



Call for NKJ networks with activities in 2021-2022

The Nordic Joint Committee for Agricultural and Food Research (NKJ) hereby announces a research network call. The aim of the call is to promote Nordic collaboration among researchers from agricultural and food sectors by networking activities including workshops, conferences and seminars. Deadline for application submission is September 15th, 2020 at 24:00 CET.

Overall scope of the call and features of funded networks

Participants in submitted networks should represent *at least* three countries consisting of *at least* three research institutions in the Nordic* region. Successful applicants may receive funds from NKJ of up to 300 000 SEK for activities in 2021-2022, covering at most 50% of the total budget for the network.

Network outputs should be useful for the Nordic community and should include knowledge exchange across national borders through e.g. arranging workshops, seminars, scientific meetings or open conferences. Networks could also produce peer-reviewed scientific papers, design policy recommendations based on research findings, write large-scale research funding applications, and create or maintain databases or websites.

Focus areas of the call

We *particularly* encourage networks that relate to aspects of plant health, soil health or Nordic food security and self-sufficiency in agriculture to apply for funding. However, we also encourage networks with focus on other aspects of Nordic agriculture and food research to apply.

Plant health

The United Nations has declared 2020 as "*The international year of plant health to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment and help boost economic development*". Climate change and human activities such as plant trade, reduced biodiversity and altered ecosystems are creating new environments where invasive organisms can thrive. Plant health is increasingly under threat, FAO estimates that up to 40% of food crops are lost due to plant pests and diseases annually. Read more [here](#).

NKJ wants to ensure that Nordic policies are based on sound research to take preventive and adaptive measures to keep plants healthy. We want research networks dealing with sustainable methods such as tools used in integrated pest management and phytosanitary measures. In the face of climate change, plant breeders need to improve traits of crops. Yields need to be maximized and of high quality while making sure that plants are resilient enough to endure extreme weather and resist diseases and pests. Growing techniques need to be adapted to lower the usage of chemicals, while providing economical incitement to farmers to make both our landscapes and fields more diverse. Insects need

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shelter in a complex surrounding to provide invaluable ecosystem services from pollinators and natural enemies. Monitoring techniques need to be readily available for farmers so they can make informed decisions and as a last resort use just the correct amount of pesticides at the right time. We need to collaborate and come up with new, sustainable solutions to reduce the dependency of agrochemicals, while increasing resilience. In this spirit, NKJ has decided to fund networks that can change the future.

Soil health

Soil is the base for life on land and forms a fundamental pillar for agriculture. Thriving healthy soils are a prerequisite for achieving sustainable agriculture. Soil health is defined as “the *capacity of soil to function as a vital living system, within ecosystem and land-use boundaries, to sustain plant and animal productivity, maintain or enhance water and air quality, and promote plant and animal health*” (Doran and Zeiss, 2000). In a future of climate change and extreme weather, healthy soils are needed to mitigate climate changes and for a resilient Nordic agriculture. Therefore, NKJ calls for networks that focus on maintaining and enhancing soil quality for future generations, this is crucial both as an agricultural resource and as a carbon sink. With this funding opportunity, we want to encourage researchers in the Nordic region to interlink and together work on finding solutions that can improve soils, counteracting decades of soil degradation and the subsequent loss of productive agricultural land.

Nordic food security and self-sufficiency in agriculture

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a focal point on that nations have a low level of self-sufficiency and at dire times limited food security. Therefore, it is important to understand how we in the Nordic countries can utilize current food production systems to increase output in current and future crops. There are similarities between opportunities and challenges in the Nordic countries, in terms of climate change, soils, production and policies, this makes it possible to find collaboration that are highly beneficial across the Nordic region. NKJ therefore calls for networks that can help safeguard and strengthen the Nordic agricultural and food sectors in terms of resilience and self-sufficiency. Today, large parts of Nordic agriculture and livestock industry are highly dependent on transportation and import of e.g. fuel, fertilizers, seed, labor, plant protection agents and fodder. This dependency makes Nordic agriculture and food security vulnerable. A crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic gives unprecedented chances to funnel the need for change to bring the future already tomorrow. A fossil fuel free agriculture that relies on regional production of inputs would reduce the import dependency and make production less sensitive to social disturbances. NKJ wants to fund networks working with agriculture, either on farms or focusing anywhere from the downstream refinement of agricultural products to upstream innovations and production flows needed to increase primary agricultural production in the Nordic region. The goal is to find novel tools and improve current production to increase resilience, sustainability, competitiveness and improve self-sufficiency of agriculture in the Nordic region. Examples on topics for networks to focus on are improved cooperation between farmers and producers, alternative protein sources, alternative fuels, alternative fertilizers, renewable energy on farms and innovative tools to be used both in integrated pest management and organic agriculture.

Please download the [application form](#) and submit your application to NKJ@slu.se and hansson.NKJ@slu.se by 24.00 CET, of September 15th, 2020, at the latest.



About NKJ

The Nordic Joint Committee for Agricultural and Food Research (NKJ) is a Nordic cooperation body under the Nordic Council of Ministers. The primary objective of NKJ is to contribute, promote and coordinate a knowledge-based agriculture and food sector in the Nordic countries. To meet this end, NKJ encourages and provides support to joint Nordic cooperation within agriculture and food research, including forestry and fishery.

Scope of the call

The aim of the call is to:

- Facilitate collaboration between researchers in the Nordic* countries by networking activities.
- Link national research projects in agriculture and food research** which otherwise would be carried out on a national level, but where considerable positive outcomes can be reached through a wider regional scope.
- Bridge gaps between research and practice.
- Encourage Nordic researchers and institutions to apply for funding from larger funds like e.g. Horizon 2020 or similar activities.

Call conditions

Activities and participation

- Network grants are for activities in 2021-2022.
- Aspects of the prioritized focus areas will be prioritized. However, the call is also open for networks with other focus within Nordic agriculture and food research.
- Researchers or communication officers at research institutions are eligible to apply.
- Stakeholders are encouraged to be involved but cannot be main applicants.
- Networks should include participants from *at least three* different countries consisting of *at least three* research institutions in the Nordic region.
- Each gender must be represented by a minimum of 40% of the participants in the network.
- PhD students and young researchers should be included in the network.
- Cooperation with other regions including the Northwest Atlantic region, the Baltic Sea region and other European countries is encouraged.
- The applications are expected to contribute to the strategic goals of the NKJ and to promote competitiveness and innovation in the Nordic countries. The NKJ strategy for 2019-2021 can be found [here](#).

* Nordic is defined as Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the autonomous areas of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands. ** Including animal health and welfare and reindeer husbandry.



Economic framework

- The amount applied for from NKJ can be maximum 300 000 SEK.
- The funding should primarily be spent on networking costs, e.g. costs for arranging scientific meetings, workshops and conferences including accommodation, travel and conference fees but could also cover costs for designing policy recommendations based on research findings, write large-scale research funding applications, creating or maintaining databases or websites (excluding hardware) and communication activities.
- Labour costs are *not eligible* for financing. This includes salary and overhead costs, and the costs of board meetings or other administrative meetings.
- Networks are expected to co-finance at least 50% of the total budget.
- Co-financing can either consist of cash or be in the form of in-kind such as working hours (salaries) or access to infrastructure or other resources.
- Cost-efficiency: Applicants are encouraged to ensure that the cost-per-person in the network application is reasonable. In addition to physical meetings applicants are encouraged to make use of other means of meeting, e.g. web-based meetings to reduce travel costs and CO₂ emissions.

Communication activities and reporting

- Network participants are expected to keep NKJ informed about their ongoing activities by inviting the NKJ secretariat to related events.
- Outputs of the network are expected to include publication of findings to NKJ for dissemination in various channels.
- Network participants are expected to report their activities, including expenditures, by the 1st of March 2023. The reporting template is available on the [NKJ website](#).

Proposal submission

- Applications must be submitted using the [application form](#) available on the [NKJ website](#), to NKJ@slu.se and hansson.NKJ@slu.se
- Points to include in the proposal:
 - Aims of the network and strategic area in focus.
 - Planned activities and outcomes.
 - How the network will be beneficial for the Nordic region.
 - Involved participants including research organisations and stakeholders, if applicable.
 - A plan for integrating PhD students and young researchers into the network.
 - A plan to address gender equity.
 - Budget.

Schedule

- Applications must be submitted no later than September 15th 2020 at 24:00 CET.
- Decisions will be made and communicated to applicants in December 2020.
- Project participants are expected to submit a final report no later than the 1st of March 2023. The reporting template is available for download on the [NKJ website](#).



Evaluation criteria

The applications are assessed by selected members of the NKJ board. The secretariat of NKJ compile the results of the evaluations and prepare a proposal. Based on the proposal a decision on the selection is made at the NKJ Board meeting. The evaluation criteria are described below.

Quality of the proposal

1. Grade the aims of the network and the accordance with (one or several of) the prioritized strategic areas of the call: a) plant health, b) soil health, or c) Nordic food security and self-sufficiency. *Note the call is open for proposals with other focus on Nordic agriculture and food research. However, the strategic areas (a-c) are prioritized.*
2. Are the planned activities reasonable and clearly described?

Relevance of the network

3. Grade the expected publishable outcomes.
4. Grade the other practical outputs.
5. Grade the overall connection between the aims and means.
6. Grade the intentions of the network for increasing synergies in the Nordic region.

Participation and inclusion

7. Does the activity involve researchers from at least three different Nordic countries?
8. Does the network reach the requirement of 40-60% gender balance?
9. Does the network have an adequate plan to address gender equity?
10. Does the network include PhD students?
11. Does the network have an adequate plan to include and integrate PhD students and young researchers?

Budget

12. Is co-financing at least 50% of the total budget?
13. Is the budget reasonable considering the planned activities, means and expected outcomes?

Contact

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