ABOUT THE FOODTECH CHALLENGE

The FoodTech Challenge (FTC) is a global competition that identifies and supports leading early-stage, tech-driven solutions poised to transform food systems in arid, hot, and increasingly challenging environments. These environments, in addition to being among the most food-insecure nations, are also underserved, untapped for innovations, and underinvested in by traditional agricultural practices.

Organized by the United Arab Emirates, FTC is on a mission to catalyze innovation to address the unprecedented strain that climate change, changing demographics, and other supply disruptions are placing on the food security of more countries each year. The third edition of the FoodTech Challenge is structured around three key focus areas related to the food-water-energy nexus: Food & Water, Food & Energy, and Food Loss & Waste. The competition will enable four winners to develop their solutions in the UAE and deploy them across underserved markets in the Global South, with each winner benefitting from a shared prize of $2M in cash grants, as well as access to a robust network of partners.

FTC empowers innovators to contribute to a world where food security is a reality for all. The competition is delivered by the International Affairs Office at the Presidential Court of the UAE and Tamkeen in partnership with ne'ma, the UAE's Food Loss and Waste Initiative; Silal, the UAE's leading agtech company; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Clinton Global Initiative, and other key partners.

The program is further supported by Ecosystem Enablers, including start-up accelerators such as Hub71, Sheraa, and startAD; organizations like the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture, AGRA, and CGIAR Accelerate for Impact Platform (A4IP); and companies such as Al Tamimi & Company.

OUR STORY

- By 2050, the world must feed an estimated additional 2 billion people. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), this will require approximately 70% more food over levels in the last decade, as economic development continues to lift people out of poverty and change global eating patterns. The urgent need of the hour is bold action, innovative thinking, and a new, transformative approach to the entire food value chain.

- With its arid desert climate, scarce arable land, and limited fresh water, the UAE is already experiencing challenges that will increasingly be faced by other countries. Developing new ways to nourish a rapidly growing population with finite resources and such a challenging climate will provide solutions that are replicable across much of the world.

- The UAE, guided by its National Food Security Strategy 2051, is committed to becoming a global pioneer in food security. The ambitious strategy identifies technology as a fundamental pillar, recognizing that innovation in this sector is key to meeting food security goals. It also prioritizes the production capacity, sustainability, and profitability of its thousands of smallholder farmers, who have been a longstanding pillar of the UAE's agricultural sector. In addition, the UAE President, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, has called for food loss and waste in the country to be halved in under a decade, further highlighting the importance of these endeavors.

- What began as an initiative to raise awareness and catalyze participation within the UAE's burgeoning food tech ecosystem has rapidly evolved into a global movement. In just two editions, the FoodTech Challenge has garnered over 1,100 applications from start-ups across 98 countries, underscoring its growing international significance. Competitors have presented remarkable solutions, from novel techniques for developing carbon-negative plant-based protein, reducing food waste using AI image recognition, and maintaining the cellular structure of food while hyper-freezing, to rethinking greenhouse solutions for desert climates.

OUR STORY

- Now in its third edition, the FoodTech Challenge is offering its largest prize yet - $2m in cash - to help winners make tangible progress in scaling their start-ups. In addition to an emphasis on the UAE market, the third edition includes explicit pathways for impact in underserved markets in the Global South, building on the UAE's longstanding tradition of solving shared challenges. The FoodTech Challenge is also expanding its focus to three key focus areas - Food & Water, Food & Energy, and Food Loss & Waste – each representing a critical aspect of the Food-Water-Energy Nexus. These efforts will bring greater resources and attention to the geographies most in need, marking a shift from traditional venture capital that largely supports start-ups and ecosystem hubs in some of the world's most food secure countries.

- Through a $2m cash prize shared between four winning teams – plus go-to-market support and access to a robust network of partners – the FoodTech Challenge 3.0 empowers winners to achieve a "soft landing" within the UAE's thriving agri-food tech ecosystem. In the UAE, winners will undertake new projects and partnerships to demonstrate, refine, and expand their leading tech solutions. They will then use their UAE foundation, FoodTech Challenge partners, and remaining prize fund as a launchpad to deploy their solutions into chosen markets in the Global South.

- The goal? For winners to leverage the resources and support provided by the FoodTech Challenge to have a local and global impact, scaling their solutions and contributing to a more food-secure future for us all.

- The FoodTech Challenge 3.0 is co-organized by the International Affairs Office of the Presidential Court of the UAE and Tamkeen. Its key partners include ne'ma, the UAE's National Food Loss and Waste Initiative; Silal, the UAE's leading agri-tech food company; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Clinton Global Initiative, who join as Impact Partners.

- The program is further supported by Ecosystem Enablers, including start-up accelerators such as Hub71, Sheraa, and startAD; organizations like the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture, AGRA, and CGIAR Accelerate for Impact Platform (A4IP); and companies such as Al Tamimi & Company.