applicant should demonstrate how essential the scheme funding is to enable them to undertake the project? They should also demonstrate how consistent the project is with the national objectives/targets for the sector. - Employment Creation/Maintenance: The applicant should show if the project will have an impact on the creation of new jobs and maintenance of existing employment at a relatively reasonable cost per job. BIM and external evaluators as appropriate. <p>A simplified and accelerated selection process may be implemented by BIM for projects from individual seafood processing enterprises with total eligible costs of less than €40,000. Such projects will be selected and approved for funding by BIM without the scoring and evaluation processes applying to larger projects, but will still be subject to available budgets and, demonstrated alignment of the project with the objectives of the Scheme.</p>	BIM and external evaluators as appropriate.
4. Final Project Selection	To select projects for funding and decide grant amounts and grant rates.	Project Approvals Board
5. Grant Offer	BIM will issue letters of offer awarding EMFF funding.	BIM

6. Claim	The applicant will submit a claim showing receipts and invoices for all items of expenditure once the project is completed, tax clearance evidence and auditor certificates as applicable.	Applicant
7. Payment	The claim form will be reviewed, a site visit will be performed when applicable and payment will be made to the applicant as appropriate.	BIM

11. Applicants Declarations

All candidates for EMFF Grant Aid must certify that the information given in their application form is accurate and agree to provide documentary evidence to support all or part of this information. They must also certify that they are eligible for EMFF support having regard to article 10 of the EMFF Regulation (Regulation 508/2014). Full information on this declaration will be given in the application form.

12. How BIM will use your Information

Information including PPSNs and other tax numbers used in the processing of each grant application will also be included in BIM's end of year returns and disclosed to Revenue as set out in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2016). Details of projects may be shared with the Managing Authority for the EMFF OP and details of any supports provided will be published online as required by article 119(2) of the EMFF Regulation 508/2014. Data provided in candidates application forms will only be used in compliance with Data Protection legislation and by the Department of Agriculture Food and Marine and EU institutions for audit and verification purposes.

Freedom of Information Act, 2014

Section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 requires FOI bodies to prepare and publish as much information as possible in an open and accessible manner on a routine basis outside of FOI, having regard to the principles of openness, transparency and accountability as set out in Sections 8(5) and 11(3) of the Act. This allows for the publication or giving of records outside of FOI provided that such publication or giving of access is not prohibited by law. Under the Act, a request for records must be acknowledged within 2 weeks and, in most cases, responded to within 4 weeks. A week is defined in the Act to mean 5 consecutive week-days, excluding Saturdays and public holidays (Sundays are also excluded as they are not considered week-days). If a third party is involved there may be another three weeks before a response issue. BIM complies with EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

13. Terms and Conditions

Applicants should please note that terms and conditions will apply to all applications. These will include, but may not be limited to the following:

General

- 1) To qualify for grant aid under the Seafood Processing Innovation Scheme the following terms and conditions must be met in all cases.

Please note the onus of eligibility lies with the beneficiary, i.e. the beneficiary must ensure that they qualify under the scheme. Applications that fail to comply with the terms and conditions will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered further.

- 2) VAT is not eligible for grant aid.

Scope of the Scheme

- 3) Funding for this scheme is subject to funding being available to Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) on an annual basis. In every case payment of grant aid is contingent on the availability of finance to BIM.
- 4) Funding will only be provided for projects that seek to promote business innovation, process and new product development.

These include projects aimed at developing or introducing new or substantially improved:

- a. Products
 - b. Equipment rental (note this scheme is not for capital investment projects)
 - c. Value adding Processes and Techniques
 - d. Management & Organisation Systems
- 5) Progress on implementation of the investment will be monitored on an on-going basis and for this purpose progress reports and any other information relating to the project must be furnished promptly to BIM whenever requested.
- 6) Any work which commenced prior to the 'application acknowledgement date' is not eligible for grant aid. Applications must be submitted to BIM and an acknowledged date issued by BIM before any payments are made to suppliers. Should the application be approved, any payments made prior to the date of acknowledgment of the application will not be eligible for grant aid.
- 7) The investment must be carried out as specified in the published documentation of the scheme and these Terms & Conditions. If it should become necessary to modify any element of the project, which would affect any of the following;
- the legal status of the Grantee
 - the objectives of the project or its technical characteristics
 - the location of the project
 - the timescale for its implementation
 - the omission or substitution of any of the approved work or equipment

then prior written approval must be obtained from An Bord Iascaigh Mhara before any such modifications can qualify for grant assistance.

- 8) The Grantee shall obtain and comply with the conditions of all necessary statutory authorisation(s), consents, permissions and licences required under existing EU and National legislation and shall submit evidence of having received same to An Bord Iascaigh Mhara.
- 9) All projects must be completed, and a valid claim submitted no later than the 31 Oct 2021 or the end of the EMFF programme whichever is earlier.

Managing Authority and Intermediate Body

- 10) The Managing Authority for the Seafood Processing Innovation Scheme is the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM).
- 11) The implementing Authority for this scheme is Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM). BIM are officially designated, by the Managing Authority, as an intermediate Body (delegated tasks by the Managing Authority) for the purposes of this scheme.
- 12) The Intermediate Body will determine the eligibility of applications and applications that do not meet all the mandatory criteria will be deemed ineligible and will be returned to the applicant with an explanatory memorandum.
- 13) The Intermediate Body, with the agreement of the Managing Authority, reserves the right to alter or amend the conditions of this scheme and/or to suspend the scheme or to substitute the scheme for a different scheme.

Applicants

- 14) Applicants can only have one active application at a time. An applicant cannot submit a second application under this scheme until the previous application has been claimed and grant aid paid.

- 15) The applicant must demonstrate financial viability (at an organisation or individual level as appropriate).
- 15) The applicant must provide evidence that they are able to manage and carry out the project in a satisfactory manner.
- 17) Where required, the lead applicant and any project partner must comply with the Department of Finance tax clearance procedures, as appropriate, at the time of grant payment:
 - In the case of grant aid less than €10,000 within any 12 month period, the grantee will be required to complete a tax compliance declaration.
 - In the case of grant aid of €10,000 or more within any 12 month period, the grantee will be required to produce a valid tax clearance certificate.
- 18) Payment claims for Grant Aid in excess of €10,000 must be supported by an auditor's certificate from a registered auditor. Audit fees are not eligible for grant assistance.
- 19) The applicant will, if required, demonstrate its legal identity to the satisfaction of the Intermediate body. The applicant must give evidence of payment for expenditure items from a bank account in the organisations name. Any grant aid will be paid into this account.
- 20) Work carried out directly or indirectly by the applicant or by a company, in which the applicant has an interest, will not be eligible for financial aid.
- 21) Applicants must be eligible for EMFF support having regard to article 10 of the EMFF Regulation (Regulation 508/2014) and sign a declaration to this effect. Please note that for on-line applications and claims by submitting the forms you are electronically signing all declarations that you have agreed to via a checkbox in the form.
- 22) Where appropriate the applicant must comply with the provisions of the Data Collection Regulation at the time of financial payment.

Procurement

- 23) The following table shows how many quotes are required for your application based on:
 - Your beneficiary type and
 - The cost of each item of expenditure

Beneficiary Type	Total Expenditure per item	
	<€5,000	€5,000 – €200,000
Category 1 (0% to 50% Grant Aid): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ SME Industry Projects (up to 50%) ■ Non-SME Industry projects (up to 30%) 	1 Quote	3 Quotes

Points to note:

- The eligible expenditure amounts given in the table above are exclusive of VAT.
- Quotes should be in writing or by email.
- Where the applicant is unable, despite his or her best endeavours, to obtain the required number of quotes for reasons outside of his/her control, this must be explained in writing by the applicant, with relevant supporting documentation. Such exceptional situations will be considered on a case by case basis by the BIM officer assessing the application and where accepted, will be recorded on the BIM project file. Where the explanation is unsatisfactory, the application will not be accepted until the correct number of quotes has been supplied.
- Generally, the grant aid shall be based on the lowest quote amount. The applicant is not limited to taking the lowest quote but in such cases as outlined above a written explanation must be submitted by the applicant and accepted by the BIM officer and recorded on the file.
- These levels shall in general apply to stand alone items on a per project application basis. It is not

acceptable to purposefully break a project into smaller parcels of work or machinery to circumvent the procurement rules.

Grant aid

- 24) Any financial obligations owing to the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine and /or BIM, must be paid in full prior to claiming for the grant aid under this scheme.
- 25) Claim documentation (invoices, evidence of payments etc) are required in electronic format only.
- 26) The grant aid will be paid in one instalment on completion of the project and approval of the claim form.
- 27) BIM does not require a hard copy of the claim or the claim supporting documentation. However, the original claim documentation must be made available should it be requested at any stage by Officers of BIM and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine or their agents.
- 28) Please note that where grant aid has been paid or will be paid by any other state agency towards the cost of the project, grant aid from BIM under this scheme for the same project, is not applicable.
- 29) Applicants should note that, for all claims, they will be required to submit an invoice and proof of payment such as a copy of paid cheques, bank statements, or interbank documentation, or any other documentation deemed necessary. Please note that cash payments are not eligible for support.
- 30) Only applications submitted on the official online application form for SME /Non-SME projects will be considered for grant aid approval.
- 31) Acknowledgement of an application does not constitute any form of entitlement to any form of grant aid whatsoever neither should the applicant constitute any assistance given by officers of BIM as a form of indication that grant aid will become available.
- 32) No minimum level of expenditure applies to the scheme, but maximum level of grant aid per year, per beneficiary applies in line with the below table.

SME Industry projects	Up to 50% capped at €100,000 per project
Non-SME industry projects	Up to 30% capped at €100,000 per project

Publicity and Acknowledgement of EMFF Support Requirements

- 33) In all cases where a project has received grant approval:

Website Update: During the implementation phase of the project, the grantee shall provide on their website, where such as a website exists, a short description of the project, proportionate to the level of support, including its aims and results, and highlighting the financial support from the European Union. The website content shall be prepared in accordance with the technical characteristics adopted by the Commission in accordance with Article 115(4). The technical specification for this will be supplied to you by BIM prior to completion of the project.

- 34) In all cases where a project has received grant approval:

Posters: The grantee shall place at least one poster with information about the project (minimum size A3), including the financial support from the Union, at a location readily visible to the public, such as the entrance / reception area of the appropriate building. The poster shall be prepared in accordance with the technical characteristics adopted by the Commission in accordance with Article 115(4). The technical specification for this will be supplied to you by BIM prior to completion of the project.

Eligible/In-eligible Costs

35) Eligible Costs:

The following costs borne by applicable grant beneficiaries may be eligible for support under the scheme:

- a) Hiring of an Innovation Specialist.
 - i. Eligible enterprises are permitted to employ one innovation specialist (based in Ireland) to carry out specific purpose EMFF aligned projects specializing in applying innovation processes covering the opportunity/need, technical feasibility and commercial viability of the project. Grant aid for the innovation specialist must be applied for as part of the application for grant aid for the specific project. Therefore, the innovation specialist cannot be the only item of expenditure in an application.
 - ii. Grant aid for the innovation specialist will be capped at €50,000 per project and will go towards salary inclusive of Employer PRSI. Any additional costs such as bonuses and expenses are not eligible and will be borne by the company.
 - iii. The scope of the Innovation Specialist should match the scale and duration of the project (minimum of 1 year and up to a maximum term of 18 months or the close of the EMFF programme – whichever is earlier).
 - iv. The innovation specialist must have a recognised qualification not less than Level 8 on the National Vocational Qualifications Framework (<http://www.nfq-qqi.com/qualifications-frameworks.html>), or recognised equivalent in a discipline related to food technology/ engineering or commerce/finance and a minimum of 3 years' experience in a relevant field.
 - v. The applicant company will be required to define the goals of the position and provide a copy of the unsigned contract for the innovation specialist position at the time of application. When making a claim, the applicant must then provide a copy of the signed contract, an end of project report detailing the outcome of the work undertaken by the innovation specialist against the specified goals outlined in the application, a copy of the specialist's CV and third level qualification certification.
- b) Subcontractor costs (cost of external consultancy and subcontracted services essential for the delivery of the project e.g. recipe development, micro testing, organoleptic testing, nutritional analysis, pilot trials, technical development of packaging or pre-audit gap assessment for BRC, Organic and ISO standards).
- c) Equipment rental for the project period (maximum 4 months). Rental of machinery must be from an establishment whose core business is the supply/rental of said equipment.

Grant aid for the above will be given at the specified grant rate of the beneficiary type applying for the grant aid.

36) Ineligible Costs:

The following costs borne by applicable grant beneficiaries may be ineligible for support under this Scheme:

- Salary costs of permanent/core staff members.
- Expenditure for the purchase or lease of land or buildings.
- Value added tax.
- Interest on debt, except in the form of an interest rate subsidy or guarantee fee subsidy.
- Operational costs.
- Costs related to marketing and promotional activities.
- The cost of existing product, stock or raw material used as part of the project.
- Costs related to staff training.

Appeals Procedure

37) Procedure for dealing with appeals

BIM may specify a template for appeal of award decisions. Award decisions may be appealed to BIM, who will provide a written explanation for award decisions, in consultation with the chair of the Projects Approvals Board. Following receipt of that explanation, appellants may request that an appeal be considered by the Projects Approvals Board. The Chair of the Board will, through BIM, provide to the appellant a written decision of the Board.

14. Contact Details

For further information on how to apply for the Seafood Processing Innovation Scheme and guidance on completing an on-line application please contact:

Catherine Collins
Grant Administrator
Bord Iascaigh Mhara/Ireland's Seafood Development Agency
Clogheen Road,
Clonakilty,
Co. Cork, P85 TX47

Tel: +353 1 2144154
Email: Catherine.Collins@bim.ie

For further information on the Seafood Processing Innovation Scheme itself please contact:

Gavin McGrath
Innovation Specialist
Bord Iascaigh Mhara/Ireland's Seafood Development Agency
Clogheen Road,
Clonakilty,
Co. Cork, P85 TX47

Tel: +353 1 2144172
Email: Gavin.McGrath@bim.ie

Data Protection Notice

Any personal data you provide to Bord Iascaigh Mhara ("BIM") will be retained and processed by us for solely the purpose described in this form and as described in further detail in the BIM Data Protection Policy. Our Policy describes in detail how BIM, as a State Agency, is required to collect, process and transfer personal data for the purposes set out in various Irish and EU fisheries and marine legislation. These purposes include the administration of grants, conducting surveys and performing services for those working in the marine sector, for example, training, education and ice services. Your personal data may be disclosed to third parties where it is necessary and relevant to those purposes, for example, national or EU agencies with responsibility for the marine, grant administration or training awards or accreditation. While BIM does not engage in unsolicited direct marketing, BIM or its agents may contact you in relation to relevant events or initiatives and you can unsubscribe from such communications at any time. You have a right to access and rectify your personal data which can be exercised by writing to the Data Protection Officer, BIM, Crofton Road, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. The BIM Data Protection Policy is available on the BIM.ie website www.bim.ie.

