International First Level Master in

Open Innovation & Youth Entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean Agrifood Sector

Academic Year 2026 - 2027

Jointly organized by CIHEAM Bari and LUM Strategy Innovation

CIHEAM Bari and **LUM University "Giuseppe Degennaro"** are launching the 8th edition of the International First Level Master's programme in **Open Innovation & Youth Entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean Agrifood Sector**. The programme is developed in collaboration with **LUM Strategy Innovation**, the LUM University's spin-off specializing in strategy, innovation and sustainability, and **Almacube**, the University of Bologna's spin-off dedicated to open innovation and youth entrepreneurship support. The programme is supported by the **Mediterranean Innovation Partnership (MIP)**, a network of national and international **companies** and **organizations**.

Involved companies
Partner companies will **actively participate in the Master's activities**, especially during the **project work phase**, where students will be challenged to develop innovative solutions to real business problems. This **close collaboration** with the **private sector** ensures a practical, hands-on approach to innovation. **Cooperation** with the business ecosystem is a key pillar of the programme, fully aligned with the **Open Innovation approach**.

Objectives
The Master aims to train a **new generation of Innovation Managers** capable of **leading transformation processes** and **unlocking entrepreneurial potential** within their local and professional contexts. The programme offers a **learning-by-doing path**, where participants are introduced to methodologies such as **Design Thinking**, enabling them to **design and validate** innovative business ideas, products, and services with a specific focus on the agrifood value chain, digitalization and sustainability.

The course is designed to **strengthen entrepreneurial competencies**, **co-design the implementation of innovation projects** within companies, **foster the creation of new startups**, and **promote the transfer of knowledge** between research and the private sector. Special attention is given to **social and technological innovation,** as well as hands-on learning through close collaboration with startups and established companies.

Course structure
The course is divided into **three main phases**:

- The **first phase** equips participants with **core knowledge and skills** in areas such as Entrepreneurial Mindset, Business Model Design for Continuous Innovation, Agile Methods and Change Management, Innovation in Agrifood and Social Innovation, and Communication, Marketing & Storytelling.
- The **second phase** focuses on **developing a project work in collaboration with partner companies**. Working in multidisciplinary teams, students tackle real business challenges by applying Open Innovation and co-design methodologies to design, prototype, and validate high-impact solutions.
- The **third phase** involves the **writing of an individual thesis** based on the projects developed during the team-based project work. The thesis will be formally presented and discussed at the end of the programme before an academic committee.

The programme is organized in **weekly learning units** totalling **1,500 hours**, equivalent to **60 ECTS credits**, including **286 hours of face-to-face lectures**, **132 hours of practical sessions**, and **over 300 hours of internships with private companies, complemented by individual and team work activities**.

The programme will be delivered in English.

In terms of **job placement**, the Master's course aims at creating the following **professional profiles**:

- **Self-entrepreneur**
- **Innovation Manager**: expert in the management of innovation processes;
- **Innovation Broker**: specialist in knowledge transfer between research institutions and companies.

Admission requirements
The Master's programme is open to **applicants of any nationality** holding at least a **bachelor's degree in any discipline** (minimum 3-year degree in any discipline). To better develop multidisciplinary teams and enhance the quality and relevance of the projects developed during the project work phase, candidates with backgrounds in business, marketing, social sciences, human sciences, design and architecture are especially encouraged to apply.

Participants: min 20 - max 30

Applications
Applications will be open from **01 April to 30 May 2026**. All required documents **must be submitted in English**, exclusively online, **via the CIHEAM Bari official platform**: https://online-application.iamb.ciheam.org

Selection procedure
The selection process is composed of **two stages**:

1. The first stage consists of a **review of the application documents** submitted online.
2. The second stage involves an **individual interview**, conducted remotely, to assess the candidate's motivation, profile alignment, and growth potential within the programme.

Costs and Scholarships
The tuition fee is **€4,000** for candidates from **non-EU countries in the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Africa**. **€8,000** for candidates from all other countries.

CIHEAM Bari grants at least **12 full scholarships**, **reserved for candidates from non-EU Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and African countries**, according to a ranking list. These scholarships cover tuition fees, travel and insurance expenses, board and lodging, and pocket money.

Additional full or partial scholarships may be awarded depending on available funding and selection outcomes.

For further details about OI:
https://www.iamb.ciheam.org/education/oi/

International First-Level Master's Programme (60 ECTS)

Module 1 — Startup & Entrepreneurial Mindset
What does it take to build something new from scratch? This module explores the full lifecycle of an innovative startup, from idea generation to growth, through simulations, case analyses, and real-world scenarios. Students develop the entrepreneurial thinking and practical tools needed to identify opportunities, navigate uncertainty, and act decisively in competitive environments.

Module 2 — Open Innovation & Innovative Corporate Mindset
Innovation rarely happens in isolation. This module examines how companies, startups, research institutions, and organisations can collaborate to generate value that none could create alone. Grounded in Open Innovation theory and ESG principles, students explore how to design strategies that are both commercially effective and socially responsible.

Module 3 — Innovation Ecosystems in Practice
Every innovation project exists within a broader system of actors, policies, and relationships. Students learn to map and analyse national and regional innovation ecosystems, identifying key stakeholders, understanding funding flows, and positioning their own initiatives strategically within the landscape that surrounds them.

Module 4 — Digital Innovation & Digital Transformation
Digital technology is reshaping every industry, including agrifood. This module moves beyond buzzwords to examine how digital innovation actually changes business models, organisational structures, and decision-making. Drawing on Industry 4.0 and 5.0 frameworks, students assess the digital maturity of a real company and define a concrete transformation roadmap.

Module 5 — Artificial Intelligence for Business
AI is no longer a future prospect; it is a present reality reshaping how organisations operate and compete. This module equips students with the conceptual foundations and practical frameworks needed to evaluate, apply, and critically interrogate AI tools in business contexts, with particular attention to Generative AI, ethical implications, and strategic integration.

Modules 6-7-8 — Innovation in Agrifood I, II & III
A rich, immersive series combining lectures, field visits, and direct encounters with practitioners. Topics span food trends, short supply chains, precision farming, soil and water management, agrivoltaics, and the role of digital technologies across the value chain. Students gain a concrete, multi-disciplinary understanding of where the agrifood sector is heading, and why it matters.

Modules 9–10 — Business Model Design for Continuous Innovation
A well-executed idea needs a well-designed model behind it. This two-week module covers the tools and methods for building, analysing, and reimagining business models, including the Business Model Canvas, Value Proposition Canvas, and 4.0 design patterns. Students apply these frameworks directly with real companies, developing proposals grounded in both theory and market reality.

Module 11 — Agile Methods & Change Management
In rapidly shifting environments, the ability to adapt is as important as expertise. This module introduces agile methodologies as a practical mindset for managing complexity, leading change, and building resilient teams. Through hands-on exercises and reflection, students develop the habits of continuous learning, iterative thinking, and effective collaboration under pressure.

Module 12 — Corporate Sustainability: Managerial & Financial Tools
Sustainable strategy is no longer optional. This module examines how organisations embed environmental, social, and governance priorities into their core operations, through stakeholder engagement, materiality analysis, ESG reporting frameworks, and quality management systems. Students develop an original Social Innovation Project, connecting theory directly to practice.

Module 13 — Communication, Marketing & Storytelling
A great solution is only as powerful as the story told around it. This module develops students' ability to craft compelling value propositions, communicate across channels, and build brands that resonate. Drawing on digital marketing, consumer behaviour, and storytelling techniques, students apply their skills through a team project grounded in the agrifood sector.

Project Work 1 — Design Thinking Approach
The project work begins with listening. Working in multidisciplinary teams alongside partner companies, students conduct in-depth qualitative research, interviews, field observations, and co-creation sessions to deeply understand the context, stakeholders, and unmet needs at the heart of a real innovation challenge. The output is not yet a solution: it is clarity about the right problem to solve.

Project Work 2 — Ideation, Prototyping & Validation
Ideas are tested, not just discussed. Building on the insights from Phase 1, teams move through rapid ideation, concept development, and iterative prototyping cycles. Regular milestones and reviews with partner companies ensure that solutions remain grounded in real constraints. Dual coaching - methodological and technical-scientific - supports teams throughout.

Project Work 3 — Business Case Development
The final phase brings the full innovation journey together. Teams consolidate months of research, prototyping, and validation into a professional business case, a structured, evidence-based proposal presented before partner companies, external stakeholders, and an academic committee. This is where learning becomes deliverable.