



Panel of expert judges announced for the FoodTech Challenge

UAE Office of State for Food Security and Tamkeen selected the panel of judges for the FoodTech Challenge based on their business, scientific and policy backgrounds.

Dubai, United Arab Emirates, December 2019 - UAE Office of State for Food Security and Tamkeen, an Abu Dhabi-based company mandated to deliver projects to meet the UAE's vision of knowledge-based development, are pleased to announce the appointment of thirteen UAE-based and international expert judges selected across research, academia, industry, and policy. The final awards ceremony will take place at NYU Abu Dhabi in April 2020, and will also feature Danielle Nierenberg, Co-Founder and President of FoodTank and David Rosenberg, Co-Founder and CEO of AeroFarms as part of the judging panel.

The FoodTech Challenge is a global competition that seeks commercially viable solutions that promote sustainable food practices and stimulate domestic food production in the UAE. Expert judges will evaluate business case submissions from across the world, short-listing the top ten teams. From then, the teams will be matched with a mentor from the judging panel to further support the development of their business cases and perfect their pitch ahead of the final award ceremony. Finally, the ten short-listed teams will pitch their idea to the judging panel during the final awards ceremony, where the top four teams will share a \$1m prize.

The expert judges are FoodTech Challenge spokespeople, amplifying the call for quality submissions, raising awareness about the many opportunities present in the UAE agtech ecosystem, and lending their time and expertise mentoring the short-listed teams. Expert judges will also participate in panel discussions relating to food security and ag tech at the final awards ceremony, which will be open to the wider public.

Expert judges include:

- Danielle Nierenberg, Co-founder of Food Tank
- David Rosenberg, Co-founder and CEO of AeroFarms
- Cinar Kurra, Chief Executive Officer of Catalyst
- Penny McBride, Vice-Chairwoman at FarmTech Society
- Dr. Merle Jensen, Professor Emeritus at University of Arizona
- Ramesh Jagannathan, Managing Director of startAD
- Dr. Rami Zurayk, A professor at the American University of Beirut
- Dr. Dionysia Lyra, Halophyte agronomist at the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture
- Stuart Oda, Co-founder and CEO of Alesca Life
- Abdulaziz Al Mulla, Co-founder and CEO of Madar Farms
- Dr. Hanan Afifi, Lead researcher at Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority
- Feroz Sanoulla, Senior strategic advisor at Roland Berger

Drawing on their specific areas of expertise, the judges will consider each proposal against a set of prerequisite criteria, these include: technology, sustainability, commercial viability and applicability in the UAE.

Danielle Nierenberg, Co-founder of Food Tank said: “The need to tackle rising food security issues is critical to addressing some of our most pressing environmental and social problems. By placing the spotlight on economically sustainable ways of alleviating hunger and poverty, we can begin to inspire a changed approach to the global food system.”

Cinar Kurra, Chief Executive Officer of Catalyst said: “The FoodTech Challenge provides an important opportunity for aspiring and emerging food innovators, enabling them to showcase their sustainable and technology-driven concepts and solutions. Through our involvement in this global competition, our aim is to accelerate the implementation of resilient agricultural practices in the UAE by communicating the role innovation plays in ultimately enhancing the country’s food security.”

Abdulaziz Al Mulla, Co-founder and CEO of Madar Farms said: “At Madar Farms, we recognize the consequences of increased pressures placed on our food supply and have dedicated our efforts to tackling food security challenges in the UAE and the wider region. By promoting local food for local consumption, we can increase self-sufficiency and effectively improve consumers’ relationship with food.”

Open to applicants from around the world, the FoodTech Challenge runs until April 2020. University students and early-stage start-ups are encouraged to apply.

A total prize pool of up to \$1M USD will be awarded across four winners. Each winning team will receive \$100,000 USD in prize money. Each winning team will also be eligible to enter the Abu Dhabi-based Catalyst Accelerator Programme, which provides up to \$150,000 USD in seed funding and additional non-financial support.

Entrants can submit their applications via www.foodtechchallenge.com.

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About Tamkeen

Tamkeen is an Abu Dhabi based company mandated to deliver projects to meet the UAE’s vision of knowledge-based development. Tamkeen works with a variety of local and international institutions to enrich the UAE’s social, cultural and educational landscape.