



AGRIFOOD

4Future

Deliverable 1.3

Independent quality review report (mid-term and at the end of the project)



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Abstract

This independent quality review report provides a comprehensive mid-term evaluation of the AgriFood4Future (AF4F) project, co-funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ programme. The report assesses the quality, relevance, and impact of project deliverables and processes using a structured framework. The evaluation methodology integrates both qualitative and quantitative criteria across two main axes: Quality and Impact, and Project Progress. Key findings highlight strong alignment with strategic objectives, particularly in planning and thematic relevance, while identifying areas for improvement in language consistency, interactivity, sustainability planning, and stakeholder engagement. The report concludes with actionable recommendations to enhance the coherence, usability, and long-term impact of the project’s outputs.

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1 List of abbreviation

AF4F	AGRIFOOD4FUTURE
DMP	Data Management Plan
VET	Vocational Education and Training (VET)

2 Introduction

This report presents the external quality assessment of the **AgriFood4Future (AF4F) - Centers of Vocational Excellence in Smart Farming and Sustainable Food Systems** project, an Erasmus+ project funded under the call ERASMUS-EDU-2022-PEX-COVE: Partnerships for Excellence – Centres of Vocational Excellence. The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate the quality and strategic alignment of project deliverables and processes, ensuring they meet the standards and expectations of the Erasmus+ programme and contribute meaningfully to the vocational education and training (VET) ecosystem.

The evaluation framework employed in this report is grounded in a dual-axis methodology that assesses both the intrinsic quality and impact of deliverables, as well as the robustness of overall general project management practices and progress. The assessment criteria include relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, innovation, planning, implementation, evaluation, review, and outcomes. Each deliverable was reviewed using a combination of structured scoring and qualitative analysis, supported by document reviews.

This report aims to provide an external evidence-based insight and recommendations that support continuous improvement, foster knowledge sharing, and enhance the long-term value and transferability of the AF4F project outputs.

3 Assessment framework

3.1 Methodology

The external evaluation of the AF4F project is grounded in a comprehensive, multi-phase methodology that combines structured assessment criteria with a participatory, evidence-based approach. This methodology was designed to ensure alignment with Erasmus+ quality standards and the specific objectives of the AF4F initiative. It emphasizes both the quality of project deliverables and the robustness of the processes that underpin them, ensuring that the evaluation contributes meaningfully to learning, accountability, and strategic improvement. Our methodology is designed to ensure a rigorous, transparent, and value-driven evaluation process aligned with the Agrifood4Future project’s objectives and EU best practices. **The evaluation will follow a structured four-phase approach.**

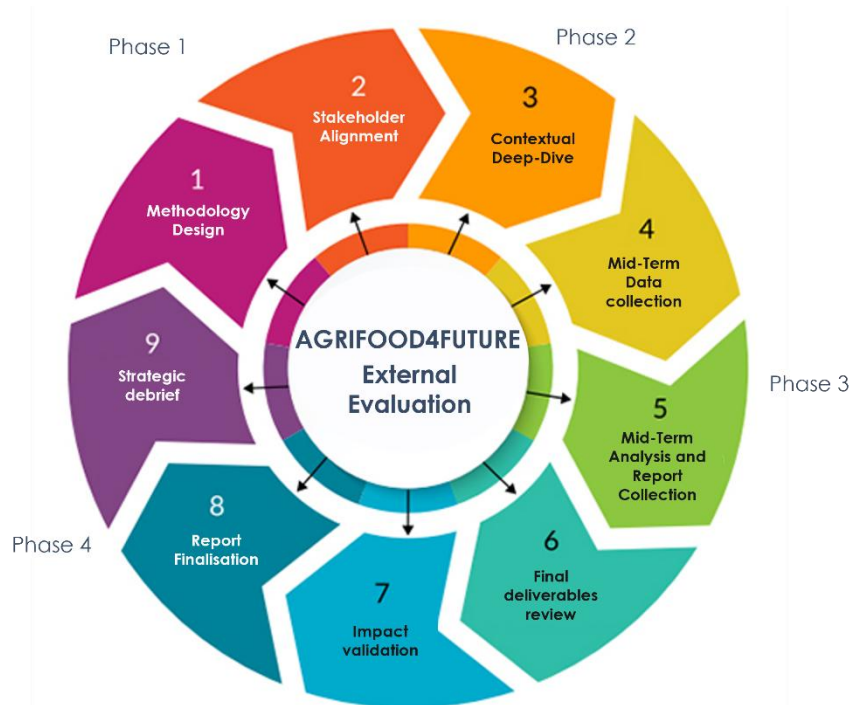


Figure 1: External Evaluation Methodology

Phase 1: Preparatory Phase

This initial phase establishes the foundation for a robust evaluation. The objective is to create a solid framework for data collection and impartial analysis. The evaluation team begins by defining clear rules, responsibilities, and administrative protocols. A mixed-method approach—blending qualitative and quantitative techniques—is designed to ensure a balanced and insightful analysis.

A detailed data collection strategy is developed, including a systematic review of project documentation such as deliverables, internal reports (e.g., risk management plans, 3P questionnaires), and strategic documents like the Description of Action and the Quality Assurance Plan.

External evaluation timelines are defined in collaboration with ISQ and the Coordination Team.

Phase 2: Pre-Evaluation Phase

The second phase deepens the evaluators' understanding of the project context and refines the tools required for effective data collection. This involves reviewing the Consortium's self-evaluation reports, deliverables, and dashboards, with a focus on how project activities align with the needs of the Agrifood sector and the broader Vocational Education and Training (VET) ecosystem.

Evaluation tools—including interview guides for the final review—will be developed and validated with ISQ to ensure they are relevant and compliant with EU standards.

Phase 3: Evaluation Phase

Mid-Term Review (M24)

At the midpoint of the project, the evaluation focuses on assessing progress, identifying gaps, and offering actionable recommendations. This includes eventual bilateral meetings with the Coordination Team, as well as observations of Project and/or Steering Committee sessions to evaluate collaboration dynamics. Results from the 3P questionnaires (administered at M12 and M24) are analysed and cross-validated with documentary evidence.

The key deliverable is the **Mid-Term Report**, which includes prioritized recommendations for risk mitigation and process improvements. A feedback session with the Consortium follows, providing a platform to discuss findings and co-develop improvement plans.

Final Review (M48)

The final review phase shifts focus to validating the project's impact, assessing the quality of deliverables, and planning for long-term sustainability. A comprehensive assessment is conducted to evaluate the implementation of mid-term recommendations and to measure the final deliverables against COVEs criteria and predefined quality metrics.

Interviews with vocational training beneficiaries help assess the project's impact on target groups. The outcome is a **Final Evaluation Report** that includes an in-depth impact analysis and key lessons learned. This is presented to the Steering Committee, along with strategic insights to support post-project sustainability.

Phase 4: Post-Evaluation & Reporting

The final phase ensures knowledge transfer and supports continuous improvement. Draft reports are submitted to ISQ for validation, with feedback incorporated to enhance accuracy and clarity. The final report structure is aligned with Erasmus+ templates and Agrifood4Future branding guidelines.

A retrospective workshop is hosted with the Consortium to reflect on the project's journey and identify areas for long-term improvement. The evaluation concludes with actionable guidance for future EU-funded initiatives in the Agrifood sector, ensuring that the knowledge gained continues to inform and inspire beyond the project's lifecycle.

To ensure the integrity, objectivity and reliability of the evaluation process, the following ethical principles will be strictly adhered to. The evaluation will be conducted in close coordination with the Project's Coordination Team and ISQ, which leads the work package responsible for quality assurance and evaluation.

- Stakeholder responsiveness and inclusion – the evaluation process will actively consider and engage relevant stakeholders and their communities, ensuring that diverse perspectives are acknowledged.
- Respect for human rights and dignity – the evaluation will be structured to be clear, unbiased and aligned with stakeholders needs, ensuring a fair and transparent assessment.
- Transparency and accountability – findings, limitations and conclusions will be fully disclosed, ensuring a comprehensive and honest presentation of results.
- Managing conflicts of Interest – any real or perceived conflicts of interest that could influence the evaluation will be openly identified and appropriately addressed.
- Reliability and validity of information – the data collected will be rigorously analysed to ensure its accuracy, relevance and meaningful interpretation in relation to the evaluation's objectives.
- Systematic information handling – a structured approach will be employed for collecting, reviewing, verifying and securely storing information throughout the evaluation process.
- Documented evaluation logic – the reasoning behind conclusions, interpretations and judgements will be explicitly documented to maintain transparency and credibility.
- Effective communication and reporting – the evaluation results will be communicated clearly and comprehensively, minimising the risk of misinterpretation, bias or distortion.

3.1.1 Preparatory phase: establishing the evaluation framework

The evaluation process began with a preparatory phase focused on laying the foundation for a rigorous and transparent assessment. This phase involved the co-development of the evaluation methodology in close collaboration with ISQ and the project's Coordination Team. Key activities included defining the scope of the evaluation, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and establishing protocols to ensure impartiality and consistency.

A **mixed-methods approach** was adopted, combining qualitative and quantitative tools to capture both measurable outcomes and contextual insights.

The data collection strategy was structured around a systematic document review of project deliverables, internal reports (e.g., risk management plans, 3P questionnaires), **and strategic documents** such as the Description of Action and the Quality Assurance Plan.

This phase also included the finalization of the evaluation timeline and deliverables, as well as the dissemination of a pre-evaluation schedule and evidence requirements to the consortium. These foundational steps ensured that the evaluation would be both methodologically sound and operationally feasible.

3.1.2 Pre-evaluation phase: contextual deep-dive tool finalisation

The second phase focused on deepening the evaluators' understanding of the project's operational context and refining the tools needed for data collection. This involved a thorough review of the consortium's self-assessment dashboards, interim deliverables, and internal monitoring outputs. The goal was to assess the alignment of project activities with the needs of the agri-food sector and the broader objectives of the VET ecosystem.

During this phase, FI Group access all relevant project documentation through ISQ which served as a middle agent providing all key information. FI Group participated in one project meeting as to understand the current project status. At the same time, the main evaluation tool was developed, tailored to the specificities of the AGRIFOOD4FUTURE project.

3.1.3 Evaluation phase

The evaluation methodology applied in this report is grounded in the structured assessment framework developed for Erasmus+ projects. It is designed to ensure a comprehensive, transparent, and evidence-based evaluation of project deliverables and project outcomes, focusing both on the quality of the outputs and the robustness of the processes behind them.

The methodology is organized around two main axes: **Quality and Impact Criteria** and **Project Progress Criteria**. Each axis comprises a set of evaluation dimensions, each with clearly defined descriptors and scoring scales ranging from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). These scores are weighted to reflect their relative importance in the overall assessment.

3.1.3.1 Quality and impact criteria

The first axis - **Quality and Impact Criteria** - evaluates the content and strategic value of each deliverable.

Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Sustainability	Innovation and Transferability
This criterion assesses how well the deliverable aligns with the project's objectives, the needs of the target audience, and the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme.	This measures the extent to which the deliverable achieves its intended outcomes—whether educational, developmental, or organizational.	Efficiency looks at how well the project used its resources (time, budget, personnel) to produce the deliverable.	This criterion evaluates the long-term viability of the deliverable beyond the project's lifetime.	This assesses how novel the deliverable is and whether it can be adapted or replicated in other contexts.
Does the deliverable address a clearly identified need?	Are the learning or developmental goals clearly defined and met?	Was the deliverable completed on time and within budget?	Can the deliverable be maintained, updated, or reused?	Does it introduce new methods, tools, or ideas?
Is it appropriate for the intended users (e.g., students, educators, institutions)?	Is there evidence of impact (e.g., improved skills, knowledge, practices)?	Were the processes streamlined and well-managed?	Are there plans for institutional adoption or integration?	Can it be used by other institutions, countries, or sectors?
Does it reflect the thematic focus of the project (e.g., inclusion, digital transformation, sustainability)?	Are the materials or tools user-friendly and pedagogically sound?	Was there unnecessary complexity or duplication?	Is it accessible (e.g., open-source, multilingual, adaptable)?	Does it contribute to European added value?

Figure 2 – Quality and Impact Criteria

It includes five dimensions: *Relevance*, *Effectiveness*, *Efficiency*, *Sustainability*, and *Innovation and Transferability*.

- **Relevance** assesses how well the deliverable aligns with the project's objectives, the needs of the target audience, and the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme.
- **Effectiveness** measures the extent to which the deliverable achieves its intended outcomes, whether educational, developmental, or organizational.
- **Efficiency** considers the use of resources—time, budget, and personnel—in producing the deliverable.
- **Sustainability** evaluates the long-term viability of the deliverable beyond the project's lifetime, and
- **Innovation and Transferability** assess the novelty of the deliverable and its potential for adaptation or replication in other contexts.

Notably, the last two criteria—**Sustainability and Innovation**—are given the highest weight (35% each), emphasizing the importance of long-term impact and broader applicability.

core	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Sustainability	Innovation and Transferability
1	The deliverable does not address any identified need or goal.	The deliverable was not completed on time or within budget and lacks reusability.	The deliverable is not user-friendly and development was poorly managed.	No evidence of impact or plans for future use.	No new ideas or methods; not adaptable elsewhere.
2	The need is vaguely defined; goals are unclear or only partially met.	Delivered late or over budget; limited potential for reuse or maintenance.	Some user needs considered, but usability and process management are weak.	Minimal impact observed; vague or informal plans for continuation.	Slightly novel but limited in scope or transferability.
3	The need is identified and goals are mostly met.	Delivered on time and within budget; can be reused with some effort.	Generally appropriate for users; processes were adequately managed.	Some impact documented; basic plans for future use exist.	Introduces some new elements; could be adapted with effort.
4	The need is well-defined; goals are clearly met with supporting evidence.	Delivered efficiently; reusable and maintainable with minimal updates.	Well-designed for users; development was efficient and well-coordinated.	Clear evidence of impact; structured plans for sustainability.	Innovative and adaptable to other contexts with minor adjustments.
5	The need is critical and well-documented; goals are fully met and impactful.	Delivered flawlessly; highly reusable, maintainable, and adaptable.	Highly intuitive and user-centered; development was streamlined and exemplary.	Strong, measurable impact; robust and funded plans for long-term adoption.	Highly innovative; easily transferable across institutions or countries.
Weight (%)	10	10	10	35	35

Figure 3 – Quality and Impact Criteria – Score System

3.1.3.2 Project progress criteria

The second axis, **Project Progress Criteria**, focuses on the processes that underpin the development of the deliverables.

Planning (20%)

<i>Are the project objectives SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)?</i>	<i>Is there a documented needs analysis based on data or stakeholder input?</i>	<i>Are stakeholders (e.g., learners, employers, educators) involved in the planning process?</i>	<i>Are milestones clearly defined and realistic?</i>	<i>Is the project timeline coherent and feasible?</i>	Means of verification	Comments & suggestions
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Implementation (25%)

<i>Are partner roles and responsibilities clearly defined and documented?</i>	<i>Are resources (time, budget, personnel) allocated efficiently?</i>	<i>Are inclusive practices in place to support vulnerable groups?</i>	<i>Is there evidence of effective cooperation among partners?</i>	<i>Are coordination meetings held regularly and documented?</i>	<i>Are milestones being achieved according to plan?</i>	Means of verification	Comments & suggestions
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Evaluation (15%)

<i>Are internal and external evaluations conducted regularly?</i>	<i>Is participant feedback systematically collected and used?</i>	<i>Are KPIs tracked and reported?</i>	<i>Are evaluation tools aligned with Erasmus+ and EQAVET standards?</i>	Means of verification	Comments & suggestions
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Review (10%)

<i>Are results reviewed and used for improvement?</i>	<i>Is there a sustainability plan for outputs?</i>	<i>Are lessons learned shared with stakeholders?</i>	<i>Are risk mitigation actions implemented and updated?</i>	Means of verification	Comments & suggestions
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Outcomes (30%)						
Are outcomes aligned with the original objectives?	Is there measurable impact on the target group?	Are the results innovative and transferable?	Are deliverables accessible (e.g., open-source, multilingual)?	Do the results contribute to European added value?	Means of verification	Comments & suggestions

Table 1: Project Progress Criteria

These criteria include five dimensions: *Planning*, *Implementation*, *Evaluation*, *Review*, and *Outcomes*:

- Planning examines whether the project objectives are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound), and whether a needs analysis and stakeholder involvement were conducted.
- Implementation assesses the clarity of roles, efficiency in resource use, and the presence of inclusive practices.
- Evaluation looks at the regularity and usefulness of internal and external assessments.
- Review considers how results are used for improvement and whether sustainability strategies are in place.
- Finally, Outcomes evaluates the alignment of results with original objectives and the extent of measurable impact and innovation.

Each of these dimensions is also weighted, with Outcomes (30%) and Implementation (25%) carrying the most significance.

In addition to these two axes, the methodology includes a checklist for **formal and visual compliance**, ensuring that deliverables adhere to project branding, formatting standards, and language quality. This includes checks for the use of templates, logos, readability, spelling and grammar, scientific accuracy, and overall usability for the target audience.

Each deliverable is assessed using this framework, with reviewers providing both quantitative scores and qualitative comments. The combination of structured scoring and narrative feedback ensures that the evaluation is both rigorous and constructive, supporting continuous improvement and alignment with Erasmus+ quality assurance principles.

4 Assessment of deliverables

The deliverables produced during the first half of the AF4F project demonstrate a commendable level of quality and alignment with the project’s strategic objectives and the Erasmus+ and EQAVET frameworks. The external evaluation, based on both structured scoring and qualitative analysis, reveals a **generally positive performance across the portfolio of outputs**.

From a formal and visual standpoint, the great majority of deliverables adhered to the project’s branding and formatting standards. Templates were correctly applied, logos were consistently used, and the visual presentation was coherent and accessible. This consistency contributed to the overall readability and professionalism of the documents.

In terms of content, the deliverables were largely relevant and well-aligned with the project’s goals. They addressed key themes such as digital transformation, sustainability, and vocational excellence in the agri-food sector. The use of established pedagogical and technical frameworks—such as the FAIR principles, EQF levels, ADDIE model, and Bloom’s taxonomy—further reinforced the credibility and strategic coherence of the outputs.

The technical and scientific accuracy of the deliverables was also rated highly. Most documents were well-researched, methodologically sound, and supported by appropriate evidence. This was particularly evident in deliverables such as the **State of the Art Report (D2.2)**, the **Acceleration Program (D3.2)**, and the **E-learning tools (D4.6)**, which showcased a strong understanding of sectoral needs and policy alignment.

However, several areas for improvement were identified. Language quality emerged as a recurring issue, with multiple deliverables marked as only “somehow” adequate in terms of grammar, clarity, and conciseness. Overly lengthy sections and dense technical language occasionally hindered accessibility, particularly for non-specialist audiences. Professional proofreading and the application of plain language principles are recommended to enhance clarity and inclusivity.

Innovation and transferability, while present in some deliverables, were generally assessed as moderate. Many outputs were seen as synthesizing existing knowledge rather than introducing novel approaches or tools. To increase impact, future deliverables should aim to incorporate more original content, pilot case studies, and co-creation with stakeholders.

Sustainability planning was another area requiring attention. Although some deliverables referenced long-term use or updates, few included concrete strategies for institutional integration, version control, or post-project ownership. Embedding sustainability roadmaps and update mechanisms into all major outputs will be essential to ensure their continued relevance and utility.

Finally, the interactivity and user engagement of several deliverables were limited. Many documents were described as static or overly text-heavy, with missed opportunities to leverage

digital formats. Enhancing interactivity—through toolkits, dashboards, multimedia content, or user-centred design—would significantly improve usability and reach.

4.1.1 D1.1 Data Management Plan

The DMP is a well-structured and technically sound document that demonstrates strong compliance with formal and visual standards. It effectively outlines the application of FAIR principles and provides a clear framework for data governance within the project. However, while the document is comprehensive, its language is occasionally verbose, and the sustainability strategy lacks specificity. The innovation dimension is moderate, relying on established practices rather than introducing novel mechanisms. To enhance its impact, the DMP would benefit from clearer phrasing, visual aids, and a more robust long-term preservation plan.

4.1.2 D1.2 Quality Assurance Plan

This deliverable presents a solid and strategically aligned quality framework. It incorporates established methodologies such as the 3P model, KPIs, and risk analysis, and is well-organized and visually compliant. The plan supports internal monitoring effectively, though some sections are overly text heavy. While the innovation is sufficient for an internal document, the plan could be strengthened by improving language clarity, integrating visual summaries.

4.1.3 D1.5 Progress Report

The Progress Report is a comprehensive and transparent account of the project's first-year activities. It documents achievements, challenges, and mitigation strategies across all work packages. The report is timely, well-structured, and aligned with strategic goals. It introduces innovative elements such as working groups and open innovation programs, though the transferability of these approaches is still evolving. Minor improvements in conciseness and stakeholder engagement would further enhance its utility.

4.1.4 D2.1 Report on the jobs and training needs analysis

This report provides a robust foundation for developing future-oriented training programs in the agri-food sector. It is methodologically sound, combining desk research, stakeholder interviews, and surveys. The inclusion of country-specific data enhances contextual relevance. However, the report would benefit from a clearer mapping between identified skills and job roles, as well as more concise presentation and visual synthesis. Also, stakeholder interviews evidence and explanation are missed as well as statistical analysis. The sustainability and innovation dimensions are moderate, with room for improvement in institutional integration and practical application.

4.1.5 D2.2 Finding report on the state-of-art and knowledge

Deliverable D2.2 offers a rich and policy-aligned overview of smart farming and sustainable food systems across six EU countries. It bridges EU priorities with national realities and showcases innovative practices. While the document is comprehensive and technically accurate, it is dense in parts and could be improved through more concise writing and clearer methodological transparency. The innovation is incremental, and the sustainability strategy would benefit from more concrete follow-up mechanisms.

4.1.6 D2.3 Handbook with best practices in the VET ecosystems

The Handbook is a strategically coherent and visually consistent deliverable that supports the project's objectives in vocational education and training. It synthesizes expert input and presents a structured analysis of the VET ecosystem. However, the document lacks actionable tools and concrete examples, limiting its practical utility. Language clarity and interactivity could be improved, and the inclusion of case studies, visual summaries, and a digital version would enhance its accessibility and impact, although the digital snapshot available in [LinkedIn](#) was a positive remark for the Handbook outreach.

4.1.7 D3.2 Acceleration program (launch and results)

This deliverable outlines a well-structured and ambitious program to support early-stage startups in the agrifood sector. It includes detailed annexes and a logical phased structure. The integration of mentoring and international exposure is a notable strength. Although KPIs for the Acceleration Program are clearly defined within Task 1.3, it would be positive to highlight them within the present deliverable. The absence of a sustainability plan limits its strategic robustness. Recommendations include incorporating feedback from the first edition, addressing formatting inconsistencies, and offering a web-accessible version.

4.1.8 D3.3 Open innovation test farm program (launch and results)

D3.3 is a well-organized and informative document that outlines the operational framework for the AF4F test farm initiative. It adheres to visual standards and includes detailed annexes. The program is innovative in its collaborative approach and real-world testing methodology. However, minor grammatical issues and a lack of visual aids reduce its clarity. Enhancements such as flowcharts, partner readiness summaries, and clickable links would improve usability and impact.

4.1.9 D3.4 Challenge-based open innovation program for startups, agro-food SMEs and corporations (launch and results)

This deliverable presents a comprehensive overview of the challenge-based open innovation program. It is technically accurate and includes useful annexes. However, the document suffers from typographical and formatting errors, which affect readability. The innovation structure is sound, but the lack of a concise executive summary and inconsistent visual elements detract from its effectiveness. A thorough proofreading and standardization of formatting are recommended.

4.1.10 D4.1 VET programmes For EQF 3-5

D4.1 is a well-structured and relevant curriculum aligned with EU frameworks. It addresses skills gaps through a modular, blended learning approach. The content is technically sound and useful for VET stakeholders. Minor language issues and limited visual engagement were noted. Recommendations include professional proofreading, the addition of infographics, and the integration of interactive features to enhance innovation and long-term usability.

4.1.11 D4.2 VET programmes for EQF 6-9

Deliverable D4.2 presents a high-quality and strategically aligned curriculum framework that effectively addresses the project's objectives, particularly through its alignment with EQF levels 6–8. The structure is modular and supports cross-border mobility and institutional integration. The use of pedagogical models such as ADDIE and Bloom's taxonomy enhances its educational rigor. While the document is well-organized and leverages institutional strengths, it would benefit from a more detailed sustainability plan and a clearer innovation strategy. Nonetheless, the systemic and structural innovations embedded in its design make it highly transferable and adaptable across contexts.

4.1.12 D4.3 Training program for “advisors for farmers”

This deliverable is a well-structured and highly relevant training program tailored to agricultural advisors. It aligns closely with project goals and addresses identified skills gaps through a modular, multilingual curriculum. The content is technically sound and pedagogically coherent, supported by clear learning outcomes and assessment tools. While the structure is strong, the document is slightly text-heavy and would benefit from professional proofreading and the inclusion of visual elements such as infographics or flowcharts. Additionally, enriching the content with interactive features and real-world case studies, along with a more detailed sustainability strategy, would enhance its long-term value and usability.

4.1.13 D4.5 Train the trainers' toolkit

This deliverable addresses a well-defined need for entrepreneurship education in VET and aligns with both EU and project priorities. It is technically sound and leverages existing EU-funded resources, particularly EntreComp and TES. However, the toolkit currently functions more as a static repository than a dynamic, user-centred training tool. While it is comprehensive and well-organized, its effectiveness is limited by the lack of implementation guidance and interactivity. The innovation lies primarily in aggregation rather than in the creation of new content. To enhance its impact, the toolkit should evolve into a more practical and sustainable resource, incorporating interactive content, clearer pedagogical pathways, and a long-term update strategy.

4.1.14 D4.6 E-learning tools

Deliverable D4.6 effectively supports the project's goals of digital transformation and skill development. It presents the LMS and MOOC platforms clearly, aligning with WP2-identified skill gaps. The use of Moodle, H5P, mobile access, and multilingual support enhances usability and adaptability. While the document is well-organized and resource-efficient, minor language issues and dense sections slightly hinder readability. A dedicated section on sustainability and a clearer emphasis on innovative features would further strengthen its impact. Overall, the deliverable is practical, relevant, and well-positioned for long-term use.

4.1.15 D4.7 Training handbook and guidelines for trainers, including mobility opportunities

The Training Handbook addresses a clear need for trainer support and mobility promotion in VET. It is well-organized and aligns with project goals, but its impact is constrained by limited innovation and interactivity. The content is largely derivative and lacks practical tools for implementation. There is no clear plan for updates or institutional integration. To improve its effectiveness, the handbook should include visual aids (e.g., diagrams, flowcharts), simplify language, and add practical tools such as templates and checklists. A digital version with accessibility features and multilingual support would broaden its reach. Incorporating original, AF4F-specific content and a sustainability plan would ensure long-term relevance.

4.1.16 D6.1 Project website, including communication and dissemination plan

The D&C Plan is well-structured and visually coherent, with a strong emphasis on internal communication and partner engagement. It provides essential elements for an effective communication strategy, though it falls short in detailing external communication actions, target group integration, and KPI justification. The document partially complies with EU communication guidelines; improvements in visual hierarchy and placement of EU emblems are recommended. While the plan lays a solid foundation, it requires further development to

enhance its innovation and external relevance. Including more detailed strategies for outreach and impact measurement would significantly improve its effectiveness.

4.1.17 D6.2 Social Media Pages

The deliverable is clear, informative, and provides useful guidance on the project's social media strategy. However, it lacks a dedicated section justifying the use of YouTube and could have included more detailed relationship with target groups. While the document includes relevant content and evidence, the idea of creating multiple social media channels for the same project is discouraged and should not be an option, as it may lead to fragmented communication and user confusion. Instead, a unified approach involving partners in content creation is recommended. The strategy is generally well-developed and sustainable, with a good selection of platforms based on efficiency, available resources, and return on investment - making it a transferable good practice as well as including a EECF profile -European Cluster Collaboration Platform. Nonetheless, areas such as content strategy and deeper integration of target groups across channels could be improved. The current online presence appears more cohesive and developed than what is reflected in the deliverable. The analytics provided, demonstrate also that the strategy is being efficient with more than 1000 followers on Social Media, more than 100 000 impressions and a considerable number of sessions / visits on the website (about 8000 sessions).

4.1.18 D6.3 Newsletters

Newsletter #0

The content (graphic and copy/text) of this initial newsletter would benefit from greater engagement as well as context (date, title and / or newsletter number, for example), and while the visual identity is accomplished, it could be improved (see comments in Deliverable D6.1). Even though, the newsletter effectively supported the project's communication and dissemination goals, even though this was not explicitly stated in D6.1. It introduced the project clearly, reached 91 initial subscribers, and involved all partners in its distribution. Subscriber growth to 142 in the second issue and a consistent 55% open rate reflect strong engagement and outreach.

While the content could be improved for greater appeal and better alignment with EU branding guidelines, the strategy was efficient and collaborative. It also shows strong potential for sustainability, thanks to partner involvement and steady engagement. The approach demonstrates innovation through its partner-driven model and is transferable to other projects due to its simplicity, scalability, and use of accessible tools.

Newsletter #1

Newsletter #1 showed improved appeal and engagement, with integrated links and multilingual options enhancing user experience. Subscriber growth (from 142 to 158 in the next newsletter) and a consistent 55% open rate confirm its continued effectiveness and efficiency. Partner involvement remains strong, supporting sustainability. The inclusion of user feedback mechanisms and a collaborative dissemination model highlights the newsletter's innovation and transferability within EU project communication practices.

Newsletter #2

This second Newsletter has some improvements considering the previous ones: several language options, a context on the top (date, number of the newsletter), although with less images and a bit long to the reader.

Newsletter #2 shows continued effectiveness in communicating the project, with improved contextual elements (date and issue number), and multilingual options. Despite being slightly text-heavy and having fewer visuals, it remains engaging and relevant. Subscriber growth from 158 to 233 and a solid 39% open rate confirms sustained interest and outreach success. The content aligns well with the target audience, and partner involvement continues to support its efficiency and sustainability. The inclusion of language options and user feedback mechanisms further highlight its inclusiveness, innovation, and transferability.

Newsletter #3

This newsletter has the same characteristics as the previous one and adds consistency to the communication of the project by using the same type of content, structure and style / visual identity.

Subscriber numbers grew steadily (from 91 to 233), and open rates remained strong (55% to 39%), indicating sustained interest of new users and retaining the existing ones. The strategy has proven efficient, inclusive, and innovative, with strong partner involvement supporting its sustainability and transferability across similar EU projects.

5 Project progress insights

The evaluation of project progress criteria was conducted across five core dimensions: Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, Review, and Outcomes. These dimensions reflect the foundational processes that support the development and delivery of project outputs. Each was assessed using a combination of structured scoring and qualitative analysis.

5.1 Planning

The project demonstrates a solid foundation in planning. Objectives are clearly defined and SMART, with strong alignment to EU priorities. A comprehensive needs analysis was conducted, and stakeholder input was integrated, particularly through WP2. However, while milestones are defined, their realism is challenged by overlapping tasks and limited resources. Stakeholder involvement in planning was present but varied in depth across partners and countries.

Score: 3 / 5 (Weighted: 0.60)

5.2 Implementation

Implementation processes are well-structured, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Coordination meetings are held regularly and documented, and cooperation among partners is generally effective. However, resource allocation—especially budget—has been a recurring concern, with some partners feeling underfunded relative to their responsibilities. Inclusive practices for vulnerable groups are not clearly evidenced, and milestone achievement has been uneven. **Score: 4.0 / 5 (Weighted: 1)**

5.3 Evaluation

Evaluation is a strong point of the project. Internal and external evaluations are conducted regularly using the 3P model, and KPIs are tracked and reported. Feedback from partners is systematically collected and used to inform improvements. Evaluation tools are aligned with Erasmus+ and EQAVET standards. However, some KPIs are overly ambitious or not fully aligned with available resources, and not all partners consistently participate in evaluations.

Score: 4.0 / 5 (Weighted: 0.60)

5.4 Review

The project has mechanisms in place for reviewing results and applying lessons learned. Risk analysis is updated annually, and mitigation strategies are documented. Risks can be at anytime communicated to the coordinator or quality task leader. Additionally, a 3-monthly meeting (monitoring board) is planned, where the risks are discussed and monitored and mitigation measures defined. However, sustainability planning is still under development, and structured knowledge sharing with stakeholders is not yet systematic. Improvements in these areas would

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enhance the project's long-term impact.
Score: 3.0 / 5 (Weighted: 0.30)

5.5 Outcomes

Outcomes are largely aligned with the original objectives, and deliverables are accessible, multilingual, and relevant. There is evidence of innovation and European added value. However, measurable impact on target groups and transferability across contexts are still developing. Sustainability and stakeholder engagement remain areas for improvement, particularly in ensuring long-term use and institutional integration of outputs.
Score: 3.5 / 5 (Weighted: 1.05)

Overall, this reflects a good level of performance, with particular strengths in evaluation and planning. Continued attention to implementation efficiency, sustainability planning, and stakeholder engagement will be essential to ensure long-term impact and alignment with Erasmus+ quality standards.

5.6 Main conclusions

Overall, the AGRIFOOD4FUTURE (AF4F) project demonstrates a solid strategic foundation, with several deliverables reflecting strong alignment with European Union priorities in sustainable agriculture, vocational education and training (VET), and innovation ecosystems. Based on the external assessment of key outputs, the project shows clear strengths in planning and thematic relevance, though there are notable areas requiring improvement to ensure the long-term quality, usability, and impact of its results.

From a planning perspective, the project has successfully identified and addressed relevant sectoral needs. Deliverables such as the State of the Art Report (D2.2) and the Acceleration Program (D3.2) are well-structured and clearly aligned with the project's objectives. These documents reflect a thoughtful understanding of the policy landscape and the challenges facing the agrifood sector. However, not all deliverables exhibit the same level of operational clarity. For instance, the Training Handbook (D4.7) lacks a clearly defined implementation pathway, which suggests that while strategic goals are well-articulated, the translation into actionable steps is inconsistent across work packages. To address this, the project would benefit from adopting a standardized implementation template that includes objectives, methodology, target groups, and expected outcomes. Visual tools such as logic models could also help clarify how activities are expected to lead to impact.

In terms of implementation, the project has made progress in designing structured and thematically relevant programs, particularly in the areas of innovation and entrepreneurship. The Test Farm Program (D3.3) and Open Innovation Program (D3.4) are good examples of this.

However, their effectiveness is somewhat undermined by delays in partner readiness. Although there is adequate performance indicators defined, their progress should be made more visible in moments such as the Consortium Meetings, the Quality Reports. Presenting the KPI updated dashboard for each work package, along the risks more regularly, would help ensure that resources are used efficiently and that implementation challenges are addressed proactively.

The review and sustainability dimension also requires attention. While some deliverables, such as the D&C Plan (D6.1), acknowledge the need for updates, few include structured review mechanisms or sustainability strategies. As a result, the long-term viability of many outputs remains uncertain. Establishing a “living document” policy for key deliverables, supported by version control and regular updates, would help maintain relevance. Additionally, sustainability roadmaps detailing institutional integration, funding strategies, and ownership responsibilities should be developed to ensure that project results endure beyond the funding period.

Finally, while the project is producing outputs with high thematic relevance and potential for replication, the overall impact is limited by a lack of interactivity, accessibility, and measurable outcomes. Innovation is often present in concept but not fully realized in execution. To enhance the usability and reach of its deliverables, the project should consider redesigning key outputs as interactive digital resources, incorporating accessibility features such as multilingual support and screen-reader compatibility. Including real-world case studies and impact stories would also help demonstrate the value of the project to its target audiences.

6 Insights on project progress based on the mid-term assessment

The mid-term external evaluation of the AgriFood4Future project reveals a generally positive trajectory, with strong alignment to Erasmus+ objectives and a solid foundation in planning and evaluation. However, several critical insights have emerged that highlight areas for improvement and strategic refinement.

6.1 Quality and consistency of the deliverables

While the majority of deliverables demonstrate technical soundness and strategic alignment, several recurring issues were identified:

- **Typographical and Language Issues:** Multiple deliverables contain typographical errors and instances of non-English text, which detract from their professionalism and accessibility. This suggests the need for systematic proofreading and consistent use of English as the project's working language.
- **Inconsistent Naming Conventions:** The nomenclature of deliverables is not uniform, making it difficult to track and cross-reference documents. This inconsistency complicates internal coordination and external communication. A standardized naming protocol, aligned with the Data Management Plan (DMP), should be enforced across all outputs.
- **Static and Text-Heavy Formats:** Several deliverables, particularly handbooks and toolkits, were expected to be more dynamic and interactive. Instead, they often present dense, text-heavy content with limited visual or practical engagement. Given their intended use in hands-on contexts, these documents would benefit from enhanced interactivity, such as embedded visuals, templates, flowcharts, and digital formats.

6.2 Communication and Dissemination strategy

The project's communication efforts show promise but require further integration and strategic refinement:

- **Visibility and Accessibility of Resources:** Public deliverables and promotional materials should be more prominently featured on the project website. The current layout does not sufficiently highlight key resources or calls to action, such as newsletter subscriptions.

6.3 Project management and strategic alignment

The evaluation of project management criteria indicates a solid foundation in planning and evaluation, The evaluation of project management criteria indicates a solid foundation in planning and evaluation, but also reveals areas requiring further attention:

- **Sustainability Planning:** While some deliverables reference long-term use, few include concrete strategies for institutional integration, version control, or post-project ownership.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Although stakeholder input was integrated during planning, its depth and consistency vary across partners and countries.
- **Innovation and Transferability:** Many outputs synthesize existing knowledge rather than introducing novel approaches. Greater emphasis on co-creation, pilot testing, and original content would enhance the project's innovation profile.

7 Joint recommendations and follow-up plans

As part of the external quality review of the AF4F project, the following joint recommendations are presented based on the mid-term assessment findings. These recommendations aim to enhance the overall quality, coherence, and long-term impact of the project, while ensuring alignment with Erasmus+ standards and expectations. Each recommendation is accompanied by concrete follow-up actions to support implementation and continuous improvement.

Rationale	Recommendations	Suggested Actions
Strengthen Quality Assurance and Language Consistency		
Deliverables contain typographical errors, inconsistent language, and non-standard naming, affecting traceability and coordination.	Centralize proofreading and language review for all public documents.	Assign a language quality reviewer in each work package.
	Standardize naming and coding of deliverables per the DMP.	Make clearer to all partners the naming protocol available in the DMP.
Enhance Interactivity, Usability and Impact of Key Outputs		
Handbooks and toolkits are overly text-heavy and lack interactivity, limiting usability in vocational contexts.	Redesign selected outputs with interactive elements (e.g., templates, infographics, clickable links).	Prioritize redesign of key deliverables (e.g., D2.3, D4.5, D4.7) or take in consideration for future deliverables.
	Apply user-centred design principles to future materials.	Allocate resources for multimedia and design support.
The internship tool is useful but outdated, with most listings over 4–5 months old.	Establish a regular update schedule for internship listings. Encourage partners to contribute new opportunities monthly.	Automate reminders for partners to update listings.
Address E-Learning Accessibility for Farmers.	Complement online modules with short face-to-face sessions. Use blended learning approaches tailored to rural contexts.	Pilot in-person workshops in selected regions. Collect feedback to refine delivery formats.
Progress on Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) has been uneven.	Reassess CoVE-related objectives and timelines.	Develop a CoVE action plan with milestones. Further consultations with the EC and COVEs managing bodies to support in such alignment with concrete suggestions.

		Monitor CoVE progress in upcoming consortium meetings.
Improve Communication Integration and Visibility		
Some finalized deliverables (e.g., WP3, WP4, WP6) are not yet uploaded to the website, limiting visibility.	Upload all finalized deliverables promptly. For non-document outputs, provide direct links with clear naming.	Regularly update the deliverable upload checklist and timeline.
Deepen Stakeholder Engagement at Current Stage Stakeholder involvement is critical at this phase of the project.	Intensify outreach to VET providers, employers, and learners. Use participatory methods in tool validation and dissemination.	FI Group can provide specific suggestions more tailored to the project reality during a face-to-face meeting.
Establish Comprehensive Analytics and Monitoring		
Lack of systematic analytics limits evaluation of communication effectiveness.	Implement analytics tracking across all digital platforms. Use data to guide strategic decisions and stakeholder engagement.	Set up dashboards (e.g., Google Analytics, platform insights). Include analytics in progress and final evaluation reports.
Consider the possibility of officially reviewing the KPI (consult the PO).	Adjust KPIs if needed to reflect realistic targets.	Review KPI definitions and targets with all WP leaders
KPI clearer tracking and visibility.	Integrate KPI tracking into quality reports.	Include updated KPI dashboards in each progress report.
Reinforce Sustainability and Institutional Integration		
Few deliverables include concrete sustainability or institutional integration strategies. We are aware WP5 has still no deliverables, but it could be good to start showcasing concrete actions in terms of sustainability and results uptake.	Embed sustainability planning and update mechanisms in major outputs. Encourage institutional adoption of training materials and tools.	Develop sustainability roadmaps with version control and ownership plans. (we are aware this is one of the focus points for the project 3 rd year). Collaborate with institutional partners on long-term integration strategies.

Table 2: Recommendations and follow-up plans.

8 Conclusions

The mid-term independent quality assessment of the AF4F project reveals a solid strategic foundation and a commendable level of alignment with Erasmus+ priorities in sustainable agriculture, innovation, and vocational education. The project demonstrates strengths in

planning, thematic relevance, and evaluation practices, with several deliverables—such as the State of the Art Report and Acceleration Program—standing out for their methodological rigor and policy alignment.

However, the assessment also identifies critical areas for improvement. These include the need for greater language consistency, enhanced interactivity and usability of key outputs, and robust sustainability planning. Many deliverables, while technically sound, lack concrete mechanisms for long-term use, institutional integration, and measurable impact.

To address these challenges, the report outlines a set of joint recommendations and follow-up actions focused on strengthening quality assurance, improving stakeholder engagement, and embedding sustainability into all major outputs. By implementing these measures, the AF4F project can enhance its overall coherence, usability, and long-term impact, ensuring its contributions endure beyond the project’s funding period and continue to support innovation and excellence in the agri-food VET sector.