

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Open call – Poster Session: “Stories from the Field: The People Shaping the Future of Agriculture”

Symposium: *“The farmers of tomorrow. Skills, jobs and renewal pathways in times of uncertainty”*

Dates: 30 September – 1 October 2026 | Zaragoza, Spain

1. Context

On 30 September and 1 October, Zaragoza will host an international symposium on the future of the agricultural sector in the Mediterranean, focusing on a topic that is now critical: how to renew the sector, attract talent and create employment opportunities, including for younger generations and women.

The central question is simple but urgent: “Who will produce the food of the future? And under what conditions?” Across the Mediterranean region – from Southern Europe to North Africa – farmers are aging, family farms face economic challenges, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for younger generations to see agriculture as an attractive life path.

At the same time, **the sector is full of experiences of innovation, resilience and transformation**. This symposium aims to bring these stories to the forefront, creating a space for dialogue between research, policy and practice. As part of this, a Poster Session co-funded by **CIHEAM Zaragoza** and the **Horizon Europe project SafeHabitus** will showcase real-life experiences from the field, placing people and their stories at the centre of the discussion.

2. Objective

The poster session, titled “Stories from the Field: The People Shaping the Future of Agriculture”, aims to bring a first-person, human perspective to the symposium, complementing the five-roundtable discussion forming the core of the programme.

It seeks to feature **impactful, innovative and transformative initiatives**, capturing both opportunities and challenges in the Mediterranean agri-food sector. Poster should tell **real stories from the field**, including successes, struggles, lessons learned and innovation that can be replicated or inspire others.

3. Categories

Applicants should submit their poster under one of the following four categories. Posters should tell real stories while documenting the actions taken, outcomes achieved and lessons learned.

1. Overcoming barriers in farming

Stories of individuals who succeed in entering the agri-food sector despite challenges (*e.g. overcoming lack of land or finance, leveraging training programmes or starting from a non-farming backgrounds*). Posters should highlight strategies and outcomes that can inspire or inform others.

2. Innovation in agriculture

Stories showcasing innovative solutions in the agri-food sector (*e.g. new business models, green technologies, digitalization, new production or marketing approaches*). Posters should include evidence of results.

3. Wellbeing and working conditions

Stories reflecting the human side of agricultural work and how challenges are addressed (*e.g. workload, mental wellbeing, work-life balance, improving working conditions or livelihoods*). Poster should show practical solutions and lessons learners that can be applied or replicated.

4. Rural revitalisation and community impact

Stories how agriculture contributes to revitalising rural areas and communities (*e.g. repopulation, youth initiatives, social cohesion, new rural opportunities*). Posters should document impacts on people, communities or territories.

4. Poster format and guidelines

While creativity is encouraged, submitted posters should cover the following elements:

- **Title and subtitle**
- **Storytelling structure**
 - Context/challenge: what was the starting point?
 - Journey/actions: what was done? What steps were taken to address the challenge?
 - Results/impact: what changed or was achieved?
 - Lessons learned: key takeaways for others
- **Visual elements** – photos, diagrams, graphics...
- **Author information** – name and contact details

Technical specifications

- Size: A0
- Layout: portrait
- Submission format: PDF
- Language: English, French, Spanish
- Visuals: use photos, diagrams or graphics to illustrate the story
- Printing: posters will be printed by the Symposium organization team

Intellectual property

Posters remain property of authors. CIHEAM Zaragoza and *SafeHabitus* may use posters for dissemination with credit to authors.

5. Submission process

Applications must be submitted by completing the application form (download [here](#)) and sending it by email to symposium@iamz.ciheam.org no later than **23 June 2026 at 23:59 (CET)**.

Applicants are required to submit:

- A completed application form;
- A draft poster in PDF or PowerPoint format (rough version acceptable), presenting the main story, structure and key visual elements of the proposed poster.

Draft posters may be submitted in English, French or Spanish.

Abstract structure and guidelines

- **Title:** Short, catchy, and understandable to practitioners (max 150 characters).
- **Abstract:** (~1,500 characters/approx. 300 words)
 - Focus on practical application.
 - Context/Problem: Why was this done?
 - Description/Methodology: What was done, how, and by whom.
 - Main Outcomes/Recommendations: What is the practical value/benefit?
 - Conclusion/Takeaway: Key lesson or action for the end-user.
- **Language:** Must be submitted in English.
- **Requirements:**
 - Focus on "ideas, put into practice, with success".
 - Use direct, easy-to-understand language.

- Avoid complex academic jargon.
- Add "applicability" context for users.

Draft poster guidelines

Applicants should submit a rough draft of their poster in PDF or PowerPoint format. The draft does not need to be final or fully designed, but it should give the panel a clear sense of the story, structure and visuals. The draft poster can be submitted in English, French or Spanish.

A good draft poster should:

- Include the key elements indicated in section 4 (title, context/challenge, journey/actions, results/impact, lessons learned, author information).
- Include at least some rough visuals.
- Focus on clarity and narrative rather than design.

The draft will allow the selection panel to assess story quality, relevance and potential impact.

Notification and final submission

- **Official selection** will be available in the CIHEAM Zaragoza website from **25 June 2026**
- Selected participants will be notified via the email they provided in their application
- Selected participants must **confirm their participation in the symposium** by **30 June 2026**. Travel arrangements will be managed by CIHEAM Zaragoza.
- The **final poster** must be submitted by **1 September 2026**. Posters not meeting minimum quality standards may not be printed or presented.

6. Who can apply

This call is open to individuals (under 40 years-old) or organisations with practical experience in the agri-food sector across the Mediterranean region.

Eligible applicants include (but are not limited to):

- Farmers and producers, both new entrants to the agri-food sector and those transforming a family farm into an innovative business
- Entrepreneurs and start-ups working on innovative solutions in the agri-food sector
- Farmer organizations, cooperatives or community groups engaged in agri-food or rural development initiatives
- Practitioners from the third sector (NGOs, development agencies, international organizations...)

- Extension workers, advisors or applied researchers involved in field-based initiatives
- Youth and women-led organisations contributing to the agri-food sector or rural development

7. Selection criteria and process

A maximum of **15 posters** will be selected through a competitive process conducted by a dedicated selection panel.

Poster will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Clarity and quality of the story: coherence, structure, narrative.
- Relevance and impact: connection to symposium themes, practical outcomes
- Originality and inspiration: innovation or replicable ideas

Each criterion will be scored 1-5. In addition, geographical balance across the mediterranean, gender balance and youth participation will be encouraged.

Presentation of stories

Selected participants may be invited to briefly present their story during relevant round table discussions. Oral presentation (if invited) can be in English or Spanish. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided during the symposium.

8. Financial support

This poster session is co-funded by CIHEAM Zaragoza and the Horizon Europe project *SafeHabitus*. Travel and accommodation costs will be fully covered for participants whose posters are selected.