

FoodTech Challenge introduced to UAE University students

Al Ain, 27 November 2019. As part of the roadshow to raise awareness for the recently unveiled FoodTech Challenge, a student workshop was hosted at the UAE University (UAEU). Launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai – the FoodTech Challenge is an initiative of the UAE Office of State for Food Security in partnership with Tamkeen, an Abu Dhabi-based company mandated to deliver projects to meet the UAE’s vision of knowledge-based development.

Conducted at UAEU in Al Ain, the workshop engaged students from the university’s college of Food and Agriculture as well as other sciences in conversations ranging from global food security trends, the overall food security challenges faced by the UAE and the country’s efforts and vision in the AgTech and urban farming space. Appealing to the university students and open to applicants from around the world, the FoodTech Challenge seeks commercially viable solutions that promote sustainable food practices and stimulate domestic food production in the UAE. At the end of the competition, four teams will be awarded against a \$1 million prize pool defined by in-kind support totaling \$150k via Catalyst, a Masdar-BP accelerator, and a \$100k cash prize.

Dr. Elke Neumann, Chair of the Department of Integrative Agriculture at UAE University said: “Experience from the past has shown that agricultural mass production technologies originally developed for temperate climatic regions are often neither environmentally friendly, nor producing food of high nutritional quality under conditions of the UAE. Sustainable regional food production requires diversification into systems that are specifically tailored to various environmental and socio-economic conditions of the UAE. There is a great potential to develop and deploy innovative, clever technologies that maximize the efficiency by which scarce natural resources are utilized for food production. We are glad and proud that the UAE is pioneering in taking agricultural food production in the arid lands to such a new era. In this respect the UAE FoodTech Challenge is not just an entrepreneurial competition; it also underpins the elevation of the food production sector to a level of technological advancement that is unique worldwide in its focus on sustainability and wellbeing of consumers and producers.”

She added “The FoodTech Competition is a wonderful chance for us help students implement the many creative ideas that they have in the fields of food production, processing and distribution. The high number of students from different UAEU Departments and Colleges who attended the FoodTech Workshop today demonstrated that the academic youth is ready to address the specific challenges of Food security in the UAE in an interdisciplinary manner. We as Faculty members are excited about the Challenge and the great opportunities that it bears for Food Security in the Region, and so are our students.”

Halima Mohammed Al-Mesmari a Chemical Engineering student from UAE University said: “The workshop has taught me valuable information on food security in several areas and helped me improve an idea I started last year at the Expo 2020 Universities Competition, which contributes towards reducing food and water waste and increasing the use of organic food. The FoodTech Challenge will also provide me the opportunity to meet with experts and develop my idea further”

As part of its local and international outreach efforts, Tamkeen will host similar sessions in universities around the world. For more information visit the FoodTech Challenge’s official website: 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.