**EIT Food as a Strategic Partner for Science-to-Market Innovation**

Paula Hafner[1]

[1]*EIT Food*

EIT Food is Europe's leading food innovation community, dedicated to accelerating the translation of scientific excellence into market-ready solutions. By connecting academia, startups, corporates and investors across the agrifood value chain, EIT Food acts as a strategic partner that reduces the time and risk associated with bringing innovation to market. Through targeted funding instruments, such as Fast Track to Market and open innovation programmes, EIT Food supports validation, piloting, regulatory navigation and commercial scaling. Beyond funding, it provides access to a powerful pan-European network, industry challenge owners, testbeds and investment readiness programmes that help innovators refine value propositions and secure follow-on capital.

By combining business creation support, entrepreneurship training and ecosystem matchmaking, EIT Food enables researchers and technology developers to move from proof-of-concept to sustainable commercial impact - strengthening Europe's competitiveness while delivering healthier and more sustainable food solutions.

**Short bio**

Paula Hafner is Head of Ecosystem Impact at EIT Food, leading strategic partnerships across Europe in the Agrifood Sector. She has over 15 years of experience in the management of EU large-scale innovation projects in the agri-food, health, and pharmaceutical sectors. She holds a Master's degree in Molecular Biology and a Master's degree in International Trade. Since joining EIT Food in 2021, she has been involved in flagship initiatives such as the Healthy Ageing Think and do Tank, technology transfer support programmes and the AgriFood Biotech Alliance.