Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of the Environment,
Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC

Swiss Federal Office of Energy SFOE
Energy Research and Cleantech

Research Programme Bioenergy
Call 2026 for Research Proposals

The Research Programme Bioenergy promotes application-oriented innovations on the energetic use of biomass, with a focus on system-wide considerations across the entire value chain, from biomass sources through conversion technologies to end-use applications. This includes the targeted use of different biomass fractions, improved conversion technologies, cascading use in line with the circular economy, and the effective valorisation of by-products such as CO_2 and nutrients.

In line with the Federal Energy Research Masterplan 2025–2028 and its detailed concept, research priorities are defined through periodic thematic calls. This call is governed by the Directive on the submission and evaluation of applications for financial support of energy research, pilot and demonstration projects and authorisation of sandbox projects.

Scope

The sustainable and efficient use of biomass is a central pillar of Switzerland's energy transition. Biomass is currently the second-largest source of renewable energy in Switzerland and, thanks to its storability and versatility, is expected to play an increasingly important role, particularly for system flexibility, security of supply, and the replacement of fossil fuels in hard-to-electrify sectors.

The potential of Swiss biomass is well documented. The key challenge is no longer to refine resource estimates, but to improve the mobilisation and utilisation of available resources, including both already-used and currently underutilised biomass streams.

This call aims to support projects that strengthen and transform biomass-energy systems in Switzerland by activating untapped biomass fractions, creating new value chains, developing innovative business models, or addressing structural barriers to mobilisation. An ideal project identifies a concrete problem or improvement opportunity in an existing sector, proposes real-world measures to address it, involves relevant partners to enable scale-up, and assesses the expected impacts at system level, including costs and environmental effects. Projects should demonstrate a clear contribution to the bioenergy sector and generate benefits beyond a single niche application, where relevant through impacts on the wider Swiss energy system.

Projects should be applied and implementation-oriented. Technical developments are eligible but should be embedded in a broader analysis of economic viability, implementation pathways, and system-level ecological considerations. Purely theoretical or conceptual studies may be considered, but projects with a clear application context and implementation perspective will be prioritised. Involvement of partners with complementary expertise is considered an advantage. Incremental efficiency improvements within existing value chains are also not the focus. All projects must have strong relevance to Switzerland.

Research Topics

Researchers are invited to submit proposals addressing one of the two topics listed below. Projects are not expected to address all research questions but should engage with a relevant subset, which may be adapted or reformulated. Additional relevant research questions may also be introduced where appropriate.

Topic 1: Increased and/or improved supply of sustainable biomass resources

Research questions of interest include:

- How can the quantity and/or quality of available biomass for energy use be increased in the Swiss context, without compromising ecological sustainability?
- What technological, logistical or storage bottlenecks exist along the biomass supply chain, and how can they be addressed in a cost-effective and scalable way?
- What key economic or coordination barriers prevent the mobilisation of untapped biomass resources, and what organisational or business models can help overcome them?
- What are the implications of competing downstream applications of the same biomass resources, and how can their utilisation be promoted despite such competition?

Topic 2: Implementation and optimisation of biomass-energy value chains

Research questions of interest include:

- How can existing biomass-energy value chains be redesigned and organised in practice to improve efficiency, resilience, and sustainability in Switzerland?
- How can biogas and other bioenergy plants adapt their operation and design to better contribute to energy system flexibility and security of supply?
- How can cascading use of biomass be implemented in practice, ensuring effective coordination between material and energetic uses across sectors and actors?
- What business models, coordination structures, or cooperation arrangements enable more efficient and sustainable biomass valorisation in Switzerland?

Timeline

22 June 2026	Launch of the call
27 July 2026	**Deadline for questions regarding the call**
31 August 2026	**Deadline for submission of full proposals**
End of September 2026	Notification of approved proposals
November 2026–January 2027	Launch of approved projects

Application procedure

The call follows a one-stage submission and evaluation procedure. Full proposals (approx. 20 pages; see full proposal template) must be submitted. The main applicant (coordinator) prepares the full proposal using the template available on the SFOE Research Programme website in English, German or French. Required enclosures (e.g. financial spreadsheet) are specified in the application forms. Only research and development (R&D) projects are eligible. Pilot and demonstration projects as well as sandbox projects are not eligible under this call.

The following points should be noted for project proposals:

- Proposals must clearly align with one of the topics defined in this call. Proposals falling outside these topics will not be considered.
- A maximum of one full proposal per main applicant can be approved.
- Projects will be evaluated based on the criteria defined in the Directive on the submission and evaluation of applications for financial support of energy research, pilot and demonstration projects. There is no competition between the two topics defined in this call. An overall ranking applies across both topics; funding decisions are based on this ranking and available budget.

The full proposals must be submitted as one PDF file together with the required enclosures (e.g. the financial spreadsheet in Excel format) by e-mail (subject: "Bioenergy Call 2026") to energieforschung@bfe.admin.ch by 31 August 2026.

Receipt of the full proposal will be confirmed in due time. If you do not receive confirmation of submission by 2 September 2026, please contact Dr Vanessa Burg (see contact details below).

Eligibility

The call is primarily addressed to universities (including ETH-domain), universities of applied science, further research organizations and the private sector in Switzerland. The participation of young scientists in the research teams is encouraged. Personnel costs are eligible up to the maximum rates defined in the Directive on the submission and evaluation of applications for financial support of energy research, pilot and demonstration projects. The Bioenergy Research Programme does not cover overhead costs.

Only projects with a clear focus on the bioenergy sector and in line with the scope of this call can be considered for funding. The projects should address questions relevant for Switzerland.

Proposals from working groups, including specialists from different fields, are welcome (main applicant and contact should be indicated). Gender-balance and diversity are encouraged. An adequate share of own and/or third-party contributions (in-kind and/or cash) is expected and must be formally confirmed with submission of the full proposal. Collaboration with partners from industry is encouraged to facilitate real-world implementation. Cooperation and exchange with ongoing projects or consortia in the field (e.g. SWEET programme) funded by SFOE or other funding bodies is also strongly encouraged. Public and private research institutions outside Switzerland may participate as project partners together with a Swiss main applicant, provided that their contributions are essential to achieving the project objectives, cannot be provided by Swiss partners, and generate clear added value for Switzerland.

Supported projects typically receive public funding between 100–350 kCHF and have a duration of 18–36 months. While there are no formal limits, a project duration exceeding 36 months would require thorough justification. The indicative call budget is in the range of 0.9–1.4 MCHF and depends on the number and size of projects approved for funding, the distribution of payments over the fiscal years and the approval of annual credits by Parliament. If deemed necessary during the evaluation of proposals, or required under applicable legal provisions, SFOE may adjust budgets or impose specific conditions for funding approval.

Applicants must comply with the conditions set out in the Directive on the submission and evaluation of applications for financial support of energy research, pilot and demonstration projects. There is no entitlement to funding.

Evaluation and approval of proposals

Project proposals will be evaluated according to the criteria listed in the Appendix. This includes formal and content-related eligibility criteria, all of which must be fulfilled, as well as qualitative evaluation criteria. In cases where several proposals are of comparable merit and overlap significantly in content, the SFOE reserves the right to fund only the highest-ranked proposal.

Contact information

If you have any questions regarding the call, please contact:

Dr Vanessa Burg: vanessa.burg@bfe.admin.ch

The deadline for questions is 27 July 2026. Answers to questions of general interest and relevance will be published on the Bioenergy Research website. No extension of the deadline will be granted.

Appendix: Evaluation Criteria

A submitted project must fulfil all eligibility criteria to be evaluated.

Eligibility Criteria

Formal criteria:

Criteria		
F1	Is the application complete (does the proposal include all information requested in the call)?	Yes / No
F2	Are the objectives of the research project clearly formulated and is the proposal well structured?	Yes / No
F3	Was the application submitted in time?	Yes / No
F4	In case of scientific publications: is open access granted?	Yes / No

Content-related criteria:

Criteria		
C1	Does the project fall within the competence of the SFOE and fit the Bioenergy Research Programme?	Yes / No
C2	Does the proposal clearly align with one of the two topics defined in this call?	Yes / No

Qualitative Criteria

Each of the main criteria will be scored on a scale from 1 to 5 and are weighted as indicated below. The 1–5 scoring system for each criterion indicates the following assessment:

1 – Poor: The criterion is inadequately addressed.
2 – Fair: The criterion is partially addressed.
3 – Good: The criterion is well addressed.
4 – Very good: The criterion is comprehensively addressed.
5 – Excellent: All aspects of the criterion are addressed in an outstanding manner.

For a project to be considered for funding, each qualitative criterion (Q1 to Q5) must obtain a minimum average score of 3. Sub-criteria marked with ** must reach a minimum score of 3 on their own.

Criteria		Min. score
Q1	**Organisation (weight: 1.0)**	**ø 3**
**	**Organisation, roles and responsibility**: Is the project well organised with clearly defined roles and responsibilities? Are the relevant partners involved?	At least 3
	Schedule and milestones: Is the proposed schedule realistic and efficiently drawn up? Have clearly measurable milestones been stipulated?	
	Cost-benefit ratio, subsidiarity: To what extent does the project offer the potential for significant benefits relative to the costs involved? Have sufficient own and/or third-party contributions been committed?	
Q2	**Excellence – Suitability and expertise of the project team (weight: 1.0)**	**ø 3**
	Expertise and academic record: Does the team have the required expertise and competencies? Are members recognised specialists in their field with a strong academic record?	

	Preliminary work: Can the team build on previous work relevant to this project?	
	Team's potential for success: Is clear potential for success discernible?	
Q3	**Content of project (weight: 2.0)**	**ø 3**
**	**Call alignment and problem orientation**: To what extent does the project address a concrete problem or improvement opportunity in the Swiss biomass-energy sector as defined in this call? Does it propose real-world measures involving relevant partners and include an assessment of expected impacts at system level?	At least 3
	Strategic relevance and innovation: Is the research topic timely and relevant from scientific, political, and strategic perspectives within the Swiss energy and bioenergy context? Does the project build up strategic knowledge or develop innovative approaches relevant to the Swiss bioenergy sector?	
	Approach, methodology and data: Is the proposed approach and methodology appropriate to address the issue? Is the project feasible within the proposed timeline and budget? Is access to the required resources and data ensured, or has a clear plan been defined to acquire them? Are potential risks clearly identified and suitable mitigation measures defined?	
Q4	**Impact potential (weight: 1.0)**	**ø 3**
	Energy potential: To what extent does the project contribute to improved energy yield and/or bioenergy integration into the Swiss energy system (e.g. system flexibility, security of supply)? Does it demonstrate scalability or relevance beyond a single niche application?	
	Ecological potential: Does the project contribute to reduced GHG emissions, improved resource efficiency, or other ecological benefits?	
	Societal relevance: Are the research findings of interest to relevant industries, policymakers, or the professional audience? Do they provide a useful foundation for informed decision-making?	
	Economic potential: Does the project contribute to improved cost-effectiveness, new value chains, or economic viability of biomass use in Switzerland?	
Q5	**Dissemination (weight: 1.0)**	**No minimum**
	Stakeholder engagement: How well is the dissemination and uptake strategy planned? Is open-access publication foreseen? Are results communicated to enable practical application and broader adoption beyond the project?	
	Public interest and open access: To what extent does the project generate broader interest? How comprehensive is the open access/data/model strategy?	