

Tender Title:	Call for Tender for the Provision of Services to Assess Potential Health Benefits of Polar Lipids Sourced from Under-Utilised Pelagic Fish Species and Co-Products
BIM Internal Reference:	2026-31
Date of Issue:	Wednesday, 5th August 2026
Clarification Period Closing Date:	12 noon (Irish Standard Time), Friday, 21st August 2026
Receipt of Tenders Deadline:	12 noon (Irish Standard Time), Friday, 28th August 2026

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1. Introduction

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), Ireland's Seafood Development Agency remit is to provide commercially relevant and innovative services to the Irish seafood industry that drive growth opportunities, add value, enhance competitiveness and create jobs in a sustainable, natural resource-based industry for the benefit of coastal communities.

BIM's vision is a scaled Irish seafood industry capitalising on the growing opportunities for seafood in global markets and providing sustainable employment in our coastal communities.

BIM's mission is to grow a thriving Irish seafood industry to deliver on the corporate strategy (Turning the Tide, 2022-2026). BIM will implement the mission through the four strategic priorities as follows:

1. **Lead** and nurture leadership
2. **Deliver** results with solutions that effect change
3. **Invest** for long term growth
4. **Protect** our environment and our sector

Further information on BIM and its programmes is available at www.bim.ie

Background

The Irish seafood processing industry has been under increasing pressure, particularly since the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement in 2020, which has limited access to raw materials. This, coupled with rising supply chain costs (including logistics, energy, and consumables) and recent cuts to quotas for key commercial species, has significantly impacted profitability.

The "Report of the Seafood Task Force" ¹ highlights the necessity for greater sustainability, improved efficiency, and better value extraction from available raw materials in order to remain competitive. In 2022-2023, Irish processors invested over €70 million in processing technologies, such as value-added plants, processing lines, and IQF systems, supported by BIM's Brexit Processing Capital Support Scheme. This investment has led to an increase in value-added processing, such as filleting and H&G, enabling processors to utilise previously discarded co-products (which can account for up to 50% of the processed fish weight) for further value extraction in products like minced products, pet food, and bio stimulants. Additionally, opportunities are emerging for underutilised species such as blue whiting and boarfish.

Maximising the use of raw materials is in line with national and international bioeconomy initiatives, such as the 'Bioeconomy Action Plan 2023-2025,' ² and is vital for ensuring sustainable protein sources to feed the growing global population, projected by the FAO to reach 10 billion by 2050.

In recent years BIM has collaborated closely with seafood stakeholders to identify opportunities, particularly in emerging areas, including utilising AI technologies to optimise processing efficiencies, traceability and quality standards; using heat and pressure emulsification processes to elevate co-products for use in human food applications, and developing high-capacity pin-boning technologies to deliver high-quality mackerel fillets to lucrative Asian markets. BIM has also supported commercially focused R&D projects that has identified a range ingredient opportunities for hydrolysates derived from under-utilised fish and marine co-products. Several potential health-benefits have been identified for human and petfood applications.

As the global population increases and western diets are being rapidly being adopted the number of obesity related chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes mellitus, metabolic syndrome, cancer, cardiovascular diseases (CVD) and neurodegenerative diseases is growing³. As a consequence, demand is growing for more natural and sustainable health impacting nutraceuticals that help mitigate these issues. The wide diversity and dynamics of marine ecosystems makes them ideal reservoirs for identification of marine nutraceuticals, which has focused significant research efforts in recent years.

Cardiovascular diseases are the primary cause of deaths in the world today⁴. Globally, the estimated number of deaths due to CVDs has increased from around 12.1 million in 1990 to 18.6 million. It is estimated that 10,000 people in Ireland succumb annually. The consumption of marine oil supplements has steadily increased over the years due to their association with anti-inflammatory and cardioprotective effects relevant to public health. They are currently the most commonly consumed dietary supplement aside from vitamin and mineral supplements in the US, where 7.8% of US adults consume fish oil supplements containing EPA, DHA, or a mix of n-3 PUFAs^{5,6}. The benefits of omega-3 fish oil are complex and not entirely conclusive, with some research suggesting that the benefits, particularly in the neutral form, may be less than initially anticipated. While omega-3s in fish oil have been linked to positive cardiovascular effects, such as lowering triglycerides and reducing blood clot risk, some studies have found little evidence that these benefits are significant, particularly when compared to other dietary sources of omega-3s. Furthermore, the polar lipid (PLs) form of omega-3s (PLs) may be more potent in some ways than the neutral forms found in triglycerides (TAGs)⁷.

In 2025 and 2026 BIM supported preliminary trials to evaluate the polar lipid content of pelagic fish, both underutilised species and co-products. These results showed promising polar lipid content and their potential use as an ingredient as marine nutraceutical.

Invitation to tender

BIM wishes to invite tenders for the assessment of polar lipids through post prandial assessment of polar lipids on humans. This work would include the scale up of extraction of polar lipids from selected species of fish yielding the highest polar lipid concentration and bioavailability, encapsulation of such lipid, and organising a postprandial trial on humans to assess the effectiveness of the polar lipid against platelet aggregation. In addition, this study will also seek to understand the anti-inflammatory properties of the selected polar lipids on

neurological cells. The outputs of this research could potentially yield insights into future research on dietary intervention trials.

The primary purpose of this tender is to develop and scientifically evaluate high-value marine nutraceutical ingredients derived from Irish fish species and seafood co-products—specifically polar lipids—with the aim of improving cardiovascular and anti-inflammatory health outcomes while creating greater economic value from seafood processing raw materials.

BIM estimates that the expenditure on the Services to be covered by the proposed Services Contract and any subsequent maintenance may amount up to €90,000 (excl. VAT) over the Term. However, Tenderers should note that this is a maximum figure, and should they wish to achieve a competitive advantage their bid should be priced accordingly.

BIM does not bind itself to accept the lowest priced or any tender.

This Call for Tender (CFT) does not constitute an offer or commitment to enter into a contract.

No contractual rights in relation to BIM will exist unless, and until, a formal written contract has been executed by or on behalf of BIM.

Any notification of preferred bidder status by BIM will not give rise to any enforceable rights by the tenderer.

There is no guarantee made by BIM that services or goods contained in this CFT will be procured.

BIM may cancel this CFT at any time prior to a formal contract being executed by or on behalf of, BIM.

2. Scope of Tender

This is an Open CFT with any appropriately qualified vendors invited to respond.

Tenderers are requested to read instructions carefully for Phase 1, Phase 2, Phase 3 and Tender format as outlined below.

Tender responses will be evaluated in three phases:

Phase 1 – Selection Criteria

Please note tenderers will only proceed to the Phase 2 if they pass all of the criteria below.

Each of the criteria below are viewed as essential and if one or more of the criteria below is not met then the tender will be automatically eliminated.

This is a **pass/fail** phase, and no scoring will be attached to the results.

No.	Selection Criteria	Requirement
1.1	<u>Satisfactory Insurances</u> Declaration that tenderers have or will be in a position to obtain all of the following insurances by the commencement of this contract: • Public liability insurance of not less than €6,500,000. • Professional indemnity insurance of not less than €1,000,000 • Employer's liability of not less than €13,000,000. A copy of these valid insurance certificates or insurance brokers letter is required prior to contract award. <i>Indemnity to Principal Clause must be included for Employers Liability Insurance and Public Liability Insurance and the territorial limits and jurisdiction of insurance policies include the Republic of Ireland.</i>	Pass/Fail
1.2	<u>Experience</u> Provide comprehensive details including tenderer name and a description of expertise provided for three (3) previous projects of a similar nature, scale and complexity carried out over the last 5 years (including, where applicable, by which subcontracting parties or members of a consortium). Relevant references must be made available upon request.	Pass/Fail

Please note that when submitting a response to the criteria above it is sufficient for tenderers to declare that they have the relevant capacity. BIM will seek verification and evidence of such capacity only in the event of a tenderer being considered for the award of the contract. The declaration should clearly and unambiguously indicate the tenderers ability to meet each of the BIM requirements above.

Phase 2 – Award Criteria

This phase is concerned with the technical ability to fulfil the conditions of the tender.

Please note tenderers will only proceed to Phase 3, if they obtain 60% or more of the available marks for the applicable criteria below. If less than 60% is obtained in any of the criteria, tenderers will be eliminated.

Tender responses will be evaluated on the following criteria:

No.	Award Criteria	Maximum marks available	Minimum marks required (60%)
2.1	<u>Technical Capacity</u> Tenderers are requested to clearly demonstrate that they have the professional capacity, technical experience and capability to fulfil the tender requirements as set out in <i>Section 4 Service Specification</i> below.	2,500	1,500
2.2	<u>Proposed Project Plan</u> This should comprehensively address the requirements of this tender as set out in <i>Section 4 Service Specification</i> below including a brief strategy outline and separate project plan for completing the work, proposals should also include any review meetings with BIM including frequency and who will attend. Any assumptions should be clearly stated.	1,500	900
2.3	<u>Proposed Key Personnel</u> Responses under this section should include details of education and professional qualifications of relevant staff and experience relevant to this contract (evidenced by way of Curriculum Vitae(s)).	2,000	1,200
2.4	<u>Environmental Responsibility</u> In line with the Government's Climate Action Plan please provide a copy of your Environmental and Sustainability policy. If no policy is available, please provide details of what steps you will take ensure this work is carried out in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way.	500	N/A
2.5	<u>Corporate Social Responsibility</u> Evidence of Corporate Social Responsibility Policy, if no policy is available, please provide details of what steps you will take to ensure the work is carried out in a socially responsible way.	500	N/A
Total		7,000	

Scoring methodology marks for Phase 2 will be allocated as follows:

Weighting	Meaning
91% to 100%	Excellent response with very few or no weaknesses exceeds requirements, and provides comprehensive, detailed, and convincing assurance that the Tenderer will deliver to an excellent standard.
80% to 90%	A very good response that demonstrates real understanding and fully meets the requirements and assurance that the Tenderer will deliver to a high standard.

Weighting	Meaning
70% to 79%	A good response which demonstrates a satisfactory understanding of requirements and gives acceptable assurance of delivery to an adequate standard.
60% to 69%	A reasonable response which demonstrates some understanding of requirements and gives reasonable assurance of delivery to an adequate standard but does not provide sufficiently convincing assurance to award a higher mark.
30% to 59%	A response where reservations exist. Lacks full credibility/convincing detail, and there is a significant risk that the response will not be successful.
1% to 29%	A response where serious reservations exist. This may be because, for example, insufficient detail is provided, and the response has fundamental flaws, or is seriously inadequate or seriously lack credibility with a high risk of non-delivery.
0%	Response completely fails to address the criterion under consideration.

Phase 3

Tenderers who achieved 60% or more in the applicable criteria in Phase 2 will proceed to this phase. Marks from Phases 2 and 3 will be added together and this will be the final mark.

Tender responses will be evaluated on the following criteria in Phase 3:

No.	Award Criteria	Max Marks Available
3.1	<u>Pricing</u> Complete Annex 2 Form of Tender. A total of 3,000 marks are available in this phase. The lowest total price of all tenders that qualify for Phase 3 will be awarded full marks for this criterion. Other tenders will be assessed relative to the lowest priced tender using the following formula: $\frac{\text{Lowest Price}}{\text{Tendered Price}} \times 3,000 = \text{Number of Marks}$	3,000
	Total	3,000

3. Tender Format

Tenders should be presented in the format and order laid out above under Section 2 Scope of Tender. Each of the sections should be clearly and separately marked and addressed in the order above.

Please complete Annex 5 - Tender Response Document (TRD) provided with this tender and complete all sections ensuring to follow all instructions. The TRD will include also include Annex 2 & 3 below.

Tenderers may be requested to attend a clarification meeting, if required.

4. Service Specification

BIM requires the successful tenderer to conduct extraction of food grade polar lipids from supplied fish, encapsulate the polar lipids, organise and conduct a technical postprandial trial, and produce a technical report detailing the trials and associated outputs.

Deliverables:

A. Project Plan & Study Protocol

The successful tenderer shall develop a comprehensive project plan and study protocol outlining the methodology, timelines, responsibilities and governance arrangements for the project.

- Detailed project initiation and delivery plan, including milestones, timelines and reporting schedule.
- Study design and methodology for both the human intervention trial and laboratory-based investigations.
- Identification of study objectives, endpoints, participant eligibility criteria and recruitment strategy.
- Submission and acquisition of all required ethical approvals from the relevant ethics committee(s).
- Development of participant information sheets, consent forms and study documentation.
- Risk management and quality assurance plan.
- Data management and GDPR-compliant data handling procedures.

B. Polar Lipid Extraction

The successful tenderer shall extract food-grade polar lipids from agreed marine species and undertake sufficient characterisation to support subsequent product development and biological assessment activities.

- Selection and justification of target fish species and raw material sources.
- Development and optimisation of food-grade extraction methodology.
- Production of sufficient quantities of polar lipid extracts for encapsulation, analytical testing and trial activities.
- Characterisation of extracted materials, including:
 - Total lipid content.
 - Polar lipid composition.
 - Fatty acid profile, including EPA and DHA concentrations.
 - Basic quality and stability assessments.

- Preparation of a technical report detailing extraction procedures, yields and compositional analysis results.

C. Encapsulation

The successful tenderer shall develop an encapsulated polar lipid product suitable for administration in a human intervention study.

- Development of a formulation strategy for encapsulation of the extracted polar lipids.
- Selection of suitable encapsulation materials and manufacturing approach.
- Production of study product under appropriate quality standards.
- Assessment of:
 - Product stability.
 - Oxidative status.
 - Dose consistency.
 - Shelf-life considerations.
- Packaging and labelling of study products for use in the human trial.
- Product specification document detailing composition, dosage and storage conditions.

D. Postprandial Human Trial

The successful tenderer shall design, implement and manage a human intervention study investigating the effects of the encapsulated polar lipid product on platelet aggregation and related health biomarkers.

- Recruitment and management of study participants in accordance with approved ethical protocols.
- Baseline health screening and participant assessment.
- Administration of study interventions and control treatments, where applicable.
- Collection of biological samples according to the study protocol.
- Measurement and assessment of:
 - Platelet aggregation response.
 - Relevant postprandial biomarkers associated with cardiovascular health.
 - Participant safety and compliance measures.
- Validation and quality control of all clinical data collected.
- Completion of the study in accordance with Good Clinical Practice principles.

E. In Vitro Assessment

The successful tenderer shall evaluate the biological activity of the extracted polar lipids using relevant in vitro neurological and inflammatory cell models.

- Design and implementation of laboratory-based anti-inflammatory studies.
- Selection and justification of appropriate neurological and/or neuroinflammatory cell models.
- Assessment of biological activity using agreed inflammatory markers.
- Measurement of cellular responses to treatment.
- Evaluation of anti-inflammatory potential and potential mechanisms of action.

- Laboratory report detailing methodologies, results and interpretation of findings.

F. Data Analysis

The successful tenderer shall undertake comprehensive statistical analysis and interpretation of all study findings.

- Statistical analysis plan.
- Analysis of all clinical trial outcomes.
- Analysis of laboratory and in vitro results.
- Integration of findings across extraction, formulation, clinical and laboratory work packages.
- Identification of statistically significant effects and biological relevance.
- Summary tables, figures and visualisations to support interpretation.
- Discussion of limitations, opportunities and recommendations for further research and product development.

G. Reporting

The successful tenderer shall provide regular project reporting throughout the duration of the contract.

- Project inception report.
- Scheduled progress reports (monthly or quarterly as agreed with BIM).
- Updates on project milestones, risks, issues and mitigation actions.
- Interim technical reports summarising progress against objectives.
- Financial and resource utilisation updates where required.
- Draft final report for review by BIM.

5. Contract Timeframe

Any contract that may result from this Competition (the “Services Contract”) shall remain in place for a period of (9) nine months (the “Term”). BIM reserves the right to extend the Term for a period or periods of up to (2) two months with a maximum of (2) two such extension or extensions on the same terms and conditions, subject to the BIM’s obligations at law.

6. Currency

Prices must be in euros (€) and be completed to two decimal places.

7. Validity of Tender

The tenderer agrees that their tender will remain open for acceptance for a minimum of 120 calendar days from the closing date for submission of tenders.

8. Cost of Tendering

Tenderers will bear all costs associated with the preparation and submission of their tenders and BIM will not be responsible or liable for any costs or expenses regardless of the conduct or outcome of the tender process.

9. Contract Terms and Tender Documents

The tender documents issued will comprise the CFT (this document) and Annexes thereto including the Form of Tender at Annex 2 and the contract included in Annex 4. All documents issued and information given to the tenderer will be treated as confidential.

Tenderers will not release details of the tender documents other than on an “in confidence” basis to those who have a legitimate need to know or whom they need to consult for the purpose of preparing their Tenders.

10. Contract Notice

Each tenderer’s acceptance of delivery of this CFT constitutes its agreement to, and acceptance of, the terms set forth in the CFT and of the contract attached at Annex 4.

11. Extension of Tender Period

BIM reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to extend the closing date for receipt by giving notice in writing to all tenderers before the original closing date.

12. Tax Clearance Certificate

Tenderers being awarded a public contract must have tax clearance. Applications for Tax Clearance Certificates can be made online and can be accessed at www.revenue.ie/en/starting-a-business/tax-clearance/index.aspx

BIM will verify the tax clearance status of vendors online before making payment.

Professional services will be subject to Irish ‘Professional Services Withholding Tax’ at the prevailing rate (currently at 20%) as laid down by the Revenue Commissioners in Ireland. Withholding tax, if applicable, will be deducted by BIM prior to payment to the contractor.

13. Notice from BIM

BIM may (up to three (3) working days prior to the deadline for receipt of tenders) issue a notice to all tenderers, deleting, varying or extending any item in these documents. Any such notice will then become one of the tender documents and will be treated as such by the tenderer.

14. General Data Protection Regulations/Freedom of Information

Please note that BIM will use personal information in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (“GDPR”), the Data Protection Acts 2003 – 2018 and the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2014. Please see BIM’s Privacy Statement / Data Protection Policy for further details on the use of information. All tenderers are required to implement appropriate technical and organisational measures (in particular those required under the GDPR) to ensure a level of security appropriate to the risk to the security of Personal Data they process.

15. Standstill Period

Standstill period not applicable to this below EU threshold level tender.

16. Tenderer’s Queries and Clarification Requests

Any queries arising from the tender documents or the Instructions to Tenderers or information provided to tenderers must be raised through the messaging facility at www.etenders.gov.ie not later than five (5) working days before the closing date for receipt of tenders.

17. Funding for this CFT

This CFT will be funded fully/partially through the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF).

18. Electronic Submissions

BIM will only accept responses electronically via the eTenders website www.etenders.gov.ie. For comprehensive details on the eTenders Post-box policy, please refer to **Annex 1**.

19. Expressions of Interest

All parties that wish to be kept informed of any clarifications and/or additional information regarding this tender should register their interest by registering on-line with eTenders (eTenders has been developed by the Department of Finance and is designed to help Interested parties/Tenderers find notices on government and public sector procurement across Ireland): www.etenders.gov.ie

20. Closing Date for Tender Responses

All tenders must be:

- Received prior to **12:00 noon (Irish Standard Time) on Friday, 28th August 2026.**
- Submitted using the via the eTenders post-box at www.etenders.gov.ie

For further information in using the Irish Government's eTenders post-box please refer to **Annex 1.**

Please note that non-conformance with these requirements will result in elimination.

Please note that any information submitted may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 2014.

Annex 1 - BIM eTenders Post-box Policy

A User Guide to eTenders and instructions on submitting a response through the eTenders Post-box may be found here www.etenders.gov.ie/system-user-guides

Please note:

The onus is on the tenderer to ensure that the tender reaches eTenders on time. It is not advisable to wait until the last moment to upload documents in case of internet connection difficulties or other technical problems. Neither BIM or eTenders take responsibility for documents which do not reach BIM by the due deadline, for any reason.

Annex 2 - Form of Tender

I/We have reviewed the *Call for Tender for Provision of Services to Assess Potential Health Benefits of Polar Lipids Sourced from Under-Utilised Pelagic Fish Species and Co-Products* and do hereby offer to provide the products or services set out therein, as may be required by BIM, in exchange for the following pricing, which is inclusive of all expenses and exclusive of VAT:

Details / service requirements	Proposed costs (inclusive of all expenses and exclusive of VAT) (€)	VAT rate for information purposes only (%)
Proposed pricing to provide the required services and deliverables as outlined in the CFT document.		
Total proposed pricing		

Pricing above is to be quoted in Euro (€), inclusive of all expenses and exclusive of VAT.

If awarded this contract, the tenderer accepts the terms of the *Provision of Services to Assess Potential Health Benefits of Polar Lipids Sourced from Under-Utilised Pelagic Fish Species and Co-Products* BIM 2026-31 Contract.

The tenderer agrees to keep this offer open for acceptance by BIM for a period of 120 days from the deadline date for receipt of Tenders.

The tenderer has read and confirms its acceptance of the Instructions to Tenders.

The tenderer agrees to treat the details of this offer, together with any subsequent correspondence or contract, as private and confidential.

The tenderer acknowledges that BIM will not be responsible for any costs incurred by in the preparation of its tender or any associated work effort, howsoever arising.

The tenderer acknowledges that the essence of the public procurement process is that BIM will receive bona fide competitive tenders from all tenderers. In recognition of this principle, the tenderer certifies that this is a bona fide tender, intended to be competitive, and that it has not fixed or adjusted the amount of the tender by or under or in accordance with any agreement or arrangement with any other tenderer.

The tenderer is aware of the prohibitions contained in Article 101 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and the Competition Act 2002.

Dated this _____ day of _____ 2026

Signature: _____

Print Name:	
Company Name: (if applicable)	
Address:	
Telephone Number:	
Mobile Number:	
Email:	

This Annex is also provided in the Tender Response Document in Section C. Please refer to Section 3 – Tender Format on how your tender should be presented.

Annex 3 – Previous Contracts/Projects

Contract/Project Client name:	
Details of services provided:	
Contract/ Project period:	
Estimated value of Contract/ Project:	
Describe how this Contract/Project is comparable to the services required under this tender	
Clients contact details:	

Please repeat the above table three (3) times.

This Annex is also provided in the Tender Response Document in Section B. Please refer to Section 3 – Tender Format on how your tender should be presented.

Annex 4 – Draft Contract

Attached separately.

Annex 5 – Tender Response Document

Please refer to '**Annex 5 – Tender Response Document (TRD)**' document attached to this Call for Tender which is available for downloading.

All tender responses should commence with the TRD document followed by any further supporting documentation which should be explicitly referenced and linked to the requirement being addressed.

Note:

Tenderers must follow the format of this Request for Tender (RFT) as outlined in Section 3 - Tender Format.

Please also ensure to address each of the selection and award criteria as outlined in Section 2 – Scope of Tender.