

FAQs

Call Food additives 2026

[Title]

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Introduction

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has launched a call for expressions of interest targeting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and first-time applicants working in the area of food additives. The purpose of this call is to support potential applicants seeking EFSA's General Pre-Submission Advice (GPSA) on the content and requirements of applications for authorisation to place a food additive on the EU market.

This initiative aims to facilitate access to GPSA for SMEs and first-time applicants, support applicants at very early or very late stages of preparation and speed up validation and assessment of food additive applications.

The call opens 11 March 2026 and closes on 21 May 2026 at 13:00 CEST. Meetings will be organised on a rolling basis from 10 April to 31 July 2026.

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document answers common questions about the call, the GPSA service, and the call process.

Should you have any questions on the call that are not replied in this document, please send them via the [Ask a Question service](#) including in the subject "Call FAD 2026".

Frequently asked questions

The Call and the General Pre-submission Advice service: Early advice and Pre-submission meetings

1. What is the purpose of this call?

The call aims to identify SMEs and first-time applicants preparing a food additive application who wish to receive advice on the applicable rules and scientific and administrative requirements.

2. Who is eligible?

Potential applicants qualifying as SME or first-time applicants and working in the area of food additives are eligible to participate in this call.

Meeting either of the two requirements 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.

3. What is the definition of an SME?

For the scope of this call, an SME is defined as in Title 1 of the [EU Recommendation 2003/361](#).

4. What is the definition of a first-time applicant?

For the scope of this call, 'first-time applicants' are those potential applicants that do not qualify as SME and have not submitted any food additive application after the implementation of the Transparency regulation on 27 March 2021.

5. What are Food additives?

Food additives¹ 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 authorised food additives in the EU, their E numbers and their conditions of use can be accessed through the European Commission's food additives database.

¹ [Food additives in the EU: Safe use and clear labelling](#)

6. What is the General Pre-Submission Advice (GPSA) service?

The GPSA service is a pre-submission activity that provides the potential applicants with information on the rules applicable to and the content required for an application. Through this service, EFSA replies to applicants' questions before they submit their application for the authorisation to put their food regulated product on the EU market. It is non-mandatory but highly recommended to solve questions before submitting an application.

7. How is the advice provided in the context of this call different from the regular GPSA?

EFSA in all cases will address with the GPSA the set of questions submitted by the potential applicant. However, depending on the stage of preparation of their applications, potential applicants via this call 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 SME.

The next questions explain the additional insights provided during these meetings.

Based on the information available, EFSA will decide on the service that better fits the needs of the potential applicant.

8. What is the purpose of an Early Advice Meeting?

The purpose of an Early Advice Meeting is to provide advice on the content and rules applicable to the food additive application by replying to the questions the potential applicant might have, and to advice on issues such as:

- 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 and checklists
- 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.

9. What is the purpose of a Pre-Submission Meeting?

The purpose of a Pre-Submission Meeting is to provide advice on the content and rules applicable to the food additive application by replying to the questions the potential applicant might have, and to advice on issues such as:

- the shortcomings frequently identified during the suitability check of food additives applications, covering administrative, scientific and confidentiality aspects and how to avoid them.
- the updated scientific guidance document for food additives: what is to consider after its implementation as of 20 July 2026.

10. What are the benefits expected from this call?

The expected benefit of this call is to facilitate the access of food additive SMEs and first-time applicants to the GPSA service, and to speed up the intake phase of the applications.

For the potential applicants, the main benefit is that they will receive additional information that is relevant depending on the stage of the development of their food additive and application, in addition to the replies to the specific questions they submitted in the GPSA.

The communication activities supporting this Call (social media, mailings, newsletters, pre-recorded info session) run by EFSA, the registered stakeholders relevant in the area of food additives, the EFSA focal points, DG GROW, EIT Food and other institutions and organisations, contribute to increase the awareness of applicants on the GPSA service, reaching some potential applicants that might not be aware of the availability of this service.

11. How specific can the advice provided by EFSA be?

The advice provided by EFSA should be general and abstractly transposable to all potential applicants who intend to submit an application for the same regulated product under the same regulated product area. During the pre-submission meeting EFSA will not perform any informal check nor provide any pre-assessment of the application in preparation, as those activities are out of the scope of the GPSA service.

12. Can other companies or the public in general have access to the questions submitted and the advice provided by EFSA?

No. The only information that EFSA will disclose is a succinct summary of the advice. The summary will not contain any personal, confidential or sensitive information. As foreseen by the legislation, the summary is made publicly available together with the non-confidential version of the application dossier once it is submitted by the applicant and declared valid by the European Commission.

13. How can potential applicants get help on this Call for EOIs?

By contacting EFSA via the [Ask a Question service](#), including in the subject "Call FAD 2026".

Submission of Expressions of Interest (EOI)

14. What information is required to be provided in the EOI?

Potential applicants need to provide brief but clear information about the potential applicant, about the food additive, when the application may be submitted, and their preferred timeframe to set the meeting to receive EFSA's advice.

15. How is the EOI submitted?

The EOI is to be filled in and submitted [via MS Forms](#).

16. What is the deadline to submit the Expressions of Interest (EOI)?

The deadline to submit the EOI is 21 May 2026, 13:00 CEST.

17. Who can submit the EOI?

The EOI may be submitted by a contact person working in the food additive business operator (the applicant), or by a third party authorised to act on behalf of them (consultant, industry association, business incubator centre, etc). In any case, at least two different contact emails are needed, one of them necessarily from an employee of the food additive business operator.

18. What are the requirements that the EOI has to accomplish to be eligible for the meeting with EFSA?

- on the **potential applicant**: qualifies as an SME or as a first-time applicant, and is aiming to submit a food additive application.
- on the **questions** submitted: they must be in the scope of the GPSA service ².

For the sake of clarity, you can find some examples of questions in the scope of the GPSA:

- *Do I need to notify EFSA in advance of all the studies that will be included in my application?*
- *Do I need to provide information on the manufacturing process?*

² 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.

- *My food additive is an extract derived from a plant. What information should I provide for the plant used?*
- *Which food categories should I indicate in my application?*
- *Which information is needed for the specifications of a food additive?*
- *What are the requirements for the analytical methods used and the testing facilities? Should I conduct any studies following GLPs?*
- *What are the data requirements for an application for the modification/extension of use of an already authorised food additive?*
- *My food additive contains or is derived from microorganism. Which data/information should I provide about the microorganism?*

Also, some examples of questions out of the scope of the GPSA:

- *The protocol of my study is ready, and I would have it validated by EFSA before starting. Can you review it and send us your comments?*
- *The study results to demonstrate the stability of my food additive are ready. Can you confirm that they are acceptable for EFSA?*
- *I am having problems interpreting certain aspects of Regulation EC 1333/2008 on food additives. Can you help me with that?*
- *Can EFSA share a list of laboratories to commission the studies / a list of consultancy firms to help us prepare the application / an estimate of the costs of preparing an application?*
- *Is my product a food additive according to EU regulations?*

19. Any recommendations to follow when preparing the EOI?

Potential applicants should take into account the following points:

- Ensure that all the eligibility criteria are met.
- Provide a short but clear description of your food additive, its source, manufacturing process, proposed specifications and conditions of use.
- Include a list of questions as detailed as possible. Avoid broad, very open questions.

20. How to proceed in case of a mistake or typo is spotted in the EOI after its submission?

It is not possible to amend the EOI once it is submitted. Contact EFSA via the [Ask a Question service](#) including in the subject "Call FAD 2026", and indicate what information is wrong and how it should be updated.

21. How can potential applicants get help to prepare and submit an EOI?

Contact EFSA via the [Ask a Question service](#) including in the subject "Call FAD 2026".

Appraisal of Expressions of Interest (EOI)

22. How will the appraisal of the EOI be performed?

The appraisal will be performed on the information made available by the potential applicants in the EOIs. EFSA may also consult relevant information in other sources, if deemed necessary. All the eligibility requirements must be met, otherwise the EOI will be declared non-eligible.

23. Can EFSA request additional information on the EOI during the appraisal?

Yes, EFSA will contact the potential applicant via email in case any additional information relevant for the appraisal is needed (i.e. on the food additive, on the questions submitted, on the SME status, etc.).

24. Why is EFSA sending an invitation to create an Applicant account in Connect.EFSA?

An active Connect.EFSA account is a prerequisite to perform any pre-submission activities, such as sending a request for General pre-submission advice. It takes a few days to have it activated, so the potential applicant may be invited to create the account after submitting the EOI to avoid any delays afterwards in case the EOI is positively appraised. Even if the EOI is considered non-eligible, the potential applicant will find their account useful in the future when working on their application, i.e. to notify studies.

25. If some questions in the EOI do not fall in the scope of the GPSA service, will EFSA discard only these questions, or the EOI will be considered non-eligible?

The fact that some of the questions are out of the scope of the GPSA service does not mean that the EOI is non-eligible. If at least one of the questions submitted is within the scope, this eligibility requirement is fulfilled. On the contrary, the requirement is not fulfilled in case all the questions submitted are out of the scope, leading to the conclusion that the EOI is non-eligible.

26. In case the EOI is submitted by a third party (i.e. a consultant, an industry association, a business incubator center, etc.), how are the SME and first-time applicant statuses assessed? On the potential applicant or on the third party submitting the EOI?

According to the eligibility requirements, the potential applicant must qualify as an SME or as a first-time applicant. Consultancy firms, industry associations and other stakeholders are welcome to collaborate in the dissemination of the call amongst SMEs and first-time applicants, and also to support the submission of their Expressions of interest by fulfilling the form on their

behalf. Nevertheless, the appraisal of the SME and first-time applicant status is done only on the potential applicant.

27. The potential applicant is working on a food additive, but the company does not qualify as an SME and has submitted already another application after 27 March 2021. Is the EOI eligible?

No, as indicated in the eligibility requirements, the potential applicant must qualify as an SME, or as a first-time applicant. Other applicants can [request EFSA's GPSA](#) any time before submitting the application.

28. The potential applicant is working in a food regulated product different from food additives (i.e. Food enzyme, Food flavouring, GMO, Feed additives, etc.). Is the EOI eligible?

No, according to the eligibility requirements, the potential applicant is aiming to submit to EC an application for authorisation of a food additive. Potential applicants working in other food domains can [request EFSA's GPSA](#) any time before submitting their application.

29. The potential applicant has already submitted the application for the authorisation of the food additive, but they have some doubts during the risk assessment process. Is the EOI eligible?

No, the GPSA can be requested only before the application is submitted. In case of doubts during the assessment of an already submitted application, contact the relevant EFSA Unit or send a query via the [Ask a Question service](#).

30. How long does the appraisal of the EOIs take to EFSA?

Depending on the volume and complexity of the EOI, the duration of the appraisal process might vary, but it is expected to last about 15 working days on average.

31. What happens next if the EOI is eligible?

If the EOI is eligible, the potential applicant will be provided with details on how and when to submit the request for GPSA via Connect.EFSA so the meeting can be properly organised.

32. What happens next if the EOI is not eligible?

If the EOI is not eligible, the potential applicant will be notified accordingly and will be provided with information on other EFSA services that may fit their needs, or indications to contact the risk managers, if applicable.

Early Advice and Pre-submission meetings

33. When will the meeting take place?

EFSA will get in touch with the potential applicant to agree on a timeslot that is convenient for all the attendants, preferably in the period indicated in the EOI.

34. Will the meetings be held online or in person?

For logistical and financial reasons, the meetings will be held online.

35. What are the next steps after receiving the positive appraisal (EOI is eligible)?

The potential applicant will receive with the notification of the result of the appraisal detailed indications on how to proceed. Basically, they will be invited to log in Connect.EFSA with their account, create a pre-application ID for the food additive application and submit a request for General pre-submission advice (GPSA) three to four weeks before the agreed date of the meeting.

36. Can potential applicants include new questions in the request for GPSA that were not included before in the EOI?

Yes, new questions can be added and will be assessed to check if they fall in the scope of the GPSA service. If that is the case, they will be also replied in the meeting.

37. Who should attend the meeting from the applicant's side?

It is recommended that a total of two to four people attend, especially those in charge of the development of the food additive and the preparation of the application. A third party representing the applicant or helping in the preparation of the application (e.g. consultant) can also participate in the meeting.

38. Who will attend the meeting from the EFSA side?

Front-Desk & Workforce Planning (FDP) is the unit in charge of the GPSA service. Staff in other units can participate in the preparation of the advice depending on the questions received³.

³ According to Article 32a of the General Food Law, EFSA staff providing the GPSA will not be involved in any preparatory scientific or technical work that is directly or indirectly relevant to the application that is the subject of the advice.

39. What should potential applicants expect from an Early Advice Meeting?

During the Early Advice Meeting, EFSA staff will reply to the questions submitted that are in the scope of the GPSA service. In addition, potential applicants will be 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 and checklists
- 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.

40. What should potential applicants expect from a Pre-Submission Meeting?

During the Pre-Submission Meeting EFSA staff will reply to the questions submitted that are in the scope of the GPSA service. In addition, potential applicants will be advised on:

- the shortcomings frequently identified during the suitability check of food additive es applications covering administrative, scientific and confidentiality aspects, and on how to avoid them.
- the updated scientific guidance document for food additives: what is to consider after its implementation as of 20 July 2026.

41. What not to expect from an Early advice or a Pre-submission meeting?

This service has some limitations and EFSA cannot:

- Take new questions during the meeting that were not included in the request for GPSA.
- Reply questions beyond the scope of the GPSA (see question "What are the requirements that the EOI have to accomplish to be eligible").
- Pre-assess or check the suitability of the application, or parts of it.
- Provide scientific advice beyond the information available in the corresponding guidance documents.

42. Can the meeting be recorded, or a transcript made?

No, 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.

43. Will EFSA prepare and share the minutes of the meeting?

No. Only 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 publish about the request for advice submitted by the potential applicant. As foreseen by the legislation⁴, it is made public together with the non-confidential version of the application dossier once the application is declared valid.

44. If new questions arise in the future during the preparation of the application, can the potential applicant request a new GPSA?

Yes, in case of new questions arise in the future, potential applicants can submit another request for GPSA⁵ for the same application. EFSA has a specific service in place (Fast-tracked GPSA for SMEs⁶) so the GPSAs submitted by SMEs are replied in a shortened timeframe and preferably in a tele-meeting.

45. How can potential applicants get help to prepare and submit a request for GPSA?

Contact EFSA via the [Ask a Question service](#) including in the subject "Call FAD 2026".

46. How can potential applicants share with EFSA their feedback on the call and on the advice provided?

After the meeting, the potential applicant 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. This feedback is very important for EFSA to develop and improve the services to support applicants, in particular SMEs and first-time applicants.

⁴ General Food Law Article 32a and EFSA Practical arrangements on pre-submission phase and public consultations

⁵ as per Article 7 of the EFSA's Practical arrangements on pre-submission phase and public consultations, and also indicated in the Catalogue of support initiatives during the life cycle of applications for regulated products

⁶ As per section 2.1.2 of EFSA's Catalogue of services during the lifecycle of applications for regulated products

List of acronyms

EFSA: European Food Safety Authority

EOI: Expression of Interest

ESFC: e-submission food chain platform

EU: European Union

FAQ: frequently asked questions

GPSA: General pre-submission advice

SME: small and medium-sized enterprise