

# Leading science competition announces 25 international pioneers who can help humanity live within Earth's boundaries

LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND, April 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- 22 April – The [Frontiers Planet Prize \(FPP\)](#) has announced 25 National Champions from leading research institutions across six continents – exceptional scientists whose research advances understanding of Earth systems while offering practical, scalable solutions to keep humanity within planetary boundaries.

As the world's largest global science competition focused on planetary health, the Prize awards three scientists \$1 million each per year and fast tracks transformative research with the potential to inform policy and drive real world impact.

The announcement coincides with the publication of the Frontiers Policy Labs report, [From Science to Policy: Planetary Solutions in Action](#), produced in partnership with the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research (UNU CPR) and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK). The report highlights a growing gap between scientific capability and policymaking across a range of climate-related issues.

The National Champions were selected by the Jury of 100, an independent group of experts chaired by Professor Johan Rockström, architect of the planetary boundaries framework. The Champions now move to the final stage of the competition, where three International Champions will be selected later this year and awarded \$1 million each to scale their research globally.

Professor Rockström said: "The twenty five national winners of the 2026 Prize exemplify the diversity of research that is so urgently needed. Spanning disciplines and approaches, they share a defining quality: excellence in advancing our understanding of the Earth system and expanding the solution space."

Now in its fifth edition, the FPP 2026 reflects growing urgency amid rising climate risk. This year's cohort spans 25 countries, with new representation from Peru, Colombia, Senegal and the UAE, and increased participation from Latin America and Africa.

Published in leading journals including Science, Nature, PNAS and The Lancet Planetary Health, this year's research combines scientific authority with real world applicability as policymakers face increasing pressure to act.

The National Champions address urgent challenges where policy action is often constrained by incomplete data or outdated assumptions, including methane accounting reform, climate optimised aviation, high seas ocean protection, community led lithium governance and drought risk.

Professor Jean Claude Burgelman, Director of the FPP, said: “We are no longer short of warnings – we are short of solutions and time. By identifying and backing the most robust, relevant and scalable research worldwide, the Prize helps turn transformative science into collective action.”

2026 National Champions:

The future of water security

- Belgium: Professor Dr Ann van Griensven, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Combined impacts of climate and land-use change on future water resources in Africa
- China: Hong Wang, Southern University of Science and Technology (SUSTech), Anthropogenic climate change has influenced global river flow seasonality
- Peru: Dr Joan Sanchez-Matos, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP), AWARE characterization factors in Peru encompassing El Niño and climate change events: does increased water availability guarantee less water scarcity?
- Switzerland: Dr Liangzhi Chen, Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL, Global increase in the occurrence and impact of multiyear droughts
- United States: Professor Amir AghaKouchak, University of California, Irvine; Global assessment and hotspots of lake drought

Emissions: Insights and solutions

- Canada: Professor Ahmed Abdulla, Carleton University, Integrating climate and physical constraints into assessments of net capture from direct air capture facilities
- Hungary: Dr Csaba Tölgyesi, University of Szeged, Limited carbon sequestration potential from global ecosystem restoration
- Norway: Dr Gunnar Myhre, CICERO Center for International Climate Research, Observed trend in Earth energy imbalance may provide a constraint for low climate sensitivity models
- Singapore: Dr Xunchang Fei, Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Methane emissions from landfills differentially underestimated worldwide
- Spain: Professor Manuel Soler Arnedo, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (UC3M), Climate-optimized flight planning can effectively reduce the environmental footprint of aviation in Europe at low operational costs
- United Arab Emirates: Dr Steve Griffiths, American University of Sharjah (AUS), Chemistry advances driving industrial carbon capture technologies

Building resilient ecosystems

- Australia: Dr Ana Sequeira, The Australian National University (ANU), Global tracking of marine megafauna space use reveals how to achieve conservation targets

- Brazil: Dr Letícia Garcia, Universidade Federal do Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), Mapping Resilient Landscapes to Climate Change in a Megadiverse Country
- Colombia: Dr Olga Mayorga, Tibaitatá Research Center, Colombian Corporation of Agricultural Research (ARGOSAVIA), The contribution of local shrubs to the carbon footprint reduction of traditional dairy systems in Cundinamarca, Colombia
- Germany: Dr Gustavo Brant Paterno, University of Göttingen, Diverse and larger tree islands promote native tree diversity in oil palm landscapes
- New Zealand: Daniel Hernández-Carrasco, University of Canterbury, Ecological and evolutionary consequences of changing seasonality
- Poland: Professor Michał Bogdziewicz, Adam Mickiewicz University, Growth decline in European beech associated with temperature-driven increase in reproductive allocation
- Senegal: Dr Adama Lo, Centre de Suivi Écologique (CSE), Remote Sensing-Based Assessment of Dry-Season Forage Quality for Improved Rangeland Management in Sahelian Ecosystems
- United Kingdom: Professor Helen Findlay, Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Ocean Acidification: Another Planetary Boundary Crossed

#### Innovation and systemic change

- Argentina: Dr Andrea E. Izquierdo, Instituto Multidisciplinario de Biología Vegetal (IMBIV), CONICET-National University of Córdoba, Integrating local and Indigenous knowledge with sustainable development goals in lithium mining impact assessment for a fair energy transition
- Austria: Dr Nicolas Roux, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU), Integrating sufficiency in the trade and biodiversity agenda of the European Union
- Finland: Dr Daniel Fernández Galeote, Tampere University, Play, games, and gamification to support sustainability transitions: a scoping review and research agenda
- Israel: Dr Alon Shepon, Tel Aviv University, The environmental and social opportunities of reducing sugar intake
- Japan: Professor Takuzo Aida, The University of Tokyo, Mechanically strong yet metabolizable supramolecular plastics by desalting upon phase separation
- The Netherlands: Dr Rutger Hoekstra, Leiden University, Beyond GDP: a review and conceptual framework for measuring sustainable and inclusive wellbeing

As National Champions, each researcher will have opportunities to share their award winning research through national and international conferences, supported by strategic partners including the PIK, International Science Council, The African Academy of Sciences, and Villars Institute.

The FPP Award Ceremony will take place on 18 January 2027 in Davos, hosted by the [Frontiers Science House](#).

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