



# AGRIFOOD

*4Future*

## **Empowering Innovation in Agrifood: The Success of the AF4F Entrepreneurship and Acceleration Programme**

The **Entrepreneurship and Acceleration Programme** of the [AgriFood4Future](#) (AF4F) project, co-funded by **Erasmus+** and developed by [BGI Sustainable Ventures](#) in partnership with BGT, has successfully completed two impactful editions, reaffirming its commitment to fostering innovation, entrepreneurship and capacity building within the European agrifood ecosystem.

Designed to support early-stage startups, entrepreneurial teams and students from Vocational Education and Training (VET), Master's and PhD programmes, the initiative focuses on projects operating within Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 2-6. The programme aims to accelerate the development of sustainable, technology-driven solutions aligned with European priorities in smart farming and sustainable food systems.

# A Structured and Hands-On Journey for Startups

Over the course of five months, participants engage in a comprehensive and practical entrepreneurial journey divided into three core phases:

## 1. Entrepreneurial Training

Participants receive intensive training on key business and innovation topics, including:

- Business Model Canvas
- Marketing and Communication
- Fundraising Strategies
- Intellectual Property and Legal Aspects
- Team Building and Leadership
- Sustainability and Impact

## 2. Acceleration and Tailored Mentorship

Selected teams benefit from one-on-one mentorship and customised support to refine their business strategies, validate their solutions, and develop strong Go-to-Market Plans. Pitching preparation and investor-readiness are also central components of this phase.

## 3. Demo Day

The programme culminates in an online Demo Day, where participants present their projects to a wider innovation ecosystem composed of experts, investors, researchers and industry stakeholders.

This structured model has demonstrated strong impact in supporting early-stage ventures through the complexities of business development while promoting cross-border collaboration, interdisciplinary learning, and access to international networks.

## Spotlight on Innovation: Palgae



Among the winning startups of the programme is [Palgae](#), an innovative venture developing next-generation biodegradable materials derived from algae to transform the agricultural and packaging industries.

Palgae's mission is rooted in the belief that algae can play a central role in accelerating the transition toward a cleaner and more sustainable future. Through a B2B collaboration model, the startup delivers tailored algae-based material solutions that help companies reduce their environmental footprint while promoting circular bioeconomy practices and supporting the shift toward low-carbon industrial systems.

Beyond technological innovation, Palgae positions itself as a studio for innovation, exploring the untapped potential of algae as a natural resource capable of driving sustainable transformation across multiple sectors. By democratizing algae technology both in Turkey and internationally, the company aspires to become a leading force within the global green technology revolution.

As a female-founded startup operating within the bioeconomy sector, Palgae also highlights the importance of diversity and inclusion in science, sustainability, and entrepreneurship. Founder Eylül's vision extends far beyond the creation of sustainable materials. It is equally focused on building a future where women are integral to the scientific, technological, and entrepreneurial landscape.

At Palgae, diversity in leadership is seen as a catalyst for innovation and for creating more inclusive and impactful solutions. The company actively promotes a culture where women's contributions to STEM and entrepreneurship are recognised, valued, and celebrated. By empowering women in science and innovation, Palgae believes it can contribute not only to technological progress but also to more holistic and socially responsive solutions for global sustainability challenges.

The company's journey has also been shaped by strong collaboration and resilience. As shared by founder Eylül, Palgae was founded alongside her long-time classmate and business partner, Sezer E. Acar, who played a fundamental role in the company's development and vision. Although currently away due to health reasons, his contribution remains deeply acknowledged and appreciated within the startup's journey.

Palgae's mission is clear: to develop cutting-edge algae-based products that contribute positively to the environment while helping industries and consumers reduce their carbon footprints. The startup is currently preparing two new Proofs of Concept (PoCs), further demonstrating its growth trajectory, commitment to research-driven innovation, and ambition to scale sustainable solutions internationally.

Reflecting on the experience within the AF4F programme, Palgae's founder Eylül shared:



*“Our participation in the Agrifood4Future programme has been transformative for Palgae. Winning first place provided us with far more than recognition - it opened doors to concrete opportunities that have accelerated our growth.*

*The programme offered us a critical validation environment where we could rigorously test our algae-based biodegradable materials solutions in real-world conditions. Beyond product development, we gained access to a strategic network spanning Western Europe's leading academic institutions, which has been invaluable in strengthening our scientific foundation and establishing credible impact measurement frameworks.*

*We are deeply grateful for the programme's commitment to supporting deep tech solutions with both practical and intellectual support.”*

Learn more about Palgae: <https://palgae.earth/>

## Driving the Future of Sustainable Agrifood Innovation

Through initiatives such as the **Entrepreneurship and Acceleration Programme**, AgriFood4Future continues to strengthen the European innovation ecosystem by empowering the next generation of agrifood entrepreneurs and sustainability-driven startups.

By combining education, mentorship, international collaboration, and practical validation opportunities, the programme contributes directly to the development of resilient, sustainable, and technology-enabled food systems for the future.