

Abu Dhabi to Welcome UAE FoodTech Challenge Finalists with Week-Long Program to Advance Innovation for Global Food Security

- *10 finalists from 7 countries will arrive in Abu Dhabi for intensive week of preparatory sessions ahead of competition's finale at Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week*
- *Winners to receive funding support and access to network of UAE and international partners, enabling them to scale innovative solutions across the Global South*
- *Now in its third edition, the FoodTech Challenge brings together leading early-stage agri-tech startups to transform food systems in arid climates*

Abu Dhabi, UAE: 6 January 2026 – Ten global agri-tech innovators will arrive in Abu Dhabi this week to compete for the top prize at the UAE FoodTech Challenge, an international competition designed to support breakthrough solutions for global food security.

Ahead of the finale at Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, the finalists – whose ventures span protein-producing insect farms to AI-powered tools for minimizing food waste – will participate in a series of workshops and partner-led sessions designed to offer practical insights into Abu Dhabi's innovation ecosystem and build industry connections with the potential to help scale their businesses from UAE to serve the Global South and beyond.

The UAE FoodTech Challenge seeks to identify and scale promising agri-tech solutions in arid and climate-stressed environments where food security is most at risk. Organized by the International Affairs Office at the UAE Presidential Court and Tamkeen, and delivered in partnership with the Gates Foundation, ne'ma, and Silal, the third iteration of FoodTech Challenge focuses on two primary areas: increasing food production and reducing food loss and waste.

This year's finalists come from 7 countries, including the UAE, UK, US, Malaysia, Kenya, Egypt, and France. Previous winners have secured over USD 48 million in funding and launched 50 pilot projects across multiple markets.

Rima Al Mokarrab, Chair of Tamkeen and Co-Chair of the FoodTech Challenge, said:

“Meeting the demands of a rapidly growing population is about more than increasing food production – it requires the transformation of entire food systems, minimizing loss and waste, and building a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable supply chain. Local innovation and global collaboration are key levers in this urgent pursuit.”

“The UAE FoodTech Challenge connects talented innovators tackling food security challenges in their communities with partners and investors who can help amplify their impact globally. By supporting their integration with Abu Dhabi's world-class innovation ecosystem and network of like-minded partners, the UAE FoodTech Challenge enables their solutions to scale from the UAE to the global south and beyond.”

Highlights of the finalists' schedule over the upcoming week in Abu Dhabi include policy discussions at the ne'ma Food Loss and Waste Majlis and a visit to Hub71, Abu Dhabi's global tech ecosystem, where they will gain insights into Abu Dhabi's role as a champion of startup growth. Previous FTC winners have gone on to join Hub71's elite cohorts, gaining access to world-class mentorship and growth opportunities in the UAE.

Fatema Almulla, Senior Specialist Development at the International Affairs Office, UAE Presidential Court, said:

“The UAE FoodTech Challenge is a testament to the UAE’s leading role in addressing global challenges through innovation and international cooperation. By convening bold agri-tech innovators from around the world and embedding them within Abu Dhabi’s domain of technological excellence and global development expertise, we are creating a platform where high-potential ideas can mature into globally deployable solutions.”

Khuloud Al Nowais, Chief Sustainability Officer at Emirates Foundation and Secretary General of the ne’ma Steering Committee, said:

“The FoodTech Challenge is evolving into a pivotal platform for food system transformation, identifying the right innovations, technologies and solutions that address supply chain issues, create efficiency, prevent or reduce food loss or waste at scale. Key to this collaborative approach is the ne’ma Food Loss and Waste Majlis, where finalists, partners, and stakeholders will engage in a dialogue on the pressing issue of food scarcity and how to reduce food waste. These interactions are essential to utilizing these innovations and adapting them to the local context. This will enable measurable outcomes that will strengthen our food systems for generations to come.”

Ahmad Ali Alwan, CEO of Hub71, said: “Hub71’s collaboration with the UAE FoodTech Challenge reflects our commitment to supporting founders building scalable solutions to food security and sustainability challenges. We look forward to welcoming the finalists to Abu Dhabi and supporting their growth through Hub71’s ecosystem.”

Finalists will also participate in the KBW Ventures Pitch Clinic with H.R.H. Prince Khaled bin Alwaleed bin Talal Al Saud to refine their pitches and prepare for investor engagement, and tour Silal’s cutting-edge Innovation Oasis and hear how past FTC winners have partnered with the UAE’s leading agri-tech food company to accelerate ideas from concept to market. The itinerary also includes a visit to the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture to explore the latest research into climate-resilient crops, and an exclusive networking evening hosted by VentureSouq, fostering connections with leading regional sovereign wealth funds and institutional investors from across the GCC.

Since the finalists were announced on the sidelines of 2025 United Nations General Assembly in New York, the ten teams have participated in six remote preparation workshops focusing on incubation support, local market incorporation, and R&D.

The winners will be revealed at Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week – the region’s flagship platform for advancing global sustainability and climate innovation – and selected in a final round of judging by a panel of eight experts representing diverse sectors, including: H.E. Mariam Almheiri, Chair of the International Affairs Office at the Presidential Court of the UAE; Rima Al Mokarrab, Chair of Tamkeen; H.R.H. Prince Khaled bin Alwaleed bin Talal Al Saud, Founder and CEO of KBW Ventures; Khuloud Hassan Al Nuwais, Chief Sustainability Officer at Emirates Foundation and Secretary General of ne’ma; Dr. Shamal Mohammed, CEO of Innovation Oasis at Silal; Shelly Sundberg, Deputy Director of Adaptive and Equitable Food Systems at the Gates Foundation; Dr. Ismahane Elouafi, Executive Managing Director at the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers; and Dr. Agnes Kalibata, Founder and Chair of Connect4Impact.

In addition to sharing a USD 2 million cash prize package, winners will receive further in-kind support to refine their agri-tech ventures in the UAE, and scale, delivering tangible impact on food systems across the Global South and beyond. To learn more about the FoodTech Challenge and this year's finalists, visit: www.foodtechchallenge.com and follow on LinkedIn (@UAE FoodTech Challenge), X/Twitter (@FoodTechUAE), Instagram (@FoodTechUAE), and Facebook (@FoodTechUAE).

ENDS

Media Contact

For interview requests, please contact [name] at [phone number] or [email address]

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. 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; Gates Foundation, Clinton Global Initiative, and other key partners.