

EIT Food Startup Manual



Better businesses for a better food system

Written by:

Ilana Taub, Michael Minch-Dixon & Joseph Gridley

About EIT Food

EIT Food is Europe's leading food innovation initiative which was set up to transform our food system. EIT Food is a European Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC), part of the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT), an independent EU body set up to promote innovation and entrepreneurship across Europe.



At EIT Food we believe that we are all responsible for, and connected to, the food that we eat so we all need to work together to improve it. By connecting consumers with businesses, startups, researchers and students from around Europe, we support innovative and sustainable initiatives which improve our health, our access to quality food, and our environment.

EIT Food works with consumers in the change process to improve nutrition and make the food system more resource-efficient, secure, transparent and trusted. Our ambition is to redesign the way we produce, deliver, consume and recycle our food to create a future-proof food system which supports a sustainable and circular bio-economy.

About the authors

We're passionate about food and sustainability so in 2013, we quit our jobs to find a way to contribute to a better food system. We co-founded SNACT, a brand making fruit snacks from ugly fruit to tackle food waste. This means we have direct experience in having created a successful food company recognized for driving environmental and social change. We built an innovative supply chain rescuing over 220 tonnes of food from going to waste and were the first in the UK to launch innovative compostable packaging. After five years of hard work, we decided to take a step back from the day to day activities of the company and sold part of the brand at the end of 2018.

Our work has been recognized by features in the Guardian, the BBC, Channel 4, The Telegraph. We won awards such as the Best Eco Product in the Global Good Award and were selected for prestigious initiatives like The London Greater Authority's London Leader programme and the Unreasonable Impact programme. More broadly, we have wider business startup experience having created other green businesses and projects in the past. Whilst our personal food startup experience has been UK focused, we are well connected to startup culture and the sustainability sector worldwide having fostered an extensive network in both of our combined 20 years of experience. We were really excited to be asked to put together this guide and be given the opportunity to share our knowledge and experience in this space.



Ilana Taub
Co-Founder
Snact



Michael Minch-Dixon
Co-Founder
Snact

Disclaimer and Copyright

This guide is intended to help agrifood entrepreneurs and startups. However, it does not replace seeking professional advice and guidance. As such, although EIT Food has made every effort to ensure that the information in this book is useful, they do not assume any responsibility for the outcome of your business.

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Written by: Ilana Taub, Michael Minch-Dixon, and Joseph Gridley

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EIT Food

info@eitfood.eu

www.eitfood.com

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Shortcuts to content

- 1. Have an idea and that's it?** Read the whole book.
- 2. Feeling excited and ready, but would like to hear what food entrepreneurs wish they'd known before starting out?** [Pages 9-10](#) are for you. *(You might also want to check the general startup advice that follows.)*
- 3. To go solo or not go solo: that is the question.** [Page 13](#) will help you answer that.
- 4. Know that you need to do some research to back up your gut feeling but don't know where to start?** [Read Chapter 2](#).
- 5. Looking for clarity and focus on your new business (idea)?** [Pages 33-34](#) and [The Business Model Canvas](#) will help you.
- 6. Done the market research and even done some testing but missing an actual business plan?** [Pages 37-39](#) will help you out.
- 7. Got everything under control – except commercialising and scaling?**
[Head to page 66](#).
- 8. You're not sure every time someone mentions the words "accelerator" or "incubator"?** Go to [pages 74-81](#).
- 9. Know your food but not your legal requirements and business structures?**
[Pages 45-46](#).
- 10. Could use some money to get started or take it to the next level?** [Pages 51-57](#).
- 11. Not interested in grants or crowdfunding but equity interests you?** [Jump to page 56](#).
- 12. Cashflow questions?** [Go to page 73](#). Actually, start with the bit about sales on [page 71](#) and keep reading.
- 13. Got a great product or service but feeling lost in terms of branding/storytelling?**
[Chapter 7](#) is for you.
- 14. Want to embrace social media but feel completely lost?** [Pages 91-93](#) will be useful.
- 15. Making a positive impact but don't know how to communicate it?** Check out [pages 98-100](#) for inspiration.
- 16. Need more man (or woman) power to help with the business?** [Chapter 8](#) will help you build your dream team.
- 17. Want a piece of culture?** [Page 109](#) will get you thinking about your own company culture.
- 18. (Used to) love what you do but scared that burnout will soon be approaching?**
Go straight to [Chapter 9](#) – and take some deep breaths.

EIT Foreword

Dear Entrepreneurs,

Like never before, our food system needs bold innovators like you. Years of mismanagement have damaged the food industry and the food we eat. The statistics are all too familiar: more than fifty-percent of the planet is malnourished through over- or under-eating, we throw away a third of all the food we produce, and food production is one of the leading causes of environmental degradation and human rights abuses.

But, it really doesn't have to be this way. As businesses, large and small, are demonstrating, we can build a food system that is good for people and planet; a food system that generates social, environmental and financial profits. However, the current rate of change is simply not fast enough if we want to avoid some of the environmental and health disasters predicted.

I believe that startups hold the key to accelerating this process of positive change. It is the brave entrepreneurs and brilliant startups that will help us turn Europe's food system around in time and I'm excited to see the next generation of innovations transforming the food industry.

That's why at EIT Food, we are dedicated to building and shaping the innovators of tomorrow. By bringing together the latest and best technologies, the most advanced skills and training programmes and the most disruptive business models we can empower the food industry and society to innovate. Together, we will improve food.

This guide is filled with invaluable lessons on how to build an agrifood company that can transform the food system in a scalable and sustainable way. Best of all, it is written by other agrifood entrepreneurs so that you can learn directly from their challenges, successes and wisdom.

This guide is just one small part of what we offer startups at EIT Food. I encourage you to explore www.eitfood.eu to uncover all the opportunities available to you. From grant funding to business training, from industry partnerships to investments, we have a programme to support your startup's growth and success.

Wishing you the very best of luck on your entrepreneurial journey.

Warm wishes,



Dr. A. M. (Andy) Zynga
CEO, EIT Food

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. M. Zynga', written in a cursive style.

How EIT Food can help you

EIT Food offers agrifood startups of all stages different types of support and works across all EU member countries, as well as Switzerland, Turkey and Israel. If you want more information about these initiatives or to apply, please visit our website at www.eitfood.eu.

Early Stage

- **Online tools:** a guide to help new startups develop their business model
- **Legal and accounting support:** low-cost, free legal and accounting support to help new businesses get registered and establish accounting practices
- **Hackathons:** a network of events across Europe to help aspiring entrepreneurs find solutions to pressing challenges in the food system and meet others
- **Mentors and network:** a series of events and online platform to help entrepreneurs meet the people that are key to their development
- **Entrepreneurship training:** resources and training for startups to help them develop the skills they need to be successful



Mid-Stage

- **Innovation Grants:** more than €500,000 distributed to new startups every year to get new products/service to market
- **Co-working spaces in offices, farms and factories:** places to develop your business in the city or in the country
- **Demo Days:** a calendar of events where startups can present to and meet possible investors/industry partners
- **Seedbed Incubator:** An international incubation programme of 10 weeks that gives early-stage entrepreneurs the tools, resources and network to test their business idea with 100 potential customers



Advanced

- **Food Accelerator Network:** a 4-month programme to help the best startups to grow and disrupt our food system. The best startups can receive up to €100.000 in funding
- **Business services:** a portfolio of business services to help European agrifood startups to grow including access to a large network of agrifood investors
- **Rising Food Stars:** a network of the best agrifood startups in Europe that can participate in large-scale, EU-funded innovation projects with other EIT Food partners

