

Global Press Release

UAE Announces US \$2 Million Global FoodTech Challenge Prize to Attract Cutting-Edge Agri-Tech Solutions

Dubai – UAE: 28 March 2022 – The second edition of the global FoodTech Challenge, that seeks to find the next wave of technology innovations on the cusp of transforming traditional agriculture practices, efficiently and sustainably, was launched at the EXPO2020 Dubai, and today unveils the competition’s pooled prize amount of US \$2 million.

Targeted at early-stage start-ups, ranging from international university-based research teams to individual entrepreneurs and small firms, the competition invites innovations related to two critical tracks: ‘food production’ to address the availability and abundance of food and explore ‘next gen’, nutrient rich alternatives, and ‘food loss and waste’ to ensure sustainability across the food supply chain and the planet more broadly.

With a pooled prize of up to US \$2 million, the winners will be offered an opportunity to scale-up their business model within the UAE, supported with R&D, start-up acceleration, commercial incentives and mentorship to take winning concepts from lab-to-market. Applications are being encouraged from around the world, with a priority on agri-tech concentrated nations.

The FoodTech Challenge is organised by the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment and Tamkeen, an Abu Dhabi entity that partners with leading local and international institutions to deliver projects that enrich the UAE’s social, cultural and educational landscape. For this edition of the competition, they are joined by ASPIRE, the programme management pillar of the Advanced Technology Research Council (ATRC), which oversees technology related R&D funding for Abu Dhabi and the wider UAE. Each track is also being supported by a local champion, with ADQ and Silal being the track partners for increasing food production, and Emirates Foundation the track partner for reducing food loss and waste.

Commenting on the launch, Her Excellency Mariam Almheiri, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, said: “The importance of food security has never been more pertinent, with supply chain challenges and climate change disrupting the world as we know it. The pressure is on for us to rethink food for the future, to rethink resilient agricultural practices, and to leverage the best of technological advancements in doing so. The FoodTech Challenge brings us closer to finding some of those solutions, acknowledging the critical role that innovation has to play in addressing our shared challenges”.

Rima Al Mokarrab, Chair of Tamkeen, added: “Responding to the UAE’s long-term and far-reaching food security ambitions requires bold approaches that foster creative ideas, newfound models and extensive coordination with the global agri-tech ecosystem. The FoodTech Challenge brings together a powerful consortium of multi-sector partners who drive progress – supporting sustainable, technology-driven, commercially viable solutions to thrive here in the UAE”.

With a focus on breakthrough technologies, His Excellency Faisal Al Bannai, Secretary General of ATRC, said: “The UAE is one of the most exciting places in the world right now when it comes to innovation and harnessing the power of cutting-edge technology to help find the answers to some of society’s most pressing issues. The FoodTech Challenge is yet another fantastic example of this with the UAE hosting the brightest minds on the planet as they come together to collaborate, explore, and push the boundaries in agri-tech.”

The competition is additionally supported by Abu Dhabi Global Market, Abu Dhabi Residents Office, The Catalyst Accelerator, and Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development.

Applications for the Challenge will remain open until June, when submissions will be shortlisted and the top 10 teams given an opportunity to present their business cases at the Awarding Ceremony in November. Entrants can submit their applications via www.foodtechchallenge.com.

The first edition of the FoodTech Challenge saw 437 applications from across 68 countries, with winners announced from Australia, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the UK.

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