

## FOOD & HOSPITALITY STARTUPS

### Call for Startups & Disruptive Companies at Alimentaria+HOSTELCO 2026

With the aim of fostering and encouraging innovation, talent, new business models, and the entrepreneurial ecosystem, Alimentaria+HOSTELCO 2026, together with IRTA (Institute of Agrifood Research and Technology), will select a group of **Startups and innovative companies** to take part in its most disruptive exhibition area.

In this edition, a new and powerful joint space will be created between the two trade shows, bringing together Startups and hosting various activities. Innovation is a cross-cutting priority, essential to ensuring that the food, hospitality, and catering sectors are efficient, productive, sustainable, and competitive.

This project seeks to showcase the **most transformative initiatives in the world of food, beverages, and equipment for catering, hospitality, and foodservice**. Leading companies in the sector attend Alimentaria+HOSTELCO in search of innovation and new solutions for their businesses—a meeting point also for **potential investors and major strategic players in the industry**. The new exhibition area will focus on creating connections among all stakeholders.

For this reason, ahead of Alimentaria+HOSTELCO 2026, the organization is launching **FOOD&HOSPITALITY STARTUPS**, a new call for Startups and disruptive companies, governed by the following rules:

#### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this call is to select **14 Startups** and disruptive companies to participate in the **Alimentaria and HOSTELCO trade shows**, to be held from **March 23 to 26 in Barcelona**.

For the first time, all Startups and disruptive companies in the fields of food, hospitality, and catering will be brought together in a single space: **the Food & Hospitality Startups Arena, located in Halls 4–6** of the Gran Via venue at Fira de Barcelona. This call places a strong emphasis on the market applicability of technological innovations in products or services, aiming to provide companies in these sectors with the opportunity to connect with emerging businesses offering solutions to industry challenges.

The goal is to select a total of 14 projects. Projects will be evaluated based on various criteria, including: degree of innovation, scalability, growth potential, relevance to the sector, internationalization, sustainability, and health impact.

In addition to being featured in the exhibition area, the selected companies will also be candidates for the Alimentaria+HOSTELCO **FOOD & HOSPITALITY STARTUPS AWARDS** in two categories:

- **Most Innovative Startup**
- **Startup with the Highest Growth Potential**

## 2. Participants

This initiative is aimed at innovative and disruptive projects in the fields of food, beverages, and equipment for catering, hospitality, and foodservice, whether they are in the early stages of their business journey (**Startups**) or **more established companies within the sector**.

There will be no territorial restrictions for participation in this initiative, meaning that any company, **whether national or international**, may submit an application.

## 3. Beneficits

Alimentaria+HOSTELCO represent one of the largest meeting points in the world of food, gastronomy, and catering, becoming a true generator of business opportunities: visibility, access to strategic agreements, innovation, and more.

The 14 projects selected to participate in Alimentaria+HOSTELCO will receive access to a **special package consisting of:**

### BUSINESS

- Participation in B2B meetings with companies, investors, and members of the expert committee
- 15 free (1-day) invitations to access Alimentaria+HOSTELCO

### VISIBILITY

- Nomination for the Alimentaria+HOSTELCO FOOD & HOSPITALITY STARTUPS AWARDS
- Inclusion of the company logo on the Alimentaria+HOSTELCO website, as applicable
- A 3-minute presentation on Tuesday, March 24 in the Conference Room during “Pitching Day”
- Opportunity to deliver scheduled presentations at the dedicated *Pitching Point* throughout the four days in the Food & Hospitality Startups Arena
- Company profile in the Alimentaria+HOSTELCO Exhibitors and Products Catalogue, with the option to publish up to 3 products free of charge
- A dedicated Food & Hospitality Startups newsletter, distributed to Alimentaria and HOSTELCO exhibitors

### EXHIBITION SPACE

- Exhibition module in the Food & Hospitality Startup Arena
- Customization of the space with the company’s logo
- 2 personalized exhibitor passes

The selected companies commit to being present at the exhibition space for the four specified days, during the official exhibitor opening hours of both trade shows (from 10:00 to 19:00, March 23–25, and until 18:00 on March 26)

This package is offered at a special price of €500 (VAT not included) for companies that meet the requirements indicated above.

For all Startups that are not selected by the jury but wish to be present at the Alimentaria+HOSTELCO trade show, the organization will contact them to provide information about rates and participation options in the exhibition area.

## 4. Eligibility and Application Process

The application period to participate in this Alimentaria+HOSTELCO initiative **will open on September 25, 2025, and close on January 9, 2026.**

Companies interested in participating **must complete the application form available on the Alimentaria and HOSTELCO websites**, where they will be asked to provide contact information and details about their project for evaluation by a selection committee.

To be eligible for the benefits described, applying Startups and disruptive companies must meet the selection criteria, which will be assessed for their final choice:

- **Innovation**  
Relevant and distinctive innovative qualities that are useful and of interest to the sector.
- **Digitalization**  
Support in the digitalization of processes and/or implementation of new technologies in the industry.
- **Internationalization**  
Availability or potential for internationalization or export to other countries.
- **InvestmentPotential**  
The level of interest the company may generate among investors, financial entities, and/or other companies participating in the trade shows.
- **Sustainability**  
The company's commitment to developing solutions that help reduce environmental impact.
- **Health**  
For product-focused companies, consideration will be given to how well they align with consumers' healthy lifestyle choices.

Candidate companies must demonstrate their interest in the event, commit to maintaining regular communication with the organizers, and, finally, ensure their attendance and active involvement in the activities organized. An interview may be requested to evaluate the application.

## 5. Evaluation and Selection Process

The selection committee appointed by Alimentaria+HOSTELCO is chaired by IRTA and composed of experts from the food, beverage, and catering, hospitality, and foodservice equipment industries.

The Committee will evaluate the submitted projects and select the companies that will receive an invitation to participate in the corresponding trade show. The following aspects will be considered and weighted:

- **Degree of Innovation of the Solution/Product:** Relevant and distinctive innovative qualities that are useful and of interest to the sector.
- **Applicability and Scalability of the Solution within the Company**
- **Investment Potential:** The level of interest the company may generate among investors, financial entities, and/or other companies participating in the trade shows.
- **Digitalization:** Support in the digitalization of processes and/or implementation of new technologies in the industry.
- **Contribution of the Solution to the Sector's Internationalization:** Availability or potential for internationalization or export to other countries.
- **Sustainability and Social Improvement of the Innovation:** The company's commitment to developing solutions that help reduce environmental impact.
- **Health Alignment:** Products or solutions that help consumers maintain a healthier lifestyle and promote preventive health.

## 6. Communication Channels

The 14 selected Startups and disruptive companies will be notified of their selection by the jury from among all submitted applications starting on **January 23**.

For any questions regarding the selection process or participation in the event, please contact: [iaymat@alimentaria.com](mailto:iaymat@alimentaria.com) / Irene Aymat.