**ERDF Interregional Innovation Investments Instrument (I3)**

**Project Summary Form**

**Call topic**

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| ERDF Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument, Capacity Building Strand 2b under the Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument (I3-2023-CAP2b) |

**Project title**

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| Empowering Innovative SMEs to provide Smart Technologies for European Dairy Farmers |

**Project acronym**

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| SmartDairyTech |

**Project coordinator**

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| **Name** | **Organization** | **Region** | **Country** |
| Ana Sofia Santos | Associação para a inovação em nutrição e alimentação animal – FeedInov | Alentejo | Portugal |

**Indicative list of participating regions**

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| **Region** | **Country** | **Organizations** |
| Alentejo | Portugal | FeedInov CoLAB |
| Midtjylland | Denmark | Innotech Vision |
| Hovedstaden | Denmark | INNVITE |
| Emilia-Romagna | Italy | FOOD-hub |
| Midtjylland | Denmark | Aarhus university |
| Andalusia | Spain | Universidad de Córdoba |
| Eesti | Estonia | Estonian University of Life Sciences |
| Liguria | Italy | Cynomys |
| Wien | Austria | TU Wien |
| Madrid | Spain | Sensowave |
| Madrid | Spain | Digitanimal |
| Norte | Portugal | INESC TEC |
| Wien | Austria | University of Veterinary Medicine |

**Project Summary** *[Brief description of the relevant project information for the confirmation that is consistent and addresses the regional S3 priorities, namely, background, objectives, themes and priority areas, targeted economic sectors, activities and other relevant information, if applicable]*

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| **Project summary**  Innovative dairy technologies have emerged as a valuable approach to enhance dairy production efficiency, lower labour costs, improve product quality and promote overall sustainability on dairy farms. However, their adoption has been slow, primarily due to a lack of awareness and understanding of the potential advantages and quantitative these technologies offer. Additionally, many SMEs and startups providing these technologies encounter significant challenges in making their solutions fully market-ready.  With a consortium of 11 partners including universities, SMEs and associations from 6 countries in the EU, the project “Empowering Innovative SMEs to provide **Smart** **Tech**nologies for European **Dairy** Farmers **–** **SmartDairyTech**” aims to tackle these challenges by establishing regional innovation networks that will assess current smart dairy technologies, explore their potential applications and benefits and identify the obstacles to their implementation in the different regions. Subsequently, it will create a comprehensive toolkit of available smart dairy technologies, enabling farmers to use them more effectively. Also, **SmartDairyTech** will establish training programs and knowledge-sharing sessions to enhance understanding of innovative digital solutions. By fostering stronger networks, the initiative will facilitate the introduction of more market-ready solutions, with a focus on empowering technology-providing SMEs through financial support, enhancing competitiveness and identifying scalability opportunities in the targeted regions.  Ultimately, the project will strengthen connections among key stakeholders in the smart technology and dairy sectors, accelerating and supporting the digital transition.   1. **Relevance**    1. **Background and general objectives**   The European Commission has adopted a New European Innovation Agenda in order to boost Europe's technological leadership and generate innovative solutions to pressing societal challenges. Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) are at the centre of this approach, encouraging regions and Member States (MS) to build regional coalitions to support the creation of new European technological centres/incubators. This will help to address the innovation divide in regions with similar or complementary S3 priorities and improve the competitive advantage of their territories. The Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument is a tool to facilitate collaboration between different EU regions. It helps to coordinate investments in shared and complementary areas of specialization and to connect regional innovation ecosystems. The goal is to increase innovation capacity, particularly in less developed regions, by engaging in innovation and reinforcing the capacity of regions to join EU value chains. The I3 Instrument work programme aims to strengthen the competitiveness and resilience of EU innovation systems by assisting companies to accelerate market uptake and scale-up of innovative solutions.  The European dairy sector is facing significant challenges due to evolving consumer demand, increased competition and rising operational costs. To maintain competitiveness and meet these challenges, the adoption of innovative technologies is critical. Smart dairy technologies—such as robotic milking systems, automated data analysis tools and advanced sensor-based monitoring systems, joining with new business models and new value chains —present a powerful opportunity to enhance production efficiency, lower labour costs and improve product quality. These technologies can streamline operations, optimize animal health management and support sustainable practices, leading to long-term economic benefits for farmers and the industry at large.  Despite these advantages, the uptake of smart technologies in the dairy industry has been limited. Many producers remain unaware of the tangible benefits these tools can provide and the initial investment costs can be a barrier, particularly for SMEs and farms in less developed regions. Additionally, start-up innovators in the field often face challenges in bringing their solutions to the market, lacking the necessary business acumen, demonstrations and validations to scale their technologies. Getting deeper understanding and addressing these gaps through targeted initiatives and support mechanisms is essential for accelerating the adoption of these transformative technologies across the EU's dairy sector. For that, **SmartDairyTech** targets the dairy industry for its relevant need and potential to adhere to the digital smart transition. As an important activity of the agricultural sector in Europe providing vital economic, environmental and social benefits to the region, it is urgent to support co-creation dynamics for capacity building targeting innovation actors from different categories of regions (developed, transition, less developed and outermost regions).  In line with the scope and priorities of I3 strand 2b call; **SmartDairyTech** fixed the main general objective of supporting interregional cooperation between smart technologies providing SMEs across Europe and other actors from the quadruple helix to enhance the uptake of smart dairy farming technologies by European farmers. The specific objectives to reach this goal are (1) to assess and deepen understanding of the needs, gaps and obstacles hindering technology adoption (WP2), (2) to support knowledge transfer, collaborative learning and networking (WP3) and (3) to increase investment readiness and improve projects financial capability and access to funding (WP4). The project aims to form a closely connected innovation network and co-develop a consortium that will co-market various smart agricultural technologies targeting the European and potentially the international dairy industries through an integrated dissemination and communication strategy (WP5). It has been recognized that farmers do not want to deal with small/individual companies and segregated/separate technologies. Farmers want to deal with one contact point for technology suppliers and prefer fully integrated information management systems in order to maximize the benefits of co-utilizing various information/data streams.  Table 1: SmartDairyTech objectives   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Core actions** | | | **Pillar 1** | **Ecosystem Building and Connection** | | Project specific objective | Enhance cross-regional collaboration | | Linked to WP | All WP | | Project specific objective | Increase the adoption of smart dairy technologies among farmers | | Linked to WP | 3, | | **Pillar 2** | **Supporting the development of interregional investment projects** | | Project specific objective | Enhance business readiness of smart technology providing SMEs | | Linked to WP | 4 | | Project specific objective | Increase awareness of the benefits of smart technologies | | Linked to WP | 3 and 5 | | **Support actions** | | | **Pillar 3** | **Mapping & Benchmarking** | | Project specific objective | Identify and map gaps limiting smart dairy technology adoption | | Linked to WP | 2 | | **Pillar 4** | **Networking and staff exchange schemes** | | Project specific objective | Implement an EU- wide network for smart dairy technologies | | Linked to WP | 3 and 4 |   The I3 funding call is designed to support innovative projects that promote regional economic development, foster regional collaboration and improve the competitiveness of businesses in the EU. **SmartDairyTech** would help to promote regional economic development by providing dairy industry stakeholders with access to the latest technological innovations, which could help them to become more competitive in the global marketplace. It would also foster regional collaboration by connecting Smart dairy industry stakeholders from different regions, allowing them to share their knowledge and experiences. Finally, the project would improve the competitiveness of businesses in the EU by helping them to more effectively market their Smart dairy technologies and by providing them with integrated smart dairy technologies. |