

Call for Expressions of Interest

Technology; Microbiology; Health & Nutrition

The Danish Dairy Research Foundation (DDRF) calls for Expressions of Interest for research projects within Technology, Microbiology, and Health & Nutrition, with an application deadline **Thursday, 26 November 2026, at 12:00 noon**. Please use the **application forms**.



Photo: Niels Åge Skovbo

The Danish Dairy Research Foundation (DDRF) supports dairy research with a clear application potential, cf. the Foundation's [Strategy 2030](#). There is a specific desire for interdisciplinary collaboration projects across different research groups, as new knowledge and understanding of correlations often arise in the cross-field between professional disciplines. Interdisciplinary research and research that takes value chain considerations into account are thus given top priority. Sustainability and climate remain key areas for the dairy industry, and the Board would therefore like to see these aspects included in the projects, if relevant. This could, e.g., be the effects of a more sustainable diet, circular economy (such as raw materials and water), shelf life-extending cultures, and processes using less energy. Data science is also an area the Board would like to see included in the project proposals. In addition, cooperation with dairies and/or downstream industries (cultures, ingredients, equipment, and analyses) is encouraged.

The Foundation receives Expressions of Interest throughout Strategy 2030.

Technology

Technological development is essential to ensure that the Danish dairy industry can continue to provide consumers with high-quality and sustainable products. This requires greater knowledge of how processing technologies influence product quality, functionality, shelf life, and sustainability throughout the entire value chain.

At the same time, consumers demand appealing taste and texture experiences, creating a need for a deeper understanding of how product composition and processing influence the sensory perception.

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As resources such as raw materials, water and energy come under increasing pressure, it is crucial to develop solutions that enable more efficient and complete resource utilization. This includes, among other things, creating value from side streams and optimizing the use of water and energy. We must therefore ensure sustainability across the entire value chain, from raw materials to finished products.

The development of new analytical methods and data-driven tools, together with the application of big data and artificial intelligence, is creating new opportunities to monitor, understand, and predict conditions throughout the value chain. Research in this area should contribute to the development of the data-driven decision-support systems of the future, strengthening quality, innovation, and food safety within the Danish dairy industry.

Technology:

- **The influence of process technologies** on product shelf life, quality, and sustainability.
- **Taste and texture**, to include a mechanistic understanding of how taste and texture can be changed through, e.g., product composition and processing.
- **Complete resource utilization**, to include the use of side streams, water, and energy.

Microbiology:

- **Positive effects of microbiology** on shelf life, taste, or human health and wellbeing.
- **Risk assessment and prediction** of, e.g., toxins, microorganisms, and accumulation of undesirable substances.
- **New measuring methods and interpretation of big data** to support quality and food safety decisions.

Microbiology

Danish dairy production is characterized by well-documented, high food safety standards, which are essential for ensuring and maintaining customer and consumer trust.

Microorganisms play a central role in the quality, shelf life, and functional properties of many dairy products. Research that generates new knowledge about the beneficial effects of microorganisms is crucial for unlocking their potential, including their contribution to product quality, flavour, and health benefits.

At the same time, the development of new products, ingredients, and processing methods places increasing demands on the understanding and management of risks. There remains a need for advanced methods for risk assessment and the prediction of microorganisms, toxins, and the accumulation of other undesirable substances, enabling decisions to be made on a robust scientific basis.

Health & Nutrition

A better understanding of the role of dairy products and dairy ingredients in health and nutrition throughout life is essential for documenting their contribution as an integral part of a healthy and sustainable diet.

Knowledge of the components, structure and processing of dairy products is fundamental. However, particular attention to the role of different dairy matrices in determining nutrient availability and biological effects is crucial for how dairy products contribute to meeting the body's nutritional requirements, promoting health, and helping to the prevention of disease across different population and age groups.

A specific area of focus is gut health, including how dairy products and their components influence gastrointestinal function and interact with the gut microbiota, and how

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these effects contribute, both directly and indirectly, to health and wellbeing.

Furthermore, a deeper understanding is needed of how dairy products and dairy-based diets affect the function of the body and its organs across the life course. This includes elucidating the role of dairy products in supporting brain development and function, maintaining bone and muscle health, and influencing other fundamental physiological processes, including the prevention of lifestyle-related diseases and the promotion of healthy ageing.

Health & Nutrition:

- **The role of dairy products and ingredients in a sustainable and healthy diet.**
- **The health effect of the food matrix** – focusing on matrix components, structure, and processing.
- **Gut health** – focusing on the connection between gut function and health, either directly or indirectly, via gut bacteria.
- **Body and organ functions throughout life** – focusing on growth and development to maintenance, aging, and prevention of lifestyle diseases.

Note: Relevant clinical documentation research is given equal weight as hypothesis-driven research projects.

Which types of projects are eligible for funding?

DDRF is a non-commercial foundation. DDRF initiates and coordinates dairy research that can contribute to a knowledge-based and sustainable Danish dairy industry that is best-in-class relative to innovative, healthy and safe products. This is done in close interaction between the dairy industry and, among others, the universities, the hospitals, and the downstream industry.

The projects are pre-competitive by nature and support

research-based initiatives that can subsequently lead to innovation in the dairy companies and in this way also contribute to improving the competitiveness of the dairies.

DDRF does not support research in primary production, projects that have the character of product development, major equipment investments, and projects relating solely to the communication of research results. Projects focused on mapping is only eligible for funding if they are research-based.

The board evaluates the projects based on three evaluation criteria:

- Fulfilling the requirements in the call.
- High-level research projects with clear objectives.
- Dairy industry relevance.

High-level research projects with clear objectives include:

- Precise and cutting-edge state of the art.
- News value and hypotheses.
- Choice of scientific method(s).
- Work package descriptions.
- Project management, relevant CV of project manager.
- Realistic time schedule and budget, possible external co-financing.
- Cooperation with other universities, industry partners, to include international collaboration.

Dairy industry relevance includes:

- Impact – value creation for the dairy industry.
- Collaboration with companies and industry participation.
- Dissemination of results to the dairy industry.
- Contribution to the research-based education of students relevant to the industry.

Grant conditions and financing

Through this call, DDRF initiates research projects with a total dairy foundation grant of DKK 16-18 million. This is

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done partially through DDRF's own resources and partly through applications to the Milk Levy Fund and the Dairy Rationalization Fund. For projects to be finally financed through the Milk Levy Fund or the Dairy Rationalization Fund, DDRF initially carries out the professional assessment, while the final decision on support takes place after the prioritized Expressions of Interest have been approved by the Milk Levy Fund/Dairy Rationalization Fund. DDRF will assist in the process. Please note that the funds will not be granted until external grants and/or contributions from participating companies and/or research institutions amount to at least 50% of the total project budget. It is the applicant's own responsibility to get the remaining co-financing in place. Co-financing may, for example, come from public and private foundations or from the participating partners in the project. If the applicant has not been able to obtain additional co-financing within approx. 18 months, DDRF is no longer obligated to support the project. However, the applicant is welcome to submit a new application in the following application rounds.

In 2025, The Milk Levy Fund, due to legal requirements, has made it possible to increase the overhead to a maximum of 44%. Danish Dairy Research Foundation is following suit, and consequently going forward, it is possible to apply for up to 44% overhead of all direct costs (exclusive of external assistance). However, it must be clearly justified why a higher overhead is necessary. Please pay attention to the specific framework for this, which is further described here: <https://maelkeafgiftsfonden.dk/ansogning-om-tilskud/> (only in Danish, unfortunately).

Who can apply to the Danish Dairy Research Foundation?

We welcome researchers from public or self-governing research institutes, preferably in collaboration with private companies. Before submitting the application, the applicant must secure the written consent of the management of the participating institutions and companies. In principle, the participating companies do not receive financial

support from DDRF, but their time involved can be included as in-kind co-financing.

Requirements for Expressions of Interest

To be evaluated by DDRF, the DDRF Expression of Interest forms must be used. Part 1 of the Expression of Interest is submitted as a PDF file, Part 2 is submitted as a Word document, and Part 3 as an Excel file. Instructions for completing the Expression of Interest appear on the application forms.

Please note that the total Expression of Interest should not exceed 6 A4 pages (excluding items 6-7, part 1). The application may be in Danish or English (except for the title and summary, which must be in both Danish and English).

Application deadline of the Expressions of Interest is Thursday, 26 November 2026, at 12:00 noon.

Please mail the application to mff@lf.dk. You will receive acknowledgement of receipt of the application. Applicants will be notified of the result in February 2027.

Information and guidance

Can be obtained from the DDRF Secretariat:

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