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CORENET GUIDE FOR LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS

**D4.2: CORENET GUIDE FOR LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS
WP 4, T 4.2**

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Abstract

The **CORENET GUIDE FOR LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS** sets out a definition of what constitutes a LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT; Guidance to a proposer of a LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT on when and how to apply for inclusion in CORENET in order to benefit from available grant-aid and expert support; Guidance on procedures for assessing and selecting LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS; Information on how grant-aid, expert and other support will be provided within the framework of CORENET; LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT inventory: expectations on the ways in which LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS are to contribute to CORENET goals and objectives.

The GUIDE builds on the **SFSC GOLDEN CASE HANDBOOK** and **GOLDEN CASES** already included in COREnet, and is in line with **THE COREnet CHARTER** adopted by Consortium members to ensure alignment with EU goals, priorities and aspirations and CORENET project objectives and goal.



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1. CONTEXT

1.1 Objectives and Goal of the CORENET Project

Many factors determine the performance and impact of a Short Food Supply Chain (SFSC) initiative operating in a specific place or *territoire*, as well as the advisory and support efforts to improve performance and increase impact of that SFSC.

With this in mind, the 3 objectives of the CORENET project are articulated as follows :

- *To nurture supporting services and share materials that facilitate the introduction, the spreading and bringing into practice innovative solutions that improve the performance and sustainability of SFSCs, by identifying good SFSC practices and services, engaging end-users (SFSC actors, advisors) and especially, small farmers and consumers in an interactive knowledge acquisition, sharing and transfer process that also (re)builds trust between farmers and advisors, and recognizes consumers as active or potential advisers;*
- *To identify and share SFSC advisory practices and services, either successful or not, as learning resources for SFSC end-users, advisors, researchers, in order to strengthen the links between research, education, advisors and farming practice at all stages from farm to fork; to identify the diverse knowledge, skills and competence needs as well as regional, national and EU institutional barriers and opportunities for mainstreaming more effective and impactful SFSC advising, including regulatory and policy recommendations;*
- *To establish a pan-European peer-to-peer learning network for SFSC advisors and advisory organisations, open to private, public, civic and other practitioner advisors, including those not yet recognized in AKIS (e.g., consumer groups advising food coops, food bloggers, virtual markets), and propose a formal organizational solution that assures sustainability and integration into the AKIS.*

The overall goal of the CORENET project is : ...to support development of a more relevant and effective SFSC advising, built around IT-enabled peer-to-peer learning and sense-making to complement the more conventional expert- client approaches that have dominated extension services. In this approach, advisors and advisory services are no longer confined to public services, but are a mix of public, private and civic arrangements with farmers and consumers as peers rather than beneficiaries.

1.2 SFSC Golden Cases and Lighthouse Projects

Central to the CORENET approach to understanding better the relationship between SFSC advising and SFSC performance and impact is the identification, collection and analysis of operating SFSC called GOLDEN CASES from across the EU-27. GOLDEN CASES, along with those engaged in them, are treated as **LEARNING RESOURCES** that serve to illustrate and illuminate the interplay of two aspects of Short Food Supply Chain (SFSC) initiatives operating in a specific place or *territoire*:

1. operational performance & impact on economy, environment and society;
2. advisory services & practices provided within the policy and regulatory frameworks of EU member states in line with EU priorities.

The point of departure for designing LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS are the range of successful advisory models identified in GOLDEN CASES (WP3).

1.3 Scope & Purpose of the GUIDE

The purpose of this GUIDE is to provide CORENET project partners and Key National Contact Points (KNCPs) with guidance on supporting SFSC advisors and/or advisory organisations in proposing potential LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS.

The CORENET expectation is that LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS will support existing or new advisors and/or advisory organisations in the uptake, design, replication, introduction, adoption, deployment, communication and/or adaption successful advisory models identified in Golden Cases in the specific SFSC policy and regulatory context of the EU member state of focus.

The GUIDE consists of :

- A definition of what constitutes a LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT.
- Guidance to a proposer of a LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT on when and how to apply for inclusion in CORENET in order to benefit from available grant-aid and expert support.
- Guidance on procedures for assessing and selecting LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS
- Information on how grant-aid, expert and other support will be provided within the framework of CORENET.
- LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT Inventory: expectations on the ways in which LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS are to contribute to CORENET goals and objectives.

1.4 Glossary of terms

Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) is the framework that brings together various actors in the agricultural sector to enhance the innovation process. AKIS seeks to a network of collaboration among farmers, researchers, policy-makers, and other stakeholders to increase the production capacity of farmers and improve food security. The main objective of AKIS is to share and integrate knowledge to enhance the agricultural innovation process. AKIS is to provide the means for disseminating innovations, best practices, and research findings from researchers and other stakeholders to the farmers. AKIS also provides feedback from farmers to researchers, promoting an iterative process of co-creation of knowledge and solutions. In line with other Horizon Europe programmes, CORENET is contributing directly both to building the AKIS and to extracting value from the AKIS in advancing the contribution of SFSC advising to SFSC performance and impact.

CORENET Charter. The Charter is a value statement formally adopted and endorsed by CORENET Project Partners to provide a reference or framework for informing operational procedures and activities aimed at identifying SFSCs and SFSC advising for use in CORENET in the selection and use of GOLDEN CASES and LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS that seek to capitalise on GOLDEN CASES to inspire and bring about improvements in SFSC advising across the EU-27. The Charter specifies what constitutes an SFSC and the intentionality for promoting SFSC as part of food sector reform and rural

revitalisation, and so, guide CORENET project implementation. The essential features for including an SFSC in the CORENET project were defined as follows:

- meeting the **EU SFSC definition**.
- **be operating**, i.e. transactions between buyers and sellers are taking place with no more than 2 intermediaries with the proviso that the second intermediary is deemed essential (as in the case of a food processor)
- focusing on **local markets** for locally products confined to a defined place, region or *territoire*.
- be making a deliberate and strategic use of **advising & support services** to improve performance/increase impact and/or has the intention to do so.
- be seeking to restore **autonomy** to those co-creating local markets for locally-produced food (food producers, traditional food processors, food distributors, advisors, communities, researchers and citizens) with a view to transforming the food system as it currently exists into a form that is fairer, more secure and respectful of the life-support processes that underpin economy, environment and society.
- include an **individual and/or organisation** willing to work with, contribute to and benefit from CORENET, who can provide information and insights, i.e. an advisor and/or the recipient or beneficiary of advice, who is interested, able and willing to provide information about SFSC operations.

CORENET Golden Cases (WP3). Exemplars of SFSC advisory models that have translated into success in terms of improved SFSC performance and impact the marketplace that have fulfilled CORENET selection criteria contained in the CORENET HANDBOOK. Information on GOLDEN CASES is available on the CORENET Knowledge Hub: <https://shortfoodchain.eu/knowledge-hub/>

CORENET European Roadshows (WP4) have the main purpose of enhancing awareness and involvement of SFSC stakeholders to share good practices and stimulating exchange of ideas among advisors, producers, consumers and other practitioners. The CORENET intent is to organise European Roadshows in Ireland, Poland, Hungary, Germany, Belgium, Austria and 2 other countries. European Roadshows have been completed in Italy (2024) and Portugal (2024).

CORENET Field visits (WP3) are visits organised to current and prospective GOLDEN CASES as part of research aimed at understanding and articulating SFSC advisory models, practices and services. Field visits are organised and planned on an as-needed basis.

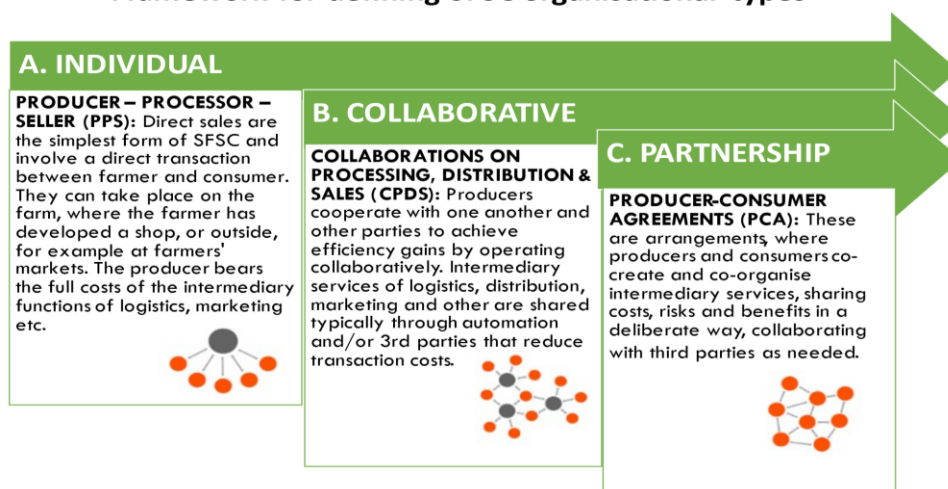
EU4Advice is the sister project of CORENET. EU4Advice employs a living lab approach and is focused more on shaping the policy agenda. Both projects are collaborating to generate a single network of SFSC advisors across the EU-27. More on EU4Advice - <https://www.eu4advice.eu/the-project/>

Key National Contact Point (KNCP) are organisations that have agreed to represent the CORENET project in EU-member states where there is no Consortium partner. The KNCP is tasked with communicating CORENET activities and progress in the in-country context and vice-versa, communicating information, insights, knowledge and so forth from the in-country context that is relevant to CORENET. KNCPs are themselves committed to realising CORENET objectives and goals in line with the CORENET Charter and act as a first point of contact for prospective LIGHTHOUSE project applicants and GOLDEN CASE nominators.

Short food supply chains (SFSC) are defined as supply chains that have a maximum one intermediary between producer and consumer, with the possibility of also a food processor as a second 'intermediary'.ⁱ These can be configured organisationally in many different ways. But 3 organisational types have been identified for the purposes of the CORENET project. Each type has implications for fit-for-purpose SFSC advisory models.

SFSC organisational types have been adopted in CORENET as a means for differentiating differing organisational arrangements for SFSCs that seek to improve their performance and scale their impact, typically through working out ways of reducing transaction costs through automating and sharing intermediary functionalities essential for SFSC operations (i.e. settling transactions, financial transactions, marketing, distribution etc).

Framework for defining SFSC organisational types



SFSC Advisors are individuals who have identified themselves as SFSC advisors by meeting the SFSC advisor criteria articulated by CORENET and her sister project EU4Advice by registering in the database through <https://shortfoodchain.eu>

SFSC Advisory models, practices and services refers to networks of organisations, institutions and individuals who provide information, knowledge and technical assistance to farmers, consumers and other stakeholders engaged in growing local markets for locally-produced food. The term covers formal and informal forms of advising, as well as public, private and non-governmental SFSC advising. SFSC advising varies in terms of the degree of public sector involvement, resourcing arrangements, quality control, technologies employed as well as mission & vision. SFSC advising arrangements are directly related to policies, regulations and programming at the national and/or regional levels, which may or may not identify SFSCs as a priority.

SFSC Advice recognises that every facet of SFSC operation can benefit from specialist or expert advice and support, from advice on regenerative farming methods, through to collaborative decision-making, organising distribution channels, financing, regulatory compliance, marketing, transacting and assessing environmental, social and economic impact. The list appears to be endless. The task in CORENET is to identify different types of advising/support through the lens of the SFSC Golden Cases and Lighthouse projects selected. The following content categories provide a framework for mapping advisory services that may be operating in an SFSC situation formally or informally:

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- **Business planning and strategy:** Advisors can help farmers to develop a business plan and strategy for their short food supply chain. This includes market research, financial planning, and developing a marketing strategy.
- **Distribution and logistics:** Advisors can help farmers to develop a distribution and logistics plan for their short food supply chain. This includes identifying the most efficient and cost-effective way to get their products to market.
- **Regulatory compliance:** Advisors can help farmers understand and comply with the regulations that apply to their short food supply chain. This includes food safety, labelling, and packaging requirements.
- **Better partnering:** collaboration between farmers, consumers and other stakeholders can be more effective thanks with the right kind of support to build relevant capacities, capabilities and competencies
- **Technology:** Advisors can help farmers identify and implement the right technology solutions for their short food supply chain. This includes software and hardware solutions to help manage inventory, track orders, and process payments.
- **Production & processing:** Advisors can help farmers to produce more effectively and in more environmentally-friendly ways, for example through organic or agro-ecology practices, that are increasing expected by consumers.
- **Packaging:** Advisors can help farmers with labelling, assuring quality and freshness, dealing with logistics and as an element of branding and marketing. Packaging is also a key aspect of environmental impact.
- **Branding and marketing:** Advisors can help farmers develop a branding and marketing strategy for their short food supply chain. This includes developing a website, creating promotional materials, and developing a social media presence.

2. LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT PARAMETERS

2.1 Definitions

Like a lighthouse, LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS are expected to communicate and otherwise draw attention to the link between SFSC advising and SFSC performance and impact within the specific context or situation of each EU member state. Like a lighthouse, LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT will serve to identify threats and opportunities in relation to SFSC advisory practice. In this way, the expectation is that LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS will enhance or otherwise contribute to advancing SFSC advisory practice in the EU member state of focus, while providing at the same time learning opportunities for SFSC advisors from across the EU.

There is no restriction as to the kind of activity, event or initiative constitutes a LIGHTHOUSE project.

However, it is expected that LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS will not be one-off events, but enablers or initiators of actions that will not only link up with one or more GOLDEN CASE, but also seek synergies with other parts of the CORENET project, most notably the European Roadshows (WP 4.1) and the Europe Advisory Network (EAN – SFSC) for improving SFSC advisory practice that is the focus of WP5.

2.2 CORENET expectations

The key contribution of a LIGHTHOUSE project to the final outcome of CORENET – an Europe-wide SFSC Advisory network - is to pilot ways of energising the peer learning and mutual support between SFSC advisors in-country that can benefit from, and contribute to, the Europe-wide network that is being generated through the CORENET project and its sister EU4ADVICE project.

By proposing a wide range of solutions in context specific solutions, LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS are expected to improve SFSC advising practice (even in a small way), while also generating invaluable knowledge and insight relevant to the goals of the CORENET project. Lighthouse projects will pave the way for SFSC advisors from the country of focus to contribute to, and benefit from, the CORENET project. In this regard, a key task for CORENET partners and KNCPs is to facilitate learning and mutual support between the range of LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT and GOLDEN CASES operating under the umbrella of CORENET.

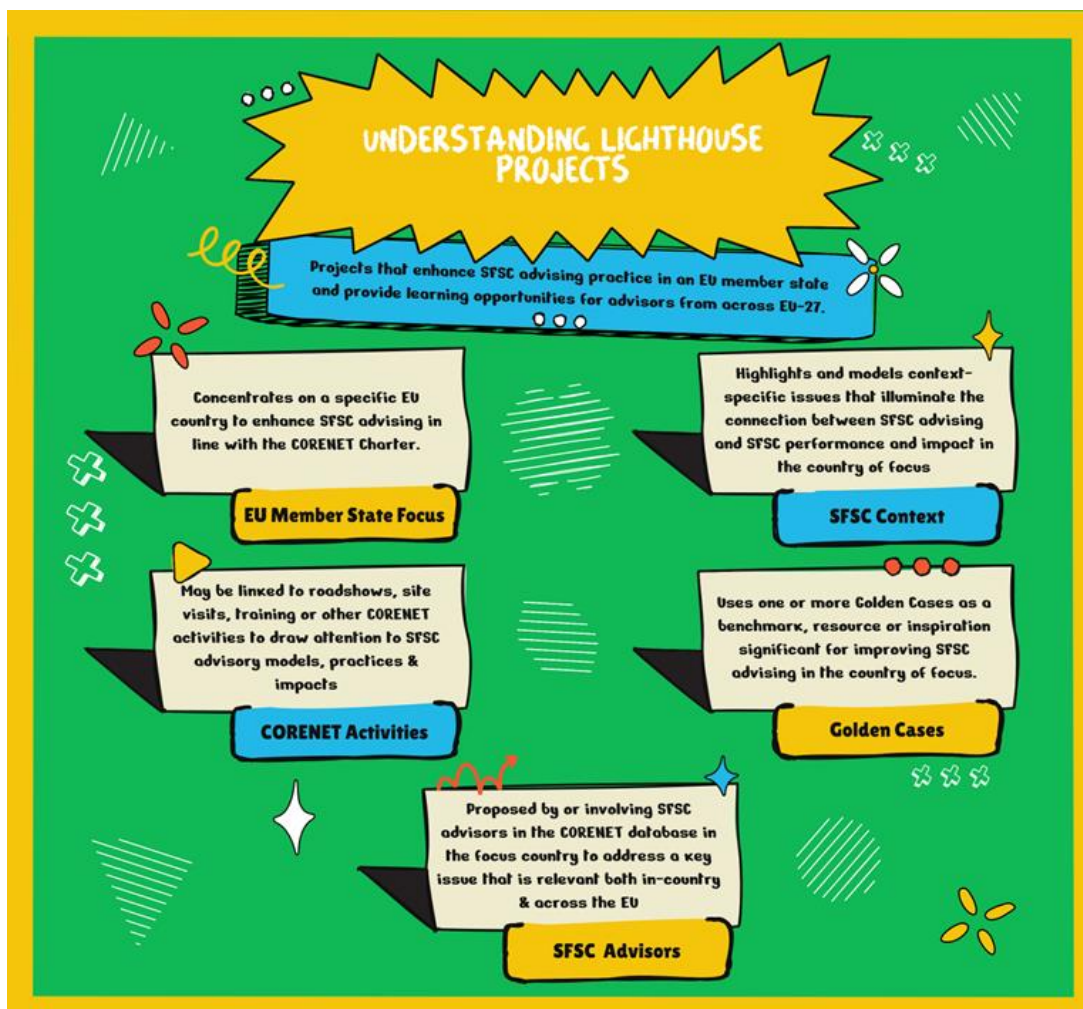
2.3 LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT expectations

In sum, a LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT is an initiative, activity or action undertaken within the context of a specified EU member state that:

- is focused on the relationship or link between SFSC advising and SFSC performance in the country of focus in line with the CORENET Charter, providing a point of entry or opportunity for SFSC advisors to connect with one another in-country and across the EU-27 for mutual support and learning during & beyond the lifetime of CORENET

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- illuminates and/or communicates a pathway to increasing the impact of SFSC advising in the country of focus by highlighting, modelling and/or unpacking the link between SFSC performance and advising, showcasing or introducing successful advisory models and/or drawing attention to any special or context-related issues – possibly linked to a CORENET activity (roadshow, site visit, database etc).
- uses one or more Golden Case as a resource, reference, benchmark and collaboration opportunity to introduce or draw attention to a selected model or aspect of SFSC advising that deserves greater attention in the country of focus, integrating the solution into ongoing SFSC advising practice in the country of focus.
- is proposed and carried out by an SFSC advisor and/or organisations included in the COREnet SFSC advisor database/network.
- initiates or strengthens SFSC advisor networking in the country of focus and facilitates links to SFSC advisors in other EU member states.

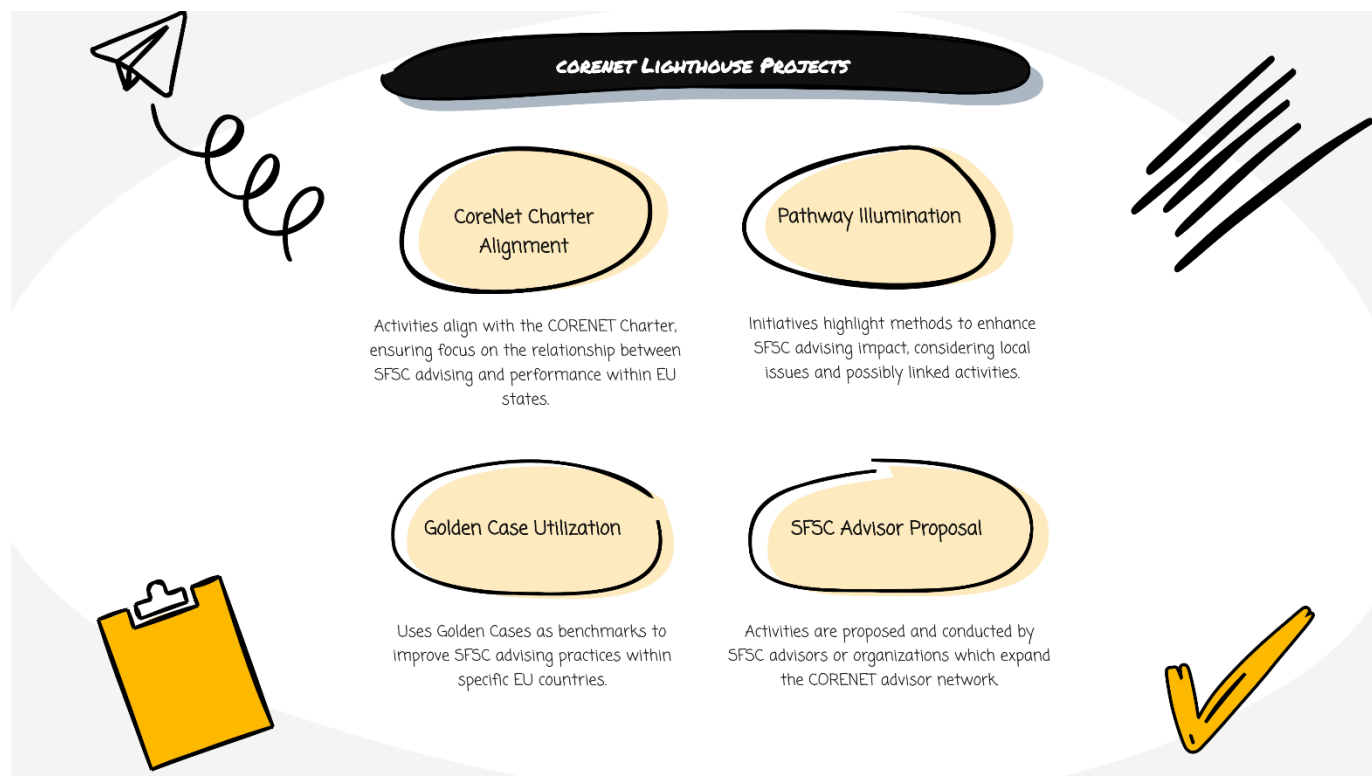


3. GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

3.1 Summary

- Like a lighthouse, LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS are expected to communicate and otherwise draw attention to the link between SFSC advising and SFSC performance and impact within the specific context or situation of each EU member state. Like a lighthouse, LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT will serve to identify threats and opportunities in relation to SFSC advisory practice. In this way, the expectation is that LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS will enhance or otherwise contribute to advancing SFSC advisory practice in the EU member state of focus, while providing at the same time learning opportunities for SFSC advisors from across the EU.
- There are to be 27 LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS (1 in each EU member state) each receiving networking and expert support from Consortium partners and up to EUR 5.500 grant aid.
- Project applicants must be SFSC Advisors who have registered in the CORENET SFSC Advisor database. Applications need to be made by an organisation, involved already or declaring involvement in SFSC advising, with which the SFSC advisor is associated.
- Project realisation can be up to 12 months. Activities might include workshops, learning platforms, guides, communications, farm visits, living labs, benchmarking, knowledge transfer, campaigns, consultations, policy dialogues, regulatory initiatives, building partnerships and/or alliances.
- LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS are to be identified and selected through an open call process that will consist of 3 rounds or calls during the lifetime of the CORENET project. Each call will seek projects focusing primarily (but not exclusively) on advisory models related to one of the three SFSC organisational types, i.e. :
 - A single farmer selling directly to many consumers (individual direct-selling)
 - Farmers and food producers collaborating to sell to many consumers (collective sales/distribution)
 - Food producers and consumers co-creating local food markets (producer-consumer partnerships)
- The successive calls are to be announced by the University of Foggia in its role as CORENET project coordinator with support from Consortium Partners and KNCPs. Each call is to be published on the University of Foggia website, as well as in English on the project website (<https://shortfoodchain.eu>) and related media channels and also in local languages on websites/social media channels of project partners and KNCPs. In this way, communication about the call will be tailored to the SFSC advisory context in each and every EU member state.
- In the application phase, prospective applicants will be supported, in the first instance, by the relevant in-country CORENET Consortium partner or KNCP.
- The call documentation contained in this GUIDE, includes information on eligibility and application procedures, including on-line application forms, evaluation procedures, payment modalities and forms of access to networking and expert support for successful applicants.

- Applications are to be on-line only.
- Once selected, each LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT will be assigned a CORENET Consortium partner who will act as a companion/mentor and as an access point to the CORENET project with the aim of facilitating connection with GOLDEN CASES and other CORENET resources, and vice-versa, ensuring that insights and learnings from the LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT contribute to CORENET objectives and goal of networking SFSC advisors across the EU-27.



3.2 Eligibility

- LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT applicants must be SFSC Advisors who have registered in the CORENET SFSC Advisor database. Applications must be made by a legal entity with which the SFSC advisor is associated.
- Registering in the CORENET SFSC Advisor database involves filling out an on-line form : <https://form.jotform.com/231712894955063>
- Applicants must be citizens of the EU. The legal entities through which they apply must be registered in a EU member state and meet all the eligibility requirements of the EU Horizon Europe programme.

Applicants will be legal entities or consortia of legal entities, which are already involved, or intend to be involved, in self-organised forms of advising, such as peer-to-peer consultations, workshops, e-learning, farm visits, or public advisory services. KCNPs and project partners are also eligible to apply.

In such a situation, the WP4 package leader will manage the initial phases of the application process, which would normally be fulfilled by the KCNP or project partner.

3.3 Thematic focus

When it comes to SFSC advisory models, it is useful to think of SFSC initiatives as local markets for locally produced food that are always in the process of becoming or journey. SFSC advising is an integral part of this process and can be conceptualised as a journey involving the SFSC advisor and the SFSC benefiting from the advice being provided.

At its simplest, an SFSC involves a series of activities that are often intertwined with another in different ways in different times, places and contexts. Each activity can benefit from advisory support as exemplified by the GOLDEN CASES. The key activities targeted in advisory interventions include:

- food producing, including food processing
- rule-setting for determining which products are qualified for selling
- marketing, distribution channels, sales, settling transactions
- market governance mechanisms for enabling local markets for locally produced food.

The advisory models and interventions will vary over time and space for many reasons, including the in-country context and the SFSC organisational type. With this in mind, there are to be 3 thematic calls, organised in sequence, providing in effect a continuous call for interested applicants. The thematic focus of each call is intended to attract projects with a different SFSC organisational focus in different country contexts.

The themes are INDICATIVE ONLY and are intended to educate, inspire and attract different types of SFSC advising projects. This means that each call will not exclude a priori project proposals that do not fit the theme. Proposals will be declined on if they are not in line with CORENET objectives and goal.

- **1st call:** Lighthouse projects on “*Individual direct-selling*”, i.e. A single farmer selling directly to many consumers
- **2nd call:** Lighthouse projects on “*Collective sales and distribution*”, i.e. Farmers and food producers collaborating to sell to many consumers
- **3rd call:** Lighthouse projects on “*Producer-consumer partnerships*”, i.e. Food producers and consumers co-creating local food markets.

Each call is anticipated to result in selection of 9 LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS, i.e. 27 projects in total. This number is indicative as the actual number of projects selected will depend on their quality and relevance to both in-country SFSC advising context and the CORENET project with its EU-wide perspective.

Only 1 LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT per Member State will be eligible for grant-aid support from the CORENET budget. Additional projects from a country of focus can be selected for inclusion in CORENET on the condition that they are self-funded.

3.4 Funding available & compliance

The total funding available for grant-aid to LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS is 1 50.000 Euros with a maximum of 5.500 Euros available to individual projects.

Eligible costs include expenses directly related to the implementation of the project, such as advisory services, workshops, study visits, exchanges, training, and administrative/expert support.

Grant aid funding will be transferred to the LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT on the basis of a grant agreement between the project beneficiary and the University of Foggia in its role of CORENET project coordinator. In this regard, the coordinator is responsible for ensuring that grant-aid provided to LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT beneficiaries is in compliance with formal obligations arising from the EU Horizon Europe programme, notably:

- Avoiding conflict of interest (see Article 12)
- Confidentiality and security obligations (see Article 13)
- Ethics (see Article 14)
- Give visibility to the EU funding (see Article 17.2)
- Respect specific rules for the action implementation (see Article 18)
- Information obligations (see Article 19)
- Record-keeping (see Article 20).

Articles refer to the EU Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement:

<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/fin/Draft%20Grant%20Agreement%20EUBA-EFSA-2024-PLANTS-02.pdf> .

3.5 Timing

The indicative timeline for the call process is provided in what follows based on a start date of 15 January 2025. The actual timeline and dates will be determined through the approval process with the European Commission. The call will be in line with all relevant EU regulations and procedures.

CALL #1 "Individual direct selling"	
	Month
Call announcement	28 (15.01.2025)
Deadline for proposal submission	30 (15.03.2025)
Evaluation & selection	32 (15.05.2025)
Project start date	33 (15.06.2025)
Project duration	33-45 (Up to 12 mths, i.e. 15.06.2025 – 15.06.2026)
CALL #2 "Collective sales & distribution"	
	Month
Call announcement	33 (15.06.2025)
Deadline for proposal submission	35 (15.08.2025)
Evaluation & selection	37 (15.10.2025)
Project start date	38 (15.11.2025)
Project duration	38-50 (Up to 12 mths, i.e. 15.11.2025 – 15.11.2026)

CALL #3 “Producer-consumer partnerships”	
	Month
Call announcement	38 (15.11.2025)
Deadline for proposal submission	40 (15.01.2026)
Evaluation & selection	42 (15.03.2026)
Project start date	43 (15.04.2026)
Project duration	43-55 (Up to 12 mths, i.e. 15.04.2026 – 15.04.2027)

3.6 Project duration, activities & budgeting

Projects are expected to be implemented over a period of up to 12 months.

Activities should engage or reach out to SFSC stakeholders in the country of focus, including farmers, business, academia, government, consumers, who are already or could be involved in the future in SFSC advisory actions. Project activities should focus on initiating, strengthening or otherwise enabling processes that lead to better SFSC advising going forwards, engaging with CORENET activities as appropriate. Activities might include workshops, learning platforms, guides, communications, farm visits, living labs, benchmarking, knowledge transfer, campaigns, consultations, policy dialogues, regulatory initiatives, building partnerships and/or alliances.

Each proposal must detail how the project will leverage or advance advisory practice so as to improve SFSC performance by making use of relevant CORENET Golden Case advisory models and experience. As a point of departure, the proposal needs to contain an explanation of how the project intends to replicate, adapt, implement and otherwise make use of CORENET GOLDEN CASE advisory models and practices.

Proposals need to include:

- Description of how an SFSC advisory model, practice or service is to be introduced, developed or otherwise adapted to improve SFSC performance and impact in the country of focus.
- An articulation of expectations and needs for advancing SFSC advice in the country of focus from the CORENET project, including possible participation in CORENET project activities, such as Field Visits, European Roadshows, on-line events and others.
- A detailed budget plan, including direct and indirect costs;
- Timeline and milestones for the project (up to 12 months)

4. SELECTION PROCEDURE

4.1 Selection committee

The already established GOLDEN CASE selection committee and the processes already operating within the framework of the CORENET project are to be the basis for LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT selection procedure.

Members of the Committee are individuals nominated by one or more Consortium Partners to act on their behalf to select LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS for inclusion in the CORENET Project in line with this GUIDE, SFSC Charter and Selection Procedure outlined in the SFSC LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT APPLICATION FORM. The selection committee is to operate in accordance with the following:

1. Nominees to serve on the Committee are approved by majority vote of Consortium Partners of the CORENET project
2. There is no limit to the number of Committee members.
3. Committee members are expected to:
 - a. read completed LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT APPLICATION FORMS, requesting additional information or clarification as needed, in order to recommend a LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT for inclusion in the CORENET project providing a written justification in case of both approval or rejection. Recommendation to be made in reference to the SFSC GOLDEN CASE HANDBOOK, GUIDE TO LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS, SFSC Charter and own experience. The task to be completed within 14 days of receiving a completed LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT APPLICATION FORM
 - b. participate in a meeting of the Selection Committee to review & discuss each application and vote to approve or reject the project for inclusion in CORENET as a LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT eligible for CORENET grant-aid and expert support.
 - c. Serve on the Selection Committee for the duration of the CORENET Project.

4.2 Selection procedure

The selection procedure is to comprise the following steps:

Initial assessment

Initial assessment of a LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT application to be completed by the Consortium Partner or Key National Contact Point (KNCP) for the country of focus. Based on the assessment a recommendation to proceed or not to proceed to the selection committee to be made by the Consortium Partner or KNCP. Initial assessment comprises 2 stages:

Eligibility Check (Stage 1):

- Proposals to be assessed for eligibility based on the formal requirements outlined in the call (e.g., applicant eligibility, completeness of the proposal, adherence to budget constraints).
- Only proposals that pass the eligibility check will move to the technical assessment phase.

Technical Evaluation (Stage 2):

Evaluation will be based on scoring against 4 criteria listed below:

- **RELEVANCE TO CORENET OBJECTIVES AND GOAL:** Proposals to be scored based on their alignment with the goals of the Lighthouse projects, focusing on improving SFSC advising and performance.
- **INNOVATION AND IMPACT:** Projects will be evaluated for their potential to generate innovative advisory solutions and demonstrate clear, measurable impact on SFSC practices in the local context.
- **FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY:** Evaluation of the viability of the project plan, the ability of the applicant(s) to deliver results, and the potential for long-term sustainability of the advisory practices developed.
- **COST-EFFECTIVENESS:** Evaluation will include an assessment of the proposed budget, ensuring that the financial plan is realistic and aligns with project objectives, including appropriate allocation of direct and indirect costs.

Evaluators need to use the same type of evaluation system/expressions in order to ensure coherent feedback and transparency throughout the project as specified below:

- For positive feedback the following expressions will be used by all evaluators :
 - good;
 - very good,
 - excellent.
- For negative feedback, the following expressions will be used by all evaluators :
 - minor shortcoming,
 - shortcoming,
 - significant weakness.
- Each of the 4 evaluation criteria listed above will be scored by the technical evaluator on a scale from 1 to 5 for each criterion.

Only proposals that receive a positive recommendation in the initial assessment (i.e good, very good or excellent) provided will proceed to the next phase (peer review).

Selection phase

The selection phase involves two stages: peer review and selection panel decision. In both cases evaluation criteria scoring will be consistent with initial evaluation (ie. 1 to 5 on each criteria & positive and/or negative feedback as per the Technical Evaluation stage).

Peer review (Stage 3):

- Proposals referred to the selection committee with a positive recommendation will be subjected to peer review by external experts or consortium members not involved in the initial technical evaluation. The peer review will ensure that all aspects of the proposal, including replicability, knowledge transfer, and engagement with Golden Cases, are thoroughly considered.
- At least 2 peer reviews are to be completed for each recommended application.

Selection decision (Stage 4):

- The application form, along with recommendation and 2 peer reviews is submitted for review to the Selection Committee. If there is more than one proposed project from the country of concern, a ranked list will be submitted additionally.
- The Selection Committee will meet after each of the 3 rounds of calls for proposals in accordance with the LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT timeline.
- The final selection will be based on the consensus of the Selection Committee, and the top-ranked proposals will be awarded funding in each round of the call.

Feedback to applicants

Notification of Results (Phase 5):

Applicants will be informed of the evaluation outcome within one month of the final decision for each call. Notifications will include the decision (successful or unsuccessful) and any relevant administrative steps for the successful applicants.

All applicants will be encouraged to contribute to and benefit from the CORENET project.

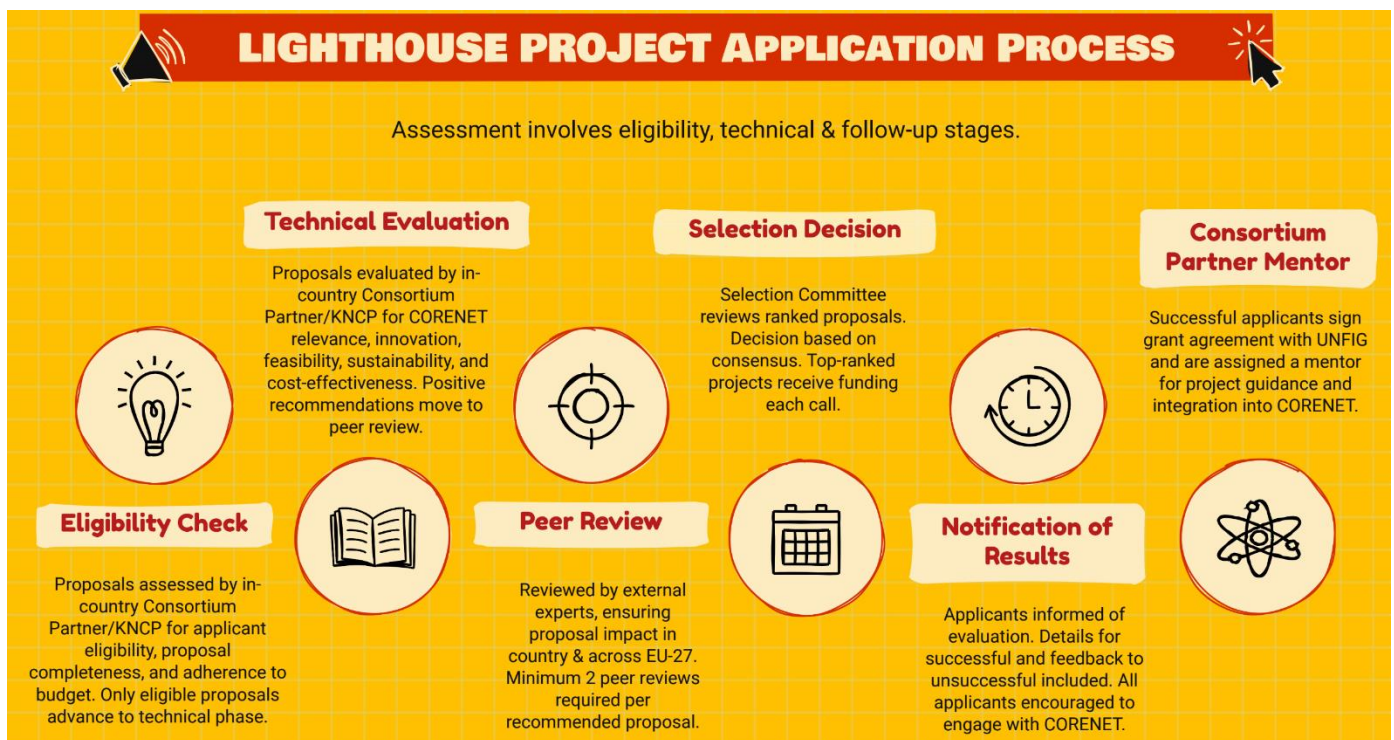
- Relevant Consortium partners and KCNPs will draw attention to and recommend opportunities.
- Successful applicants who become LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS will be assigned a Consortium Partner mentor who will be accompany réalisation of the project acting as a link into the CORENET project. The process will be agreed between the Consortium partner and the LIGHTHOUSE project for mutual benefit.
- Unsuccessful applicants will receive detailed feedback, including a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of their proposed project identified during the evaluation process. This feedback seeks to encourage applicants to improve their proposals for future calls under CORENET and/or other funding opportunities that would enable engagement with the CORENET project.

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- All applicants (successful and unsuccessful) will receive an Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) along with a formal (email) letter to communicate the result of the Evaluation (acceptance or rejection)

Appeals and Reconsideration (Phase 6):

If applicants believe that there has been a procedural error in the evaluation process, they may request a review. Appeals will only be considered in cases of procedural or administrative issues, not disagreements with the scientific or technical assessment.



5. EVALUATION FORM

Applicant Name		
Project Name & Country		
Evaluator Name		
Eligibility check		
Criteria check	Scoring	Feedback
RELEVANCE TO CORENET OBJECTIVES AND GOAL	Score 1 - 5	
INNOVATION AND IMPACT	Score 1 - 5	
FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY	Score 1 - 5	
COST-EFFECTIVENESS	Score 1 - 5	
SUMMARY COMMENTS		
RECOMMENDATIONS		

6. CORENET SUPPORT FOR LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS

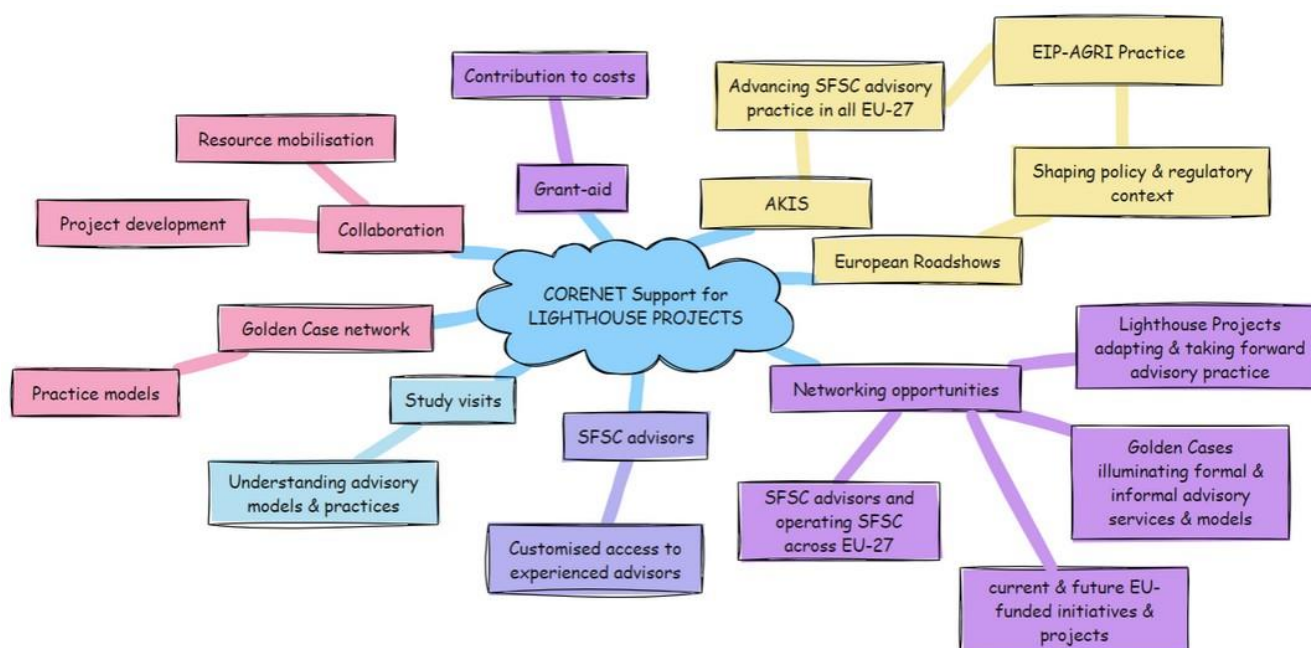
At the application stage, the respective in-country Consortium partner or KCNP is the first point of contact for prospective applicants. As part of their overall responsibility to contribute to, and benefit from, CORENET activities in individual EU member states, their task is to help with connecting to Golden Cases and related SFSC advisory models/practices that can inform and/or inspire LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS.

The expectation of CORENET partners and the KNCPs assigned to them is encourage, inform and inspire prospective Lighthouse project applicants by drawing attention to relevant CORENET Golden Case advisors and solutions in order to make the knowledge sharing & transfer easier, practical and useable to advance SFSC advising in the country of concern.

Once LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS have been selected, each consortium partner will be assigned to at least 2 Lighthouse projects as a mentor and CORENET entry point in order to ensure the projects benefit fully from engagement with the CORENET project and vice-versa, the insights and learnings from the LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS contribute fully to realising CORENET objectives and goal of networking SFSC advisors across the EU-27. Where appropriate, the Consortium Partner will work closely with the KNCP.

Consortium partners, along with their collaborating KNCPs where this is appropriate, are expected to analyse and promote the results of the LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT as they accompany their realisation, engaging also in peer-to-peer learning activities where appropriate and ensuring that the LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT connects effectively with Golden Cases and other Consortium or KNCP partners as needed.

The scope and timing of CORENET support for LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS will be agreed on a case-by-case basis between the LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT and the relevant Consortium Partner and KNCP in line with the overall CORENET goal of building an interactive and adaptive SFSC network across the EU-27.

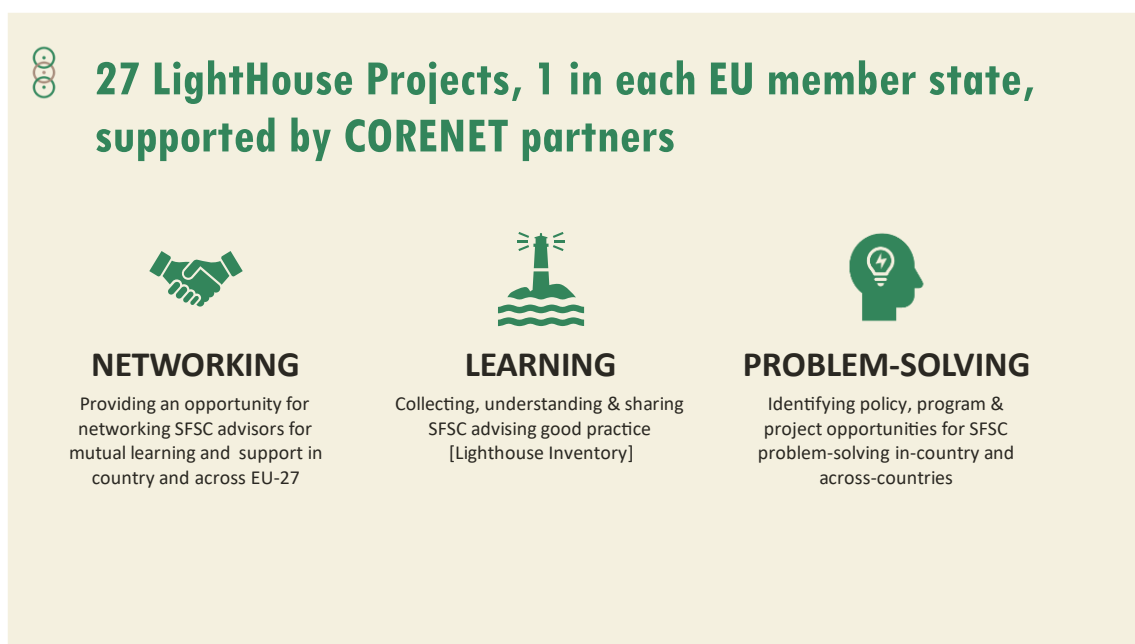


7. LIGHTHOUSE INVENTORY

The CORENET project ambition is that the 27 LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS and the SFSC advisors associated with them will themselves become part of a multi-faceted European-wide network as CORENET project implementation proceeds. The CORENET network is intended to be much more than a database – the CORENET vision is that it will be a living and self-organising network of mutual support of SFSC Advisors, who are pro-actively exchanging and sharing knowledge, information and good practice for mutual benefit.

A key opportunity for the network lies in making ‘usable’ for in-country SFSC advising relevant research results from the EU Horizon Europe, EIP-Agri Operational Groups, Local Action Groups and other EU-funded initiatives, projects and networks.

LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS are important contributors to making the CORENET vision a reality. With this in mind, the results of the Lighthouse projects are to share and add to knowledge on how to deploy SFSC advisory models, practices and services in different country-specific contexts so as to improve SFSC performance and increase SFSC impact.



Capturing and communicating results of the LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS will be a contribution to the CORENET knowledge repository that is being developed in WP5, T5.1 in the form of EIP-AGRI PRACTICE ABSTRACTS that will be shared through the EU CAP Network. In addition, practice information will be included in the EUfarmbook repository funded under CL6-2021-GOVERNANCE 24.

CORENET will provide LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS with support to prepare the EIP-AGRI Practice Abstracts in line with the standards and forms that have been adopted by the EU CAP network.

The relevant specifications can be found here:

https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/projects/practice-abstracts_en

End notes

ⁱ SFSC initiatives are now explicitly recognised by the EU as an area that should be supported within EU rural development policy. They are covered by a definition in Article 2 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), which entered into force with the reformed Common Agricultural Policy for 2014-2020: a short supply chain means '*a supply chain involving a limited number of economic operators, committed to cooperation, local economic development, and close geographical and social relations between producers, processors and consumers*'. This definition is complemented by Article 11 of European Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 807/2014 supplementing the Rural Development Regulation, which stipulates that '*Support for the establishment and development of short supply chains ... shall cover only supply chains involving no more than one intermediary between farmer and consumer*'. In France, SFSC have been officially defined in 2009 by the French Ministry of Agriculture as a marketing mode involving either the direct sale of products from the producer to the consumer, or the indirect sale with no more than one intermediary (Augère-Granie, 2016).