Pre - Announcement of the
CORE Organic call 2016

with cofunds from the EU

Planned launch of the call: 5 Dec 2016
Brokerage event: 7 Dec 2016 (see time schedule, chpt. 5)

The project receives funding from the European Union’s Horizon2020 Research &
Innovation
Programme under grant agreement no 727495, CORE Organic Cofund
1 Background

Background to this call
In the beginning of December 2016, CORE Organic is planning to launch an EU cofunded transnational joint call for research project proposals based on funds from participating countries and funding from the European Commission. The CORE Organic consortium for the cofounded call consists of 25 partners from 19 countries and committed 13 million € of national funds “in cash” for transnational research. The CORE Organic Cofund ERA-Net will benefit from cofunding from the European Commission under Horizon2020.

What is CORE Organic?
CORE Organic is the acronym for "Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming Systems". The aim of CORE Organic is to improve the knowledge basis and innovation capacity necessary for supporting further development of organic food and farming as a way to respond to significant societal challenges in Europe’s agriculture and food systems.

The overall objective for the CORE Organic Call 2016 is that the proposed research projects support sustainable growth of the organic sector in Europe and beyond. The expected impacts are more sustainable organic food systems including farming practices, processing and innovative value chains, aiming at fulfilment of the growing demand for organic products, support to Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and organic farming regulations and subsequently supporting health, trade and job creation. Furthermore, the funded projects should contribute to the improvement of the general competitiveness of the European agriculture and present new and innovative solutions to environmentally friendly agriculture.

The CORE Organic Cofund ERA-Net is the continuation of the ERA-Nets CORE Organic I, II and Plus. The present Pre-Announcement is pending final approval from the European Commission.

2 Which thematic areas can be applied for?
The CORE Organic Call 2016 will provide funds for four topics:

Topic 1: Ecological support in specialised and intensive plant production systems
Topic 2: Eco-efficient production and use of animal feed at local level
Topic 3: Appropriate and robust livestock systems: cattle, pigs, poultry
Topic 4: Organic food processing concepts and technologies for ensuring food quality, sustainability and consumer confidence

For a detailed description of the topics see the call text in Annex A.
3 Who can apply?
Institutions that are involved in research / innovation and operate in accordance with national rules, including companies, are invited to apply. CORE Organic is aiming at a high degree of stakeholder participation by a multi-actor approach throughout the whole project. Cooperation with farmers and companies is encouraged and attention will be paid to dissemination of research results into practice.

Research consortia must comprise of a minimum of five independent legal entities from a minimum of five different CORE Organic partner countries participating with funding in the specific topic. A list with the CORE Organic partners including the available funds per country and topics can be found in Annex B.

Research consortia are encouraged to consider good geographical coverage with regard to their main research question.

Applicants who are not eligible for funding by their national funding body or applicants from countries not participating in the call are welcome in research consortia, but will have to provide in-kind funding and will not receive EU top-up funding. They will not be included in the required minimum number of partners in the consortium and they cannot be the coordinator of the project.

Such partners should state in advance the source of funding for their part in the project.

The maximum budget requested from CORE Organic funds is 1.5 million euro per research proposal including the coordination costs, but in-kind contributions may be added on top of this amount.

A complete list of the CORE Organic eligibility criteria will be published with the Call Announcement when the call is launched.

Please note that applicants must be eligible for funding by CORE Organic and the national funding bodies. Eligibility criteria may vary even between national funding bodies. Therefore, it is mandatory for each applicant to also consider the national regulations of their funding body, for example whether eligible costs or sub-contracting are in line with the national rules and priorities. The national funding rules and priorities will be published at www.coreorganic.org when the call is launched.

Projects should start between 1 March and 1 May 2018 and be of maximum 36 months.

4 Coordinator of the research consortium
At the start of the application phase each research consortium needs to appoint a project coordinator.

Together with the submission of the pre-proposal, the coordinator can request additional funding from CORE Organic, i.e. independent of the national project funding, for the following tasks:
1. Travels for participation to 3 CORE Organic research seminars and travels to partners for problem solving (travels for project meetings are to be requested from the national funds)
2. Person months to cover the coordination work and reporting to CORE Organic, also for permanent staff
3. Overhead (fixed at 25% of the total coordination costs)
4. Catering in connection to project meetings
5. Other costs (must be specified)

The project coordinator has the following role and responsibilities:

» Lead the consortium throughout the application procedure and be responsible for the correct submission of the pre-proposal and full proposal. The coordinator should be the one who creates an account for the proposal in the online submission tool.

» Ensure that all partners:
  › fulfil the requirements stated in the Call Announcement and criteria as stated in the national / regional annexes and communicated by the national / regional contact points
  › provide all necessary information and comply with all formalities as required
  › participate actively in the proposal preparation, and ensure that the proposal meets a high standard of excellence, represents good value for money and meets all eligibility requirements

» Fully responsible for the overall project coordination and will be the central contact point for the CORE Organic consortium during the full lifespan of the research project, from application to successful completion after approval by the funding bodies

» Inform the CORE Organic Call Secretariat about any event that might affect the implementation of the project

» Ensure that all work is carried to a high standard and meets contractually bound milestones presented in the full proposal and approved by the funding bodies

» Responsible for sharing all information with consortium partners

» Responsible for monitoring data and timely delivery of project reports

The project coordinator will not be responsible for the financial management of CORE Organic project funding, which will be handled directly between the national research institutions and their national funding bodies in each participating country.

5 Time schedule, 2-step-procedure

The call will follow a 2-step procedure with pre-proposals (step1) and full proposals (step2). There will be a competitive selection at both steps.

Table: Time schedule
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<thead>
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<th>Action</th>
<th>Scheduled</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Launch of the call</td>
<td>5 Dec 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brokerage event* in Brussels</td>
<td>7 Dec 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closing date for submission of pre-proposals</td>
<td>1 Mar 2017, 10.00 am CET</td>
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<td>Pre-proposal selection meeting</td>
<td>5 &amp; 6 Apr 2017</td>
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<td>Notification letters sent to applicants</td>
<td>27 Apr 2017</td>
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<td>Step 2</td>
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<td>Closing date for submission of full proposals</td>
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* Brokerage event (7 Dec 2016 in Brussels): At the event, the call content and the application procedure will be explained. Brokerage sessions will be organised giving potential applicants the opportunity to find partners. For those not attending all material will be available on-line and access granted to the matchmaking tool: http://coreorganicplus.org/currently/nyhed/artikel/organic-innovation-days-and-core-organic-brokerage-event/

6 Further information

All information necessary for the preparation and submission of a pre-proposal will be available at www.coreorganic.org at the launch of the call. Here you can also find a partnering tool and a FAQ section.
Interested project consortia should apply to one of the four topics. The call is open to all proposals which address the call topics and do not overlap with those previously funded by CORE Organic (http://www.coreorganic.org/ http://orgprints.org/view/projects/eu.html) or others.

TOPIC 1: ECOLOGICAL SUPPORT IN SPECIALISED AND INTENSIVE PLANT PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

Rationale
The management of specialised and sometimes monoculture cropping systems of fruit tree orchards, vineyards, small fruits, vegetables and greenhouses requires more intensive use of energy, water and other inputs including processed organic fertilisers and inputs for pest and disease control than arable farming. The potential benefits of functional biodiversity are not always utilised. There is a need for improvement in use of natural resources and for reduction of dependency on external inputs, while still increasing economical sustainability of these systems. The challenge is to find practical ways to develop more resilient agro-ecosystems for perennial and annual, intensive and protected crops that meet the high standards of environmental sustainability and good-tasting and nutritious products, and thus, are in closer alignment with the organic principles.

Innovative cropping and production systems should improve nutrient cycling by using new crop combinations (intercropping, mixtures with different rooting depths, ecological services providing crops, etc.) and recycling of other substances including organic matter, waste and waste water. They should improve the quality and stability of production at low nutrient levels, and lead to lower production costs. Relevant research should result in diversified, stress-tolerant, multi-functional and resilient cropping systems and farming practices with lower environmental and climate impact. Reduction of GHG emissions including options for carbon sequestration and improving energy efficiency at soil, field and farm levels should be considered.

Scope
A. Concepts for sustainable, resource-efficient and resilient intensive vegetable, fruit, olive and viticulture production

Organic vegetable fields, fruit orchards, olive groves and vineyards still depend on inputs for pest and disease control, as well as for fertilization, and the agro-environmental services they produce are limited. Vegetables, fruits and wine are important products for the European organic market. Consumers expect high quality in terms of taste and nutritional content as well as high environmental production standards. This includes agro-environmental and wider eco-system services. There is a knowledge need of how to design and manage
vegetable fields, orchards and vineyards in order to reduce dependency on external inputs for pest and disease control, as well as for fertilization, and on how to improve synergy with ecosystems services. One of the challenges is how growers can make best use of the diversity within and between crops, and of the natural biodiversity at field, farm and landscape levels in fruit orchards, vineyards and vegetable production.

Projects may include new forms of partly closed covering systems to protect crops in open field (such as rain caps, nets or plastic shelters).

Projects should combine knowledge in cross disciplinary work in order to design innovative and productive systems that meet these requirements. They should include further development, testing and on-farm validation of the innovative systems in different regions of Europe.

B. Concepts for sustainable soil-bound greenhouse systems

There is a wide variety in organic production in greenhouses such as (semi)-permanent, closed, walk in glasshouses, plastic-covered houses or poly-tunnels. Available knowledge on organic greenhouse production has been gathered in the COST Action “Biogreenhouse”. From that it became clear that more research is needed to increase the ecological and economical sustainability of these systems. Problems which commonly arise all around Europe include: low input efficiency, the need for adequate supplies of water or of nutrients under the provisions of the Nitrates Directive, the use of broad spectrum plant protection products and copper-based fungicides, which hamper natural crop protection and heating with fossil fuels. A general constraint on all organic greenhouse systems is the difficulty of practicing crop rotation. Maintaining soil health and resilience in such a protected growing system is a challenge. There is a knowledge need to combine the high intensity of greenhouses systems with the management of soil health and fertility. Projects should direct the understanding, assessment and development of new concepts and management of more climate-neutral and sustainable, yet economically sound and resilient soil-bound greenhouse systems for various climatic conditions, and suited to different farming systems. This may include soil-bound urban farming systems. Technological and agro-ecological solutions should be developed to reduce the use of inputs like plant protection products and fossil fuels, that have a high environmental impact and to prevent nutrient losses and improve water use efficiency. The solutions that will be developed must fit within the European organic regulation.

New strategies and concepts should be developed using a system approach and combining knowledge of different disciplines such as soil science, agro-ecology, entomology, plant pathology, weed science, economics, among others.
The projects should follow a multi-actor approach with an active involvement of various relevant stakeholders (e.g. growers, researchers, advisory services, manufacturers, retailers, consumers and citizens). Activities should cover different geographical and climatic conditions.

**Expected impact**

- Results to reach end-users and be used transnationally; suitable and smart outputs and deliverables for dissemination are expected.
- Improved competitiveness of organic vegetable, fruit, olive, grape and greenhouse production;
- Models for more resilient and sustainable organic vegetable, fruit, olive and grape production systems in the open field and under cover;
- Concepts for more sustainable and climate-neutral organic soil-bound greenhouse production systems suitable for different climates, conditions and agro-ecosystems;
- Closed nutrient cycles and improved efficiency in the use of water and inputs.

TOPIC 2: ECO-EFFICIENT PRODUCTION AND USE OF ANIMAL FEED AT LOCAL LEVEL

**Rationale**

Currently, recycling of nutrients on farms or at a regional level is still difficult to achieve in large parts of the EU, mainly for economic reasons but also due to the over-simplification of farming systems. To a large extent, feed and livestock production are concentrated in different regions, and animal feed, especially proteins, has to be imported from regions far away from where the animals are raised. In different regions of Europe, a variety of surplus green biomass from crops or residuals as well as blue biomass could be made available for feed production, and at the same time, providing new options for nutrient recycling between farms and between farming and other parts of the food system. The EC policy on Circular Economy in particular points to the need for recycling food waste in the form of animal feed. Different sources of proteins are important, e.g. soybean (*Glycine max*), horse bean (*Vicia faba*), peas (*Pisum sativum*), Beach pea (*Lathyrus sp*), Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*), while recycling of residues should be considered as well.

Organic animal production systems, particularly for monogastric animals, have an increasingly smaller ecological base, thus threatening their capacity of resilience and also the sustainability of specialised organic animal production therefore putting consumer confidence at risk. Moreover, it is expected that changes in EU legislation on re-use of feed will affect these sectors significantly and lead to high demand for suitable concentrate protein feeds. New forms of bio-refinery and other techniques are emerging which may provide high
quality livestock feed, but their commercial and practical success depends on further joint technical and market development including animal feed experiments.

In order to contribute to the improvement of the above-mentioned issues we need high quality relevant research in this topic, but with a capacity to interlink skills, knowledge and disciplines, which rarely work together. A value chain approach, involving upstream and downstream partners, is needed in order to deliver useful and implementable results with the necessary degree of innovation.

**Scope**

Feed crops and other protein rich feed sources e.g. based on insects or algae or mussels for all livestock species should be considered, including monogastrics and dairy farming. Special attention should be paid to the availability of concentrate feed of plant, marine or by-product origin and of a quality suitable for organic poultry and piglets/pork production, including protein feed with essential amino acid composition.

Enhanced efforts are needed to increase the local production of feed crops and the availability of proteins in order to support the development of more sustainable livestock systems related to local cultivated lands in order to improve self-sufficiency and overall sustainability (*including economic sustainability*) of organic value chains.

The projects should develop innovative cropping systems and methods for the production and small scale processing of local feed. These would include growing new crops and more suitable varieties and re-designing crop rotations and intercropping in a way such as to develop a more self-sufficient, integrated and closed-loop livestock and vegetal production system, using an agro-ecological and ethological approach with the final objective to achieve an eco-functional intensification of sustainable livestock production. High quality protein feeds from bio-refinery or other processes based on regional crops, crop residues and food waste as well as blue biomass such as algae and mussels may be included.

The projects should develop organic animal productions taking into consideration the whole value chain and related economic aspects that impact local livestock farming systems and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of innovative systems of feed production including bio-refinery processes and provide suggestions on how to develop these strategies for more sustainable feed and animal systems.

The conventional livestock production sector could also benefit from greater knowledge about local production of protein crops and feeds and their efficient and sustainable deployment in livestock production.
The projects should follow a multi-actor approach with an active involvement of all relevant stakeholders and activities should cover different geographical and climatic conditions.

Applicants should take into account pertinent EU-legislation, especially EU legislation relating to the use of food waste and other residues, insects, insect protein and other insect components as animal feed as well as pertinent EU-legislation relating to the production of insects, insect protein and other components from insects. Thus, project proposals must justify to what extent they will provide knowledge applicable under current regulation or may provide knowledge relevant for policy development and science based improvement of regulation.

Expected impact
- Results to reach end-users and be used transnationally; suitable and smart outputs and deliverables for dissemination are expected.
- Improve the sustainability of organic animal husbandry by reducing the dependency on “imported” protein feed;
- Re-designed and developed cropping and feeding systems that introduce an innovative use of crops, grassland, forage, by-products and other potential protein sources including methods and techniques for processing;
- Support for organic animal productions by taking all the value chain and related economic aspects into consideration that strongly condition local livestock farming systems;
- Support for sustainable local farming systems and economies driven by organic animal production.

TOPIC 3: APPROPRIATE AND ROBUST LIVESTOCK SYSTEMS: CATTLE, PIGS, POULTRY

Rationale
Many organic livestock systems have become increasingly specialised. From the initial economic advantage of specialisation, they have developed a too small economic and ecological base. The challenge lies in converting these systems into robust farming systems that rely on smart ecological intensification. In those systems the use of antibiotics can be further reduced following societal expectations. Economic performance can be maintained and even improved – both per hectare and per labour unit.
Scope

A. Forage-based dairy systems – sustainable strategies to increase the health and welfare of dairy livestock

As regards ruminants, we focus on grazing systems and young stock. Innovative grazing systems for different agro-ecological and economic conditions are required that improve land productivity, increase the production of protein, while optimizing roughage intake and reducing the use of anthelmintics. Effective new practices are required for reduction of antibiotics and anthelmintics use, while maintaining udder health, preventing mastitis, preventing hoof problems, preventing and treating parasites, and improving fertility.

In improving the rearing of young stock, the challenges are: to find innovative methods for keeping dairy calves that allow mother-infant contact without negative productivity effects, to find and apply additional indicators in addition to common production parameters to assess the welfare and performance of calves and dams under different rearing conditions, and to sustain the long-term benefits of alternatively reared calves and their long term production and reproduction performance.

B. Organic poultry systems – environmentally and animal friendly

As regards poultry we focus on the performance of breeds in organic systems and on the free-range areas. Poultry breeds should be monitored with regard to their performance, health and welfare in several organic production systems. Appropriate breeding strategies or programmes for improving animal welfare should be considered and developed. As regards laying hens, the aim should be to reduce the number of broken keel bones, feather pecking, red mites and foot pad problems. Dualpurpose breeds are promising with respect to animal welfare aspects and should be tested under differing conditions, including in view of breeding improved breeds. Other poultry systems are gaining importance, including turkey and duck, and should be improved with regard to husbandry systems as well as identification of suitable breeds. Free-range areas, especially in fixed stables for flocks of thousands of animals, have a high nutrient load. Solutions should be developed to reduce this environmental problem and waste of nutrients by developing outdoor areas that stimulate the birds to make optimal use of the range area, while at the same time maintaining the level of welfare that freerange systems provide.

C. Pig husbandry: Combining animal welfare, efficient production and low ecological footprint

Organic pig production requires access to outdoor areas for animal welfare which however creates challenges in terms of parasite control, nutrient recycling, climate impact and productivity. There is a need for further development of housing systems and management of outdoor areas in order to reduce piglet mortality, nutrient losses and emissions of ammonia.
and nitrous oxide while improving economic competitiveness. Recent research has produced health management manuals for organic pig farmers, yet further improvement is needed in the overall management in light of the multiple objectives and challenges of organic production systems. Projects should focus on one or more factors for improving productivity, efficiency in resource use, animal health and welfare while keeping a holistic perspective on the performance of the system in light also of climatic and environmental impact.

D. Mixed livestock systems for improved farming and food system resilience

As regards mixed systems, we focus on the identification, exploration and assessment of different paths to more robust and resilient livestock systems. Mixed livestock systems are farming systems in which two or more farm animal species are kept simultaneously and most likely are integrated with crop production or agroforestry. In that way, potential ecological synergies can be exploited in all aspects of the farm. Mixed livestock systems can offer solutions to the negative phenomena that occur at highly specialized livestock farms, such as high nutrient loads and the risk of reduced health and animal welfare. There is a need for improving existing mixed livestock systems and developing innovative forms of producing livestock integrated with crops or feed, biomass or human consumption.

We encourage the design of new forms of livestock systems or improvement of existing systems. Existing mixed livestock systems, as well as new concepts should be assessed in different regions across the EU. This assessment should address production (including economy), environmental impact, feeding, management, parasite and disease management and animal welfare. Socio-economic impacts and ecosystem services also need to be taken into account.

The projects should follow a multi-actor approach with an active involvement of all relevant stakeholders particularly enterprises of the organic sector and activities should cover different geographical and climatic conditions.

**Expected impact**

All:

- Results to reach end-users and be used transnationally; suitable and smart outputs and deliverables for dissemination are expected.
- Assessment of alternatives to contentious inputs in organic livestock systems.
Dairy systems:
- Increased knowledge and application of dairy systems with improved productivity, reduced environmental impact, enhanced animal health and reduced antibiotic and anthelmintic use;
- Increased knowledge and use of more natural calf-rearing systems.

Poultry:
- Improved health and welfare of organic poultry, including improved breeds;
- Identification of the possibilities and limitations of existing and improved breeds, both for specialised and dual purpose production;
- Implementation of new poultry husbandry systems which maintain a high level of animal welfare and health, high environmental standards, and robust economic performance.
- Improved health and welfare of turkey and duck in organic husbandry systems, including better suited breeds;
- Development and start of implementation of breeding strategies and concepts of poultry, including dual-purpose breeds

Pigs:
- Housing systems and management practices that enable organic farmers to improve productivity, efficiency in resource use, animal health and welfare while achieving a low ecological footprint.

Mixed livestock systems:
- Increased and well-documented knowledge of mixed livestock systems, including mutual benefits for animal health, the environment and socio-economic aspects;
- Improved guidelines for managing complex agricultural systems, and for health management in mixed livestock systems.

TOPIC 4: ORGANIC FOOD PROCESSING CONCEPTS AND TECHNOLOGIES FOR ENSURING FOOD QUALITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

Rationale
A significant proportion of the organic food we consume is processed. Organic consumers expect that processing techniques and technologies handle the primary products in a gentle way preserving the high quality of the organic primary food ingredients, use low levels of
additives and have a low environmental impact. However, until now, only a few specific processing technologies have been developed for organic food products, and there is no clear guidance on how to select the most appropriate technologies. Mandatory standards for the processing of organic food are lacking and research on the assessment of the environmental impact of organic processing is limited. There is a demand for assessing the actual need for contentious substances or techniques/technologies as well as alternatives to them in organic food processing. Packaging may have a high environmental impact. As far as still needed packaging which preserves quality and reduces food waste should be improved. Organic food processors have, therefore, expressed the need for a Code of Practice on how to implement the rules and principles of organic processed food of high quality and with a low environmental impact. This should go hand in hand with the definition and development of sustainable, minimal and gentle processing techniques in line with the organic principles.

Scope

The call focuses on the development, assessment and evaluation of gentle organic food processing methods and chains which maintain high food quality and low levels of additives and have, at the same time, low environmental impact and a high degree of consumer acceptance. In this regard, research should support the development of a Code of Practice which indicates how to implement the rules and principles in processing of organic food while keeping the environmental impact low and maintaining high food quality.

Recommendations for the phasing out of contentious substances or techniques/technologies without compromising the competitiveness of organic sector should be formulated. The definition of criteria for the acceptability of contentious substances and alternatives to them in organic food processing in order to complying with the organic principles should ensure consumer confidence. As far as still needed evaluation systems for and improvement of food packaging materials should be further developed. This includes new general developments in intelligent packaging for organic products, and identification of packaging materials which do not pollute the organic products with synthetic chemicals, heavy metals or other undesirable substances, suitable for different types of food products.

New technologies, techniques, assessment and evaluation tools and indicators should be generally recognized in the organic sector. A multi-actor approach with active involvement of various relevant stakeholders (end-users such as farmers/farmers' groups, advisors, enterprises, consumers etc.) all along the projects is in this perspective indispensable.

Applicants should consider the current EU legislation on organic food processing and the recommendations in the EGTOP final report on food.

Expected impact

- Results to reach end-users and be used transnationally; suitable and smart outputs and deliverables for dissemination are expected.
• Development and promotion of a Code of Practice or other set of criteria for selecting appropriate food processing methods for organic food at regional/national/European level;
• Testing/application of new gentle food processing methods suitable to preserve high quality of primary products in processed food and to decrease environmental impact;
• Testing/application of alternatives to contentious substances as well as new natural origin additives (i.e. antioxidants, preservatives etc.) in food processing enterprises;
• As far as still needed application of best practices for packaging of organic food along processing chains as well as in stores and supermarkets taking into account resource use and packaging material as well as food quality, shelf life and food waste.
### Annex B: Indicative call budget

Indicative national budgets (in 1000 euros) including pre-allocated EU funds amounting to 10% of national funds (except Switzerland)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Total funds</th>
<th>Plant production</th>
<th>Feed, local</th>
<th>Livestock</th>
<th>Food Processing</th>
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<td>GDAR</td>
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<td><strong>Total funds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>14,594</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3,431</strong></td>
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