

## UAE launches expanded \$2M Global FoodTech Challenge at Clinton Global Initiative 2024 Annual Meeting during UN General Assembly

[Link to Press Kit](#)

- *Early-stage start-ups with solutions poised to transform food systems can apply now until 12 December*
- *Four winners will develop their solutions in the UAE and scale them across underserved markets in the Global South*
- *The competition is delivered by the International Affairs Office at the UAE Presidential Court and Tamkeen, in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Clinton Global Initiative, ne'ma, Silal, and other leading partners*

**New York City, USA – 25 September 2024:** The UAE has launched the latest installment of the FoodTech Challenge competition at the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) 2024 Annual Meeting in New York during the UN General Assembly (UNGA).

By 2050, the world must be equipped to feed an extra 2 billion people. In response to growing global food security challenges, the FoodTech Challenge identifies and supports leading early-stage, tech-driven solutions poised to transform food systems in harsh environments.

Offering its biggest cash prize to date, the third edition of the FoodTech Challenge is organized by the International Affairs Office at the UAE Presidential Court and Tamkeen, and delivered in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Clinton Global Initiative, ne'ma, the UAE's Food Loss and Waste Initiative, and Silal, a leading UAE agri-tech firm.

This year, the FoodTech Challenge is expanding its focus to three key areas: food and water, food and energy, and food loss and waste. Through a shared \$2 million cash prize, as well as go-to-market support and access to a robust network of partners, four winning start-ups will undertake new projects and partnerships to demonstrate, refine, and expand their leading tech solutions in the UAE. This base will then serve as a launchpad that will enable teams to then scale their solutions to underserved markets in the Global South and contribute to a more food-secure future for all. With its arid desert climate, scarce arable land, and limited fresh water, the UAE is 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 competition is a Commitment to Action with CGI, and was launched by FoodTech Challenge Co-Chairs, Her Excellency Mariam Almheiri, Head of the International Affairs Office at the Presidential Court of the UAE, and Rima Al Mokarrab, Chair of Tamkeen.

**Her Excellency Mariam Almheiri, Head of the International Affairs Office at the Presidential Court and Co-Chair of the FoodTech Challenge** said: “After the historic COP28 Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action, and the announcement of the partnership between the UAE and the Gates Foundation on agriculture innovation, the critical role of agriculture and food production in the wider climate crisis is increasingly coming into focus. With the rising demands for food, water, and energy in the face of climate change, we need bold action, innovative thinking, and a transformative approach to our food systems.”

Her Excellency added: “Through the FoodTech Challenge, we are ensuring that every country and region has the opportunity to participate in the exchange of ideas and investments on the critical issue of food security.”

**Rima Al Mokarrab, Chair of Tamkeen and Co-Chair of the FoodTech Challenge, commented:** “In the UAE, innovation is part of our DNA, and we’ve learned that the key to accelerating the pace of progress lies in combining forward-thinking ideas with partnership, inclusivity, and early-stage investment. This approach has proven effective in driving transformative outcomes, both locally and globally.”

She added: “The FoodTech Challenge harnesses this philosophy by identifying and connecting promising early-stage innovators with a wide network of partners. We are providing the resources and support needed to scale their solutions, fast-tracking efforts to meet the global goals for food security.”

**Rodger Voorhies, President of Global Growth & Opportunity at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** added, “The effects of food insecurity and malnutrition are in sharp focus for us at the Gates Foundation, with our annual Goalkeepers report highlighting child malnutrition as one of the world’s worst health crises. As food insecurity rises globally and climate change continues to disrupt the sensitive task of raising crops and livestock, we must support innovative solutions and technologies that ensure stable food systems. We are delighted to partner with the FoodTech Challenge and support their work to foster innovation and transformative thinking in agri-tech, with the aim of ensuring all countries reap the rewards of a food-secure future.”

The FoodTech Challenge is further supported by Ecosystem Enablers, including UAE-based start-up accelerators Hub71, Sheraa, and startAD, as well as organizations like the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA), AGRA, and Al Tamimi & Company.

In just two editions, the competition has garnered over 1,100 applications from start-ups across 98 countries. Previous competitors have presented remarkable technologies, from novel techniques for developing carbon-negative plant-based protein, to reducing food waste using AI image recognition, to maintaining the cellular structure of food while hyper-freezing.



Winners of previous editions have enjoyed outstanding successes, raising additional funding, launching joint ventures, and deploying their solutions. Iyris (formerly Red Sea Farms) is one such example, having raised over \$34 million since winning the competition and implementing its technologies across Silal farms in Abu Dhabi.

Applications for the competition close on 12 December 2024 and finalists will be selected in April 2025. Entrants can submit their applications at [www.foodtechchallenge.com](http://www.foodtechchallenge.com).

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**About The FoodTech Challenge (FTC)**

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, FoodTech Challenge 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 across underserved markets in the Global South with a shared prize of \$2m.

The FoodTech Challenge empowers innovators to contribute to a world where food security is a reality for all. The competition is delivered 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 ecosystem enablement partners.