



Gleipnir

Nýsköpunar- og þróunarsetur á Vesturlandi

Expression of interest as a CIRCBIO-09 partner: Icelandic farm case study & multi-actor engagement

Hvanneyri, 28. júlí 2026

Dear colleagues,

Gleipnir, the Innovation Centre of West Iceland, is seeking to join a consortium preparing a proposal for HORIZON-CL6-2026-01-CIRCBIO-09, "Balancing food security, bioeconomy, climate and biodiversity objectives to unlock sustainable value chains" (deadline 17 September 2026). We are circulating this expression of interest to coordinators currently assembling partnerships.

WHO WE ARE

Gleipnir is the regional innovation centre for West Iceland, working at the interface between primary producers, research institutions and public bodies. Our work spans agriculture, food production, fisheries and aquaculture, sustainability and rural development, and our role is typically to connect research to the producers who have to act on it.

WHAT A SUBARCTIC CASE ADDS TO THIS TOPIC

CIRCBIO-09 asks how growing demand for agricultural land and biomass for non-food purposes affects food security, farm incomes and land-use conflict. West Iceland answers that question under conditions no continental case study can supply. Production operates at the northern margin of European agriculture: a growing season of roughly four months, livestock housed and fed for seven to eight, cultivated land amounting to a very small share of the national territory, young volcanic soils vulnerable to erosion, and near-total dependence on imported feed, fertiliser and fuel arriving by sea. Biomass yields per hectare are a fraction of continental equivalents, which changes the arithmetic of every bioeconomy business model: land diverted to non-food use is not marginal surplus here, it is a direct subtraction from an already thin domestic food supply. Iceland also sits outside the CAP, so market incentives reach farmers without the counterweight of coupled support or cross-compliance. For a consortium testing natural capital accounting methods and diversification models, this is the stress



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case, if a method holds at this margin, its robustness elsewhere is demonstrated rather than assumed.

TOURISM AS THE COMPETING INCOME STREAM

We would also bring a dimension the topic description does not anticipate but which we believe belongs in the analysis. In Iceland, the dominant alternative income stream for primary producers is not bioeconomy value chains or nature credits, - it is tourism. Farms in Borgarfjörður and on Snæfellsnes convert outbuildings to guest accommodation, land to horse riding and hiking access, and labour away from livestock; small-boat operators move from quota-constrained fishing to sea angling, whale watching and puffin tours. The returns are faster, less capital-intensive and far more visible to a farming family than carbon or biodiversity credits. This matters analytically for three reasons. First, any model of farmer decision-making that treats bio-based and nature-market opportunities as the main alternative to food production will mis-specify the choice actually being made. Second, tourism competes for the same scarce inputs, labour, capital, buildings, access to landscape and can hollow out food production without any change in land cover, making it invisible to land-use monitoring. Third, tourism income is seasonal and externally shocked, so a food system that has quietly become dependent on it carries a resilience risk that current food security indicators do not capture. Adding a well-evidenced tourism dimension would strengthen the proposal's claim to have assessed diversification pathways realistically, and the Icelandic case is where that evidence is easiest to collect.

WHAT WE OFFER A CONSORTIUM

- Multi-actor delivery: farmer and small-boat operator recruitment and sustained engagement through established regional relationships with producers, the advisory service, municipalities and the farmers' association.
- A regional case study on income diversification, land and labour reallocation, and the sequencing of decisions between food production, tourism and nature-market opportunities.
- A test site for natural capital accounting methods and business models under subarctic constraints, short season, high input dependency, no CAP framework.
- Analysis of underutilised and secondary biomass streams (agricultural sidestreams, wool and slaughter by-products, fisheries sidestreams) as alternative value sources for producers.



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- Dissemination to Icelandic ministries currently developing carbon-farming, land-use and food security policy.

A one-page profile, CVs and a draft task description are available on request, and we can respond to a partnership enquiry within two working days.

With best regards,

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