



Co-funded by
the European Union

Joint Policy Statement of LIFE CET Food-Related Projects on Energy Transition in Agrifood

*Energy Efficiency: The First Ingredient of a Competitive
Food Sector*





Content

Introduction	3
1. Recommendation: Make Energy Audits Strategic and Action-Oriented.....	4
2. Recommendation: Bridge the Gap Between Audits and Implementation.....	4
3. Recommendation: Accelerate Digitalisation and Data-Driven Energy Management ...	5
4. Recommendation: Strengthen Ecosystem Support and Peer Learning	5
Key Message	5
Supporting projects	6

Disclaimer

*The information and views set out in this *type of document* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the following information.*



Introduction

Improving Energy Audit Quality and Implementation in the European Agri-Food Sector

The agri-food sector sits directly at the point where volatile input costs are passed through to consumer prices. Not all causes of “Food inflation” can be tackled, but reducing avoidable energy use offers a major opportunity to lower operating costs, strengthen competitiveness and limit pressure on food prices.

Conventional energy audits and investment assessments often focus primarily on energy-cost savings and simple payback periods. This can significantly undervalue energy-efficiency investments. In the agri-food sector, measures may also deliver substantial non-energy benefits—including improved process control and product quality, higher productivity, reduced waste and maintenance, improved working conditions and greater operational resilience. Systematically identifying and, where possible, quantifying these benefits can strengthen the business case and help move projects from audit recommendations to investment decisions.

Drawing on the experience of [AENEAM](#), [EENOVA](#), [BETTED](#), [AUDIT PLUS](#), [REEValue](#) LIFE projects supporting agri-food SMEs across Europe, we call for stronger policies to maximise the impact of energy audits as drivers of energy efficiency, competitiveness, and decarbonisation.

While energy audits are a key instrument under the revised **Energy Efficiency Directive (EED)**, their potential is often limited by insufficient follow-up, weak integration into business decision-making, and inadequate support for implementation. This is particularly true for SMEs.



1. Recommendation: Make Energy Audits Strategic and Action-Oriented

We recommend:

- Incentivising the reporting on the implementation and impacts of audit recommendations by promoting EEOS (Art.8) programmes.
- Ensuring audits assess companies' overall energy strategy and long-term decarbonisation objectives, enabling the identification of coherent investment pathways (e.g. finance checklists connecting other instruments to action).
- Requiring or encouraging energy audits to systematically identify and, where feasible, quantify non-energy benefits alongside energy and carbon savings, including impacts on productivity, product quality, maintenance and equipment reliability, process control, working conditions, waste reduction, resilience and competitiveness. These benefits should be incorporated into the economic assessment and prioritisation of recommended measures.

2. Recommendation: Bridge the Gap Between Audits and Implementation

We recommend:

- Providing dedicated post-audit technical support for project development, financing, procurement, and implementation.
- Strengthening the financial expertise of energy auditors and promoting harmonised methodologies for assessing investments.
- Supporting the uptake of energy management systems and digital energy management technologies.
- Establishing dedicated funding schemes for energy monitoring and management systems such as EEOS and others.
- Adapting funding and investment-appraisal frameworks to capture the full value of energy-efficiency and energy-management investments, including avoided costs and non-energy benefits such as increased productivity, improved product quality, reduced maintenance and downtime, better working conditions, greater resilience and continuous performance improvement.



3. Recommendation: Accelerate Digitalisation and Data-Driven Energy Management

We recommend:

- Incentivising the adoption of Energy Management Systems (EMS) by agri-food SMEs that benefit from the introduction of digitalisation and energy data management.
- Introducing preferential co-financing rates for advanced metering and monitoring systems to support data-driven energy management and future efficiency investments.

4. Recommendation: Strengthen Ecosystem Support and Peer Learning

We recommend:

- Recognising and supporting **innovation clusters, business networks, chambers of commerce, and regional support organisations** as key enablers of the energy transition, helping SMEs share experience, access expertise and financing, and accelerate project implementation.
- Encouraging peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange through sectoral and regional networks.
- Establishing capacity-building programmes to transform organisational energy cultures, thereby enhancing skills and knowledge in sustainable value chains

Key Message

Energy audits should be viewed as the starting point of a continuous energy management and decarbonisation journey, not as a compliance exercise. Audits on company level should reveal the full business value of energy efficiency: not only energy and carbon savings, but also the associated benefits for productivity, quality, resilience and competitiveness, digitalisation and strategic planning. The cooperation between companies helps ecosystems to unlock their full potential and accelerate the energy transition of the European agri-food sector.



Supporting projects

AENEAM

The AENEAM project aims to accelerate the transition of the EU agri-food industry towards a sustainable growth model by increasing the uptake of recommended measures from energy audits. The project will encourage companies, mainly SMEs, to undergo energy audits and subsequently implement the recommendations from these audits, promoting digital solutions.

EENOVA

EENOVA aims to tackle some of the main challenges related to the food chain and its high dependence on fossil fuel, by putting an in-depth focus on energy-smart solutions, by assessing and increasing the level of energy efficiency, renewable energy while at the same time reducing the carbon intensity of 5 regional value chains in 5 different food processing subsectors.

BETTED

The BETTED Project aims to facilitate companies (especially SMEs) belonging to supply chains in the dairy sector to foster the market uptake of energy efficiency measures including the use of renewables and the deployment of heat pumps at the value chain level. Moreover, the project will also significantly contribute to the reduction of fossil fuels dependency fast tracking the energy transition.

AUDIT PLUS

LIFE AUDIT-PLUS will support Energy Intensive Industries (EII) with operational groups that can provide technical, financial, regulatory and training support to accompany them in the implementation of cost-efficient energy efficiency measures and meet EU emission reduction goals. By offering comprehensive, structured, long-term support that accompanies the company until the end of the investment process and integrates these lines of action with other technical ones to enhance the competitive edge.

REValue

The REValue project is focused on fostering collaborations among businesses operating within specific NACE codes in the food, beverage, and transport sectors. Our primary objective is to identify and implement energy efficiency (EE) and renewable energy (RES) opportunities. To achieve this, we gather up-to-date technical information on EE, RES, and collaboration models, align these data with available financial support mechanisms, and translate it into easily understandable resources for businesses.