

PRESS RELEASE

The Project

TealHelix is an EU-funded project that aims to create a personalised, inclusive and targeted approach to sustainable food labelling. The project brings together **17 partners** from **11 European countries**, including academic and research institutions, NGOs, market research companies and marketing agencies. **Coordinated by KU Leuven**, a leading research university in Belgium and with a budget of €6.5 million, TealHelix responds to the current status quo of low incentive behind sustainable food consumption by understanding the motivational characteristics of consumers and empowering them in making informed, sustainability-aligned decisions.

The approach

The project develops new labelling approaches and digital social innovations to guide and improve consumer decision-making. Combining insights from life cycle, social and economic environments analysis, measurement, and consumer behaviour theories, the project is developing a new measure to assess how individual and planetary preferences for various sustainability dimensions can be aligned to reach sustainability goals

By blending transdisciplinary knowledge, original empirical evidence, and digital solutions, TealHelix develops **behavioural interventions** that will be designed and **tested in real-life** settings and different retail environments across **6 EU countries**, incl. the Baltics, Germany, Poland and Greece. Moreover, the project will leverage expertise from current and past research & innovation initiatives and from key partnerships, such as the Joint Research Center (JRC).

According to the project's coordinator, Prof. Dr. Justina Baršytė, consumers are surrounded by hundreds of thousands of labels and creating another label -even a very powerful and very influential label- will not change the essence of behavioural patterns. *"At the centre of all previous initiatives and approaches to sustainability labelling was the assumed ability and motivation of consumers to identify and buy 'correct' (sustainable) products. This left consumers little aware of their own cumulative impact on the planet. The ground-breaking nature of TealHelix is to shift the focus – instead of only labelling products, we are building tools that will allow to 'label' consumers."*, says **Justina Baršytė**.

TealHelix will deliver systemic, human-centric solutions using insights from science, marketing, and social media. It will segment consumers based on external factors and food sustainability information needs. These findings will guide the creation of the **Sustainable Food Compass**, a psychometric tool aligning consumer preferences with key sustainability dimensions. By connecting human and planetary needs, it will also assist in estimating the sustainability of commonly perceived "sustainable" foods, such as local or organic products.



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At the same time, the **Go Green Hubs** will bring citizens and other stakeholder groups to explore their interests on sustainable food information provision. To further empower consumer choice, **AI-supported gamification** will offer interactive, tailored guidance based on individual sustainability interests, while an accompanying app will help verify product claims and build greater trust in labelling systems. The project will also test explicit, conscious, and, implicit unconscious processes linked to sustainability dimensions, as well as develop a number of behavioural interventions to guide consumers.

In addition to these technical and behavioural innovations, TealHelix **will drive social impact** by tailoring sustainability labelling to individual motivations and needs, particularly among vulnerable consumer groups. Through motivational matching and inclusive design, the project will reduce resistance to sustainability messages, promote equitable engagement, and ensure that no one is left behind. Moreover, integrity guidelines for communicating food sustainability will be provided to industry and policy actors. These efforts will help the widespread adoption and replication of the project's results.

Collaborating for innovation

Currently, the project has **established synergies** with **CUES**, **FEAST**, and **3-CO** which are EU-funded projects, united in their purpose of addressing sustainable consumption and consumer's choices. TealHelix has also joined the **EU Cluster for Traceability and Trust**. These partnerships are essential to ensuring real-world impact, accelerating the transition to sustainable food systems.

Next steps

Following its kick-off meeting in Leuven on September 24-25, 2024, the TealHelix consortium held its first General Assembly on 17-18 of March, 2025, at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam) in the Netherlands. Six months updates were given by all partners and the consortium decided on common directions in their research, behavioural interventions, ICT, and pilot activities. The next **General Assembly**, marking the first year of the project will be hosted by GS1 Germany in Cologne, from the **29th to the 30th of September 2025**.

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