



ARLA FOOD FOR HEALTH

# Research Programme 2024 – *Application Guidelines*

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## **1. THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

These guidelines are intended to assist you in the application process when applying for a grant from Arla Food for Health (AFH). Please read these guidelines carefully before initiating the application process, as the guidelines contain the complete call text as well as information regarding the application process and content requirements.

### **About the partnership**

AFH is a public-private research partnership between University of Copenhagen, Aarhus University, Arla Foods a/s, and Arla Foods Ingredients. The vision is to *Discover health effects of dairy and dairy ingredients*. The goal is to strengthen dairy's position in healthy and sustainable diets.

The partnership is based on the conviction that collaboration through independent research activities, both nationally and internationally, is crucial to address global health challenges. The ambition is to foster world-class research that subsequently can be translated into new nutritional solutions with positive impact on human health. To achieve this, AFH supports high-quality research projects within the [research strategy](#). Read more about AFH at the [website](#).

### **Funding**

In 2024, **20 million DDK** is available for funding of research projects. The ambition is to fund 3-6 projects. However, it should be emphasized that there is no preferred budget size, and projects requiring a larger budget to become feasible are welcome. Similarly, projects of high relevance that requires a smaller budget are also welcome. The funds can be seed money that enable initiation of projects that aim for additional funding from other public or private foundations. Thus, the content of the applications can be described as an element in a larger and more ambitious research project. It is important to highlight if funding has been obtained from other parties or whether it is planned to apply for additional funding. Finally, we urge applicants to create synergy with already ongoing AFH projects if possible and when relevant. Previously funded projects can be seen at <https://arlafoodforhealth.com/funded-research/>.

### **Eligibility**

The main applicant must be affiliated to University of Copenhagen or Aarhus University, and we urge researchers from all career levels to apply. AFH strongly encourages co-applicants from other AFH partner institutions to promote collaboration in the partnership. Co-applicants or partners from international research institutions, as well as from non-AFH universities in Denmark, can also be involved in the projects. AFH also encourages collaboration across research groups situated at hospitals and universities.

## **2. AREAS OF SUPPORT**

Applications must be scoped to address a research question within [AFH's research strategy](#).

### **AFH's Research strategy**

AFH's vision is to "Discover health effects of dairy and dairy ingredients". The goal is to strengthen dairy's position in healthy and sustainable diets. To achieve this, a deeper understanding of the health effects of dairy products and ingredients is needed, both alone and in combination with other food constituents.

AFH emphasizes multidisciplinary research aimed to understand the physical and chemical *properties of foods*, as well as food processing, and their implication for delivery of nutrient and bioactive components. This is due to the fact that dairy products and ingredients function as both individual components and as

part of food matrices, which structure affect digestion and nutrient uptake kinetics. This include research aimed to understand *health effects* of dietary patterns. AFH seeks to address this topic by hypothesis driven projects that uncover health effects of dairy products and dairy ingredients, as well as the mechanisms behind. Also, *consumer science* elucidating how choice and convenience can drive healthy diets and help consumers to stay healthy is welcomed. It is not a requirement that all disciplines are present in every project, but please note that an overarching goal of AFH is to fund research projects that **bring Food Science and Health Science together** in an attempt to provide mechanistic understanding of the health effects of dairy products and dairy ingredients. This interdisciplinary approach is rarely seen within traditional scientific disciplines and requires collaboration across fields.

Regarding methodologies, the full range of traditional and advances food science approaches combined with *in vitro* over *in vivo* models to human research studies are welcome depending on the purpose. Studies aimed to provide mechanistic insights are highly requested. For human studies both interventional and observational studies are welcomed, but clinical studies should be based on a strong mechanistic hypothesis or combined with experiments aimed to provide mechanistic insights. When dairy products and ingredients are investigated as part of dietary patterns, the specific role of dairy is of particular interest. Projects based on cohorts are welcomed, as well as studies aimed at improving the usage of such cohorts by use of novel biomarkers of food intake or investigations in stratified subgroups. Finally, we welcome applications for pilot studies aimed to provide preliminary evidence to guide future studies within high risk high gain areas.

Within this framework, AFH strives to promote research within the following areas:

- **Metabolic health** with emphasis on cause-effect relations between dairy and health related outcomes. This includes metabolic responses in different consumer groups to enable targeted nutritional strategies that for example regulate infant growth, increase satiety, and prevent the development of obesity and non-communicable diseases.
- **Gastro-intestinal health** with emphasis on understanding the role of dairy in development and maintenance of a healthy gut function. This includes the role of the gut microbiota in regulation of host health, as well as food digestion and absorption of macro- and micronutrients, and how these factors affect health outcomes.
- **Healthy growth and development** with emphasis on understanding the effects of dairy on bone, muscle, and brain throughout life. This includes infant growth, optimized bone and muscle function, and prevention of muscle atrophy and osteoporosis. It also includes nutritional strategies to support the development of the brain and to prevent cognitive decline during ageing.
- **Nutrition research** with emphasis on understanding nutritional needs and deficiencies, as well as the nutritional quality of dairy foods and ingredients. This includes further refinement of nutrition indexes to include parameters such as health effects, as well as methods enabling comparison between food products.

AFH does not support:

- Testing of commercially available products or ingredients, unless they are used to address a research question of generic interest.
- Industrial product and process development.
- Major equipment investments.
- Individual research chairs and professorships.
- Non-dairy ingredient testing.

### **3. APPLICATION PROCESS AND IMPORTANT DATES**

#### **Submission of applications**

The applications must be submitted via email to Anne Louise Mørkbak at [anmor@arlafoods.com](mailto:anmor@arlafoods.com). If you are experiencing any technical problems or your query is not answered, please contact Anne Louise Mørkbak by email or mobile +45 41607119.

#### **Review process**

The applications will be reviewed by the independent external [Scientific Advisory Board](#) and ranked according to i) scientific quality and originality, ii) the applicant's qualifications and the research environment of the project, and iii) the ambition, methodology and feasibility of the project. Hereafter, the [Steering Committee](#) conducts an internal review of the projects scored above average by the Scientific Advisory Board to assess if the application: (i) has a strategic fit to AFH, (ii) has business relevance, and (iii) demonstrates a collaborative partnership. The Steering Committee takes the final decision on projects to be funded.

The director of AFH communicates the funding decision to the main applicants, including any requirement for amendments to the successful applicants. In case the selected, fully funded projects do not require all available funding, the AFH Steering Committee may ask other selected applicants to revise their applications to fit the remaining funding.

#### **Important dates**

- February 1<sup>st</sup> Call opens.
- February 21<sup>st</sup> AFH call info meeting Aarhus University  
Time: 10.00-12.30  
Venue: Steno Diabetes Center Aarhus, room A201-257
- February 29<sup>th</sup> AFH call info meeting University of Copenhagen  
Time: 14.30-16.00  
Venue: Bülowvej 17, Frederiksberg, Konsistoriums mødesal/Forum
- June 1<sup>st</sup> Application deadline.
- Ultimo September Funding decision communicated.

### **3. APPLICATION CONTENT**

#### **Language**

The application must be written in English.

#### **Text and illustration**

The application should not exceed five A4 pages, excluding figures and references.

#### **Content**

The application must include the following elements (in this order):

- 1) Project title - As concise as possible, including project acronym.
- 2) The project's main objective (max 3 lines).
- 3) Short project summary (max 15 lines).
- 4) Project duration - Expected start and end dates.
- 5) An estimate of the project's total budget and the amount AFH is applied for: attach a budget (budget template available on website). Considering that AFH funding is seen as seed money, please indicate



other funding opportunities from public or private foundations that will be, or already are, applied for to fully finance the project. It is not a prerequisite that funds are equally split between Aarhus University and University of Copenhagen.

6) Information on principal investigator and co-applicant(s):

- i) Details of the principal investigator and co-applicants (name, title, email, phone, address).
- ii) If the project has been discussed with Arla scientists, you are welcome to state their names. However, they are not regarded as co-applicants.

7) Bank details and accounting contact:

- i) Name of the bank and registration and account number.
- ii) Accounting contact (name, address, phone, e-mail).

8) Project description:

- i) The hypotheses of the project.
- ii) Project content, including description of the experimental design, work packages, methodology, research facilities, and milestones etc.

9) Foreseen project outcomes:

- i) Why is it relevant for the dairy industry?
- ii) Short description of the innovation aspects, innovation potential, scientific and commercial perspectives. What new knowledge will the proposed research provide?
- iii) What difference can the project make to people's health?

10) Assessment of the risk of project failure and mitigating procedures.

11) Contribution to education - short description of the project's educational elements.

12) Publication plan.

13) Communication plan. Short description of potential messages, target audiences, relevant platforms and channels to be used. Furthermore, where appropriate, describe communication and interaction with wider policy and health authorities to facilitate that new research findings are included in decision-making processes and practices. Up to 40,000 DDK can be allocated for communication in the budget. Please contact your local communication expert for help and guidance\*.

14) CV of main application and c-applicants should be enclosed (not included in the 5 pages). Please specify role in project and man months committed during the lifetime of the project:

- i. A 2-page CV of the main applicant (incl. project management experience)
- ii. A 1-page CV from co-applicant(s)
- iii. A maximum of 5 CVs should be provided

\* If AFH decides to fund the proposed project, the communication plan will be further developed. In this process the principal investigator should seek further guidance and support from the local communication experts of Aarhus University and University of Copenhagen:

Jesper Emborg  
DCA – Danish Centre for Food and Agriculture  
Aarhus University  
Email: [je@dca.au.dk](mailto:je@dca.au.dk)

Kristian Levring Madsen  
Department of Nutrition, Exercise and Sports  
University of Copenhagen  
Email: [kma@nexs.ku.dk](mailto:kma@nexs.ku.dk)



#### **4. FURTHER INFORMATION**

Interested applicants are welcome to consult AFH director Anne Louise Mørkbak regarding questions on application topics, test products, business relevance, or sparring partners on mail [anmor@arlafoods.com](mailto:anmor@arlafoods.com) or mobile +45 41607119. Already established contacts to Arla can also be used for this purpose.