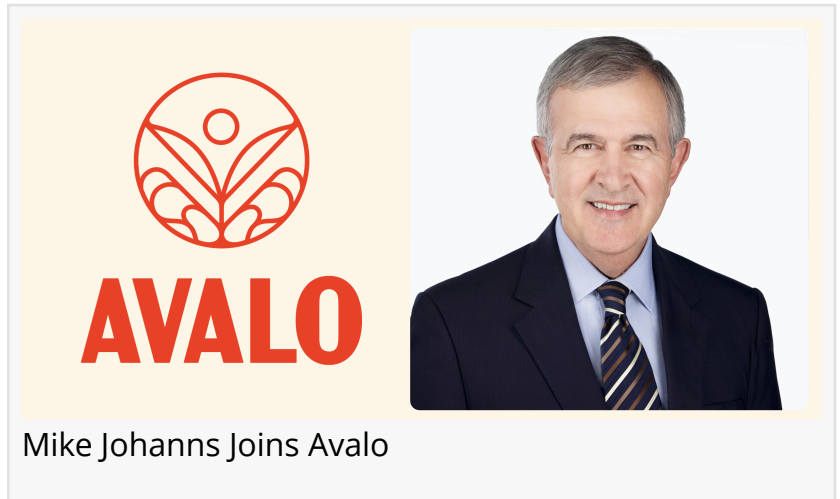


Former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns joins Avalo as Strategic Advisor to advance 'Farmer First' revolution

This new collaboration, facilitated by Germin8 Ventures, reflects a shared commitment to accelerating innovation across the agricultural value chain.

DURHAM, NC, UNITED STATES, June 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Mike Johanns, former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, former U.S. Senator from Nebraska, and former Governor of Nebraska, has joined [Avalo](#) as a Strategic Advisor. Avalo is an advanced

crop-innovation company that uses AI to rapidly accelerate the development of climate-resilient, sustainable crop varieties. The appointment was made in collaboration with [Germin8 Ventures](#), an investor-director in Avalo and colleague of Mike Johanns, reflecting a shared commitment to accelerating innovation across the agricultural value chain.



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Brendan Collins - CEO at Avalo

Johanns brings more than 30 years of service across the legislative and executive branches of government, paired with deep board-level experience across the agricultural value chain. He currently sits on the board of OSI Group, recently served on the boards of Corteva and John Deere, and is a former member of the Board of Directors of the Millennium Challenge Corporation. As Secretary of Agriculture under President George W. Bush (2005–2007), Johanns shaped policy spanning farm programs, trade, conservation, and rural development.

Born and raised on a dairy farm in Iowa, Johanns practiced law until 1991 before entering public service. That proximity to the day-to-day life of American farming aligns directly with Avalo’s “Farmer First” philosophy, a commitment to creating value at the beginning of the supply chain, not just the end.

“Few people have fought for farmers as long or as hard as Mike. He started on his family's farm and carried it all the way to the Governor's office, the Senate, the cabinet, and the biggest agricultural companies in the world. He sees the entire system at once, from the dirt to the policy to the boardroom. I don't think there's another living soul with that perspective, and we are lucky to have it,” said Avalo CEO and co-founder Brendan Collins.

Michael Lavin, representing Germin8 and serving alongside Johanns on the board of OSI Group, added: “Mike Johanns is one of the great leaders of our time and having worked directly with him, I've seen firsthand his multi-dimensional skills and intellect which make him effective alongside farming families in the field, to leaders in the Capitol, as well as with the highest caliber executives and boards. This moment in American agriculture requires the scaling of bold solutions with the speed, practicality and permanence demanded by the century ahead. Mike's calling to this has shaped his entire career—his commitment to purpose and duty is invigorating, and Germin8 is proud to work with Mike in building Avalo into a company of consequence.”

As Strategic Advisor, Johanns will provide Avalo with policy insights, industry perspectives, and market intelligence, and will offer guidance to position the company's technology within today's highly dynamic agricultural system.

“Avalo is doing something I've waited a long time to see in agriculture, using cutting-edge science to deliver real, practical wins for farmers without asking them to compromise on what works,” said Mike Johanns. “Their natural, AI-driven approach to breeding more resilient crops is exactly the kind of innovation our farmers, our supply chains, and our rural communities need. I'm proud to help Avalo bring this technology to market.”

Johanns joins Avalo at a pivotal moment for the company. In 2026, Avalo is introducing its Low-Carbon American cotton to the marketplace, helping fashion brands address historically hard-to-tackle scope 3 carbon-emissions while simultaneously creating more value for U.S. growers. The company has also launched a new sugarcane initiative in partnership with Coca-Cola Europacific Partners.

Johanns's appointment follows the recent addition of Michael Kobori, former Chief Sustainability Officer at Starbucks, former Vice President of Sustainability at Levi Strauss & Co. and former Director on the board of Bunge Limited, to Avalo's board, deepening the company's bench of agricultural and sustainability leadership.

About Avalo

Avalo Inc. is an AI-power crop evolution company based in Durham, North Carolina. Their novel Rapid Evolution Platform™ uses interpretable machine learning to commercialize more economically and ecologically sustainable crop traits faster and more affordably than conventional breeding or GMO. Their mission is to create a more sustainable, efficient, and equitable food system by creating resilient and productive crops that require less inputs. Avalo

Inc. was founded in 2020.

Nick Schwanz

Avalo

+1 208-869-9801

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