

# Call text

## Food additives 2026

Call for expressions of interest targeting SMEs and first-time applicants in the area of food additives interested in receiving EFSA's advice

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# 1. Call for expressions of interest

## Objective

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is launching a call for expressions of interest (EOI) to identify business operators working in the area of food additives that qualify as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) or as first-time (non-SME) applicants in this food area, that are interested in receiving EFSA's advice on the contents and requirements for an application to obtain an authorisation to put their food additive on the European Union market.

EFSA launched two dedicated calls in 2024 and 2025 aimed at supporting novel food SMEs. Both initiatives were highly successful, attracting 110 expressions of interest, primarily from companies in the early stages of product development and with limited or no prior experience in preparing applications or engaging with EFSA and the European Commission. Feedback from participants was very positive: potential applicants considered EFSA's support to be clear, comprehensive, and extremely valuable.

Based on the experience gained through those calls, and following the publication of the [Guidance on the scientific data requirements for an application for authorisation of a food additive](#), which will be implemented as of 20 July 2026, EFSA is launching a call targeting food additive SME and first-time applicants to guide them in the preparation of their applications in line with the requirements of the updated guidance document.

This call aims to raise awareness and facilitate access for SMEs and first-time applicants to the general pre-submission advice (GPSA) service. Despite GPSA can be requested at any moment before the submission of an application, this call focuses on **two specific stages** of the application process that can be of special interest for SMEs and first-time applicants:

- on the **very early stage of the development of the food additive**, even before starting the studies that will be included in the application
- on the **latest stages of the preparation of the application**, when most of the information that will be included in the application is already available to the potential applicant.

This call is by no means a competition and all the expressions of interest fulfilling the requirements will be declared eligible and entitled to receive EFSA's advice.

The expected benefit in the long term is to speed up the validation of the food additive applications, and ultimately leading to shortening the duration of the application process.

## Confidentiality

As the advice is provided in the context of the GPSA service, the information submitted to EFSA to answer the call, to request the advice and in the meetings will be treated as confidential.

The only information that EFSA will make publicly available is a succinct summary of the advice, only if and when the future application for the authorisation to put the food additive on the EU market that is the subject of the advice is declared valid, and together with the non-confidential version of the application dossier, as mandated by Article 9(3) of EFSA's [Practical arrangements on pre-submission phase and public consultations](#).

### Calendar

- Opening of the call: 11 March 2026
- Deadline to submit the EOIs: 21 May 2025 at 13:00 CEST
- Appraisal of the EOIs: immediately after their submission
- Meetings: on a rolling basis (expected from 10 April to 31 July)

## 2. The food additive application procedure, the GPSA service, the SMEs and the first-time applicants.

Food additives are substances that are not normally consumed as food on their own or used as typical ingredients. They are added for a specific purpose, such as extending shelf life, enhancing taste or appearance, improving texture, or ensuring safe production and storage. In the European Union (EU) the safety of all food additives is evaluated before they can be permitted for use in food. The permitted food additives are identified by an E number, and the list of authorized food additives in the EU, their E numbers and their conditions of use can be accessed through the European Commission's [food additives database](#).

EFSA is responsible for assessing the safety of all new food additives prior to their placement on the EU market, as well as for assessing proposed new uses or modifications of the conditions of use or specifications of already authorised food additives.

A food business operator who intends to place on the EU market a food additive should submit an application to the European Commission (EC) to obtain an authorisation. After having verified its validity, EC makes it available to and mandates EFSA for a scientific assessment. EFSA does not authorise marketing of food additives. Its role is to provide, upon request of the EC, independent scientific advice on the safety of the food additive before it can be placed on the EU market. Further details on the [application procedure for food additives](#) can be consulted on EFSA's website.

Potential applicants may request [general pre-submission advice](#) at any point before the submission of their applications. The advice is given by EFSA staff and aims at providing information on the rules applicable to and the content required for the application. The GPSA is a non-mandatory but a highly recommended pre-submission activity, in particular for SMEs and for applicants with no or limited experience in the preparation and submission of applications.

SMEs are defined in the [EU recommendation 2003/361](#). SMEs are very active EFSA stakeholders, in particular in some areas such as novel foods. This call is supported by Article 7(5) of EFSA's [Practical arrangements on pre-submission phase and public consultations](#), which calls for measures to facilitate the access to GPSA for SMEs.

In the context of this call, 'first-time applicants' are those potential applicants that do not qualify as SME and have not submitted any food additive application in the EU after the implementation of the [Transparency regulation](#) on 27 March 2021.

Consultants will be entitled to receive EFSA's advice provided they are working on the preparation of such applications on behalf of the business operator, qualified as SME or first-time applicant.

### 3. Early advice meetings and Pre-submission meetings

In a nutshell, potential applicants will receive EFSA's advice in a meeting. This advice will consist of the **replies to the questions** submitted in advance about the content and the rules applicable to their food additive application.

Depending on the stage of preparation of their applications, potential applicants can qualify for receiving a GPSA in the form of:

- **Early advice meeting**, if they are at the **very early stage of the development of the food additive**, even before starting the studies that will be included in the application;

or

- **Pre-submission meeting**, if they are at the **latest stages of the preparation of the application**, when most of the information that will be included in the application is already available to the potential applicant.

In **Early advice meetings**, in addition to receiving answers to their questions, potential applicants will be also advised on:

- the role of risk managers and the role of EFSA as a risk assessor
- where to find and consult the sectorial regulation
- the availability and importance of the administrative and scientific guidance documents
- aspects related to confidentiality of applications
- the obligation to notify certain studies before their starting date
- the use of the relevant IT platforms (Connect.EFSA, ESFC and Open EFSA)
- EFSA's services available to support applicants through the lifecycle of an application.

In **Pre-submission meetings**, in addition to receiving answers to their questions, potential applicants will be presented with the shortcomings frequently identified during the suitability check of food additive applications, covering administrative, scientific and confidentiality aspects, and advised on how to avoid them. During the pre-submission meeting EFSA will not perform any informal completeness check nor provide any pre-assessment of the application in preparation.

### 4. Eligibility requirements and prioritisation criteria

This initiative is open to all SMEs and first-time applicants, as defined above, working in the preparation of an application for the authorisation of a food additive in the European Union market.

#### Common eligibility requirements (each must be met)

- The potential applicant is a business operator aiming to submit to EC an application for the authorisation of a food additive in the coming months/years.
- The potential applicant qualifies as an SME or as a first-time applicant<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting either of the two is sufficient: an SME that has already submitted an application is eligible, and a first-time applicant which is not an SME is also eligible.

- The questions submitted by the potential applicant are in the scope of the GPSA service as defined by Article 6 of EFSA's Practical arrangements on pre-submission phase and public consultations. In this context, it should be noted that:
  - The GPSA is limited to the rules applicable to, and the content required for, an application. Aspects going beyond the information available in the rules and guidance documents or guidelines applicable to applications are out of the scope.
  - Questions related to design of studies, unless the advice concerns guidance documents developed by EFSA in which study design is addressed, and questions related to hypotheses to be tested or risk management, are out of the scope.

### Specific requirements for each of the services

- **Early advice meetings:** the potential applicant is still working on the development of the food additive, and few or no studies supporting the future application have already been performed. The submission of the application is not foreseen in the next 12 months.
- **Pre-submission meetings:** the application is almost complete, and the potential applicant is planning to have it submitted in the next 12 months.

### Prioritisation criteria regarding the timeframe of the meetings

In case several potential applicants were requesting to meet in the same timeframe and exceeding EFSA's availability of resources that allows to organise up to six meetings in the same month, the following criteria shall apply:

- Potential applicants that have never submitted an application to EFSA will be prioritised versus those that already submitted any application.
- First come, first served basis will be considered if additional prioritisation criteria are needed.

## 5. Submission, structure and appraisal of the EOI

### Submission of the expression of interest

- The EOI is to be filled in and submitted [via MS Forms](#).
- The **deadline** to submit the EOI is **21 May 2026 at 13:00 CEST**.

### Structure and content of the Expressions of Interest

- Information about the **potential applicant:** name of the company, country, two email addresses, contact person (name and surname), self-declaration on the SME status or as a first-time applicant.
- In case the EOI is submitted by **another organisation** on behalf of the potential applicant: email address, contact person, declaration that potential applicant agrees with the submission of the EOI.
- Information about the **food additive:** brief description of the product subject of the future application, including its source, manufacturing process, proposed specifications and conditions of use.

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- Information on the **type of food additive application**, i.e. an application for the authorisation of a new food additive or for the modification of an existing food additive authorisation.
- Information about when the **potential application** is planned to be submitted<sup>2</sup>, and if the potential applicant is aware of the EFSA [Administrative](#) and [Scientific](#) Guidance documents on Food additives.
- Non-exhaustive **list of questions** they have about their food additive application, allowing EFSA to understand whether they are in the scope of the GPSA service.
- Preferred **timeframe** to set the meeting with EFSA.

For any questions regarding the submission of the EOI, please send inquiries via the [Ask a Question service](#) including in the subject "Call FAD 2026".

## Appraisal process

Given that the call is not a competition and for the benefit of potential applicants that may have an urgency in receiving EFSA's advice, the appraisal will start as soon as the EOI is received. The appraisals are expected to end by 15 July 2026.

The appraisals will be performed on the information made available by the potential applicants in their EOI. EFSA can also consult information about the potential applicant and the intended application in other sources such as the Connect.EFSA and Open.EFSA portals, the ESFC submission portal and the EFSA Journal.

EFSA may also collect information about the potential applicant's approved annual accounts that are already publicly available to verify their SME status.

Every EOI will be appraised against the eligibility requirements indicated in section 4. If any clarifications on the content of the EOI, the SME or 'first-time applicant' status are needed, EFSA may request additional information to potential applicants via email. If the potential applicant does not yet have an active Connect.EFSA account, they may be invited to register one to facilitate and accelerate the subsequent steps of the process.

The appraisal of each EOI will conclude whether the potential applicant is entitled or not to receive EFSA's advice, and the type of service offered to fit their needs (Early advice meeting or Pre-submission meeting).

At this stage, EFSA may consult the potential applicant on the tentative dates of the meeting.

## 6. Notification of results

The results of the appraisals will be notified to the potential applicants via email as soon as they are available.

- **Eligible EOI**, meaning that it fulfils all the eligibility requirements. The potential applicant will be provided with details on how and when submit the request for GPSA in Connect.EFSA so the meeting (Early advice meeting or Pre-submission meeting) can be properly organised.

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<sup>2</sup> this information is non-committal for any subsequent decision taken by the potential applicant with regard to the submission date of their future application.

- **Non-eligible EOI**, meaning that it is not fulfilling at least one of the eligibility requirements. The potential applicant will be notified accordingly and will be provided with information on other EFSA services that may fit their needs to have their questions solved, or indications to contact the risk managers, if applicable.

## 7. Meetings, summary of the advice and feedback to EFSA

The Early advice meetings and the Pre-submission meetings will be organised on a rolling basis, i.e. once the result of the appraisals is notified and following the submission of the corresponding GPSA requests via the Connect.EFSA portal. In the sake of efficiency, meetings will be held online. In duly justified cases, the meeting may be organised after 31 July 2026.

The tele-meetings cannot be recorded in any way. If EFSA staff use a presentation during the meeting to guide the discussions, it may be shared with the applicant afterwards.

A succinct summary of the advice is drawn up and stored by EFSA. It is also sent to the potential applicant for information purposes. The summary of the advice will not contain any confidential or sensitive information and is the only information that EFSA will disclose about the request for advice submitted by the potential applicant. As foreseen by the legislation<sup>3</sup>, it is published together with the non-confidential version of the application dossier once the application is declared valid. After the meeting, potential applicants will be invited to fulfil and submit an anonymous survey to provide EFSA with their feedback on the Call for EOI and on the advice received.

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<sup>3</sup> [General Food Law](#) Article 32a and [EFSA Practical arrangements on pre-submission phase and public consultations](#).