

VTT and EIT FAN Helsinki invite startups to the agrifoodtech accelerator - Last year's achievements show the way

Agritech & Foodtech startup are welcome to apply for the 2021 EIT Food Accelerator program by 10th April 2021

ESPOO, FINLAND, March 17, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Achieving a sustainable food system requires innovations that revolutionize the market. Such innovations are often expected to emerge from startups. To support promising agritech and foodtech startups, the European Food Accelerator Network EIT FAN provides them with insights from veterans and resources from established companies.

One of the six accelerators in the network is the Helsinki-based, VTT-led FAN Nordic Hub, which organized its first four-month acceleration programme last year. Now the application process is open for the second one for startups from all European countries, the main target being the Nordics, Baltics and Poland.

Applications are accepted until April 10. Ten teams will be selected by a panel of impartial experts to participate in the programme starting in June. The programme will focus on sustainable agriculture and healthy nutrition.

"We received excellent feedback from the participants of the first programme. So, we will continue pretty much as before. Each startup will have a mentor, and we will also offer a range of workshops and lectures given by experts in various fields. We will encourage startups to



Simo Ellila @ eniferBio



engage in pilot projects to develop and test their technologies and products together with internationally successful companies. Project partners from last year included for example Nestlé and Valio," says VTT's Co-Creation Manager and EIT FAN Nordic Hub Leader Mirva Lampinen.

Unlike several other accelerators, EIT FAN network offers its acceleration programmes free of charge or future commitment, and it also funds its pilot projects. This year FAN Nordic Hub aims to increase the share of pilot projects.

More and more companies to take interest in partnership

Last year the core of FAN Nordic Hub was formed by VTT, Helsinki University and Valio. The next programme will be joined by additional Nordic corporate partners, such as PINC, the venture arm of Paulig. The program has also more than 40 international corporate partners, such as Danone, Nestlé, Buhler, Dohler and Givaudan.

"Collaborating with strong accelerators like the EIT FAN accelerator is a given for us. This way we can find impactful entrepreneurs that can either cooperate with Paulig, be an attractive investment case for PINC or, in the best of all worlds, both," says Marika King, Head of PINC.

FAN Nordic Hub welcomes, besides corporate partners and startups, dozens of experts that participated in the programme already last summer. There is still room for new experts and mentors from companies and research institutes alike.

Committed teams and mentors work together

"The EIT FAN programme came at a great time for us, just as we were taking the leap from an incubator to being an independent company. It provided us with a lot of useful training, mentoring and contacts. I'd also really like to emphasize the importance of the community. Sharing experiences with other companies at the same stage of development is extremely valuable," says Simo Ellilä, CEO at the Finnish eniferBio, one of the past participants. Its technology allows biorefineries to convert their underutilized dilute side streams into valuable Pekilo single-cell mycoprotein, which can be used e.g. as a fish feed ingredient.

The first programme was organized as remote meetings, apart from the Demo Day event where the startup teams got together and pitched their businesses to investors, partners, media and judges. Also, this time around, FAN Nordic Hub is prepared to flexibly switch from remote meetings to physical meetings, if the pandemic allows.

"The teams did excellently despite working remotely, because they were very motivated and committed. Participation requires time and willingness to challenge the course of action, and the teams had understood it very well," says Paolo Borella, Programme Manager of FAN Nordic Hub at VTT.

The work of all the six accelerators will culminate next autumn in the EIT Food Expo event where

two teams selected from each accelerator compete for the best innovations and monetary prizes.

One of the main goals for FAN Nordic Hub alumni was and still is to attract investors. They report having raised over 17 million Euro in funding since the programme.

Apply by 10th April 2021: eitfan.eu/helsinki

VTT is one of the founding Partners of EIT Food. VTT leads and participates in innovation and public engagement projects throughout the food value chain.

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