

ENSA and Gates Ag One Celebrate Uta Paszkowski's Recognition as a 2026 World Food Prize Foundation Top Agri-food Pioneer

CAMBRIDGE, UNITED KINGDOM, June 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Enabling Nutrient Symbioses in Agriculture ([ENSA](#)) and Gates Agricultural Innovations ([Gates Ag One](#)) today celebrate the recognition of Professor Uta Paszkowski, ENSA Co-Director and Professor of Plant Sciences at the University of Cambridge, as a 2026 Top Agri-food Pioneer by the World Food Prize Foundation.

The joint announcement recognises Professor Paszkowski's scientific leadership and the collaborative effort behind ENSA, an international programme supported by Gates Ag One that is working to harness beneficial plant-microbe relationships to support more sustainable crop nutrition.

The Top Agri-food Pioneers (TAP) is a World Food Prize Foundation initiative that recognises global innovators who are advancing agriculture and food systems through science-driven solutions, practical impact and collaborative leadership.

Professor Paszkowski is internationally recognised for her pioneering research into beneficial relationships between plants and soil fungi, known as arbuscular mycorrhizal symbioses. These ancient partnerships help crops access nutrients from the soil and have significant potential to support more sustainable agricultural systems.

Throughout her career, Professor Paszkowski has advanced understanding of how major cereal crops such as rice and maize communicate with beneficial fungi and exchange nutrients. Her research has revealed key molecular mechanisms that enable these interactions and has helped establish rice and maize as leading model systems for studying plant-fungal symbioses.

As Co-Director of ENSA (Enabling Nutrient Symbioses in Agriculture), Professor Paszkowski helps lead an international research effort focused on improving and expanding the use of beneficial microorganisms to support crop nutrition and reduce dependence on synthetic fertilisers. The programme's work aims to contribute to more sustainable and equitable farming systems worldwide.

"I am deeply honoured to be recognised as a 2026 Top Agri-food Pioneer by the World Food Prize Foundation," said Professor Paszkowski. "This recognition reflects the dedication, creativity and

hard work of the many students, researchers and collaborators I have had the privilege to work with throughout my career. Understanding how crops can partner with beneficial soil microorganisms offers exciting opportunities to support more sustainable agriculture, and I am grateful to see this work recognised alongside so many inspiring innovators from around the world.”

This latest recognition adds to a series of distinguished honours celebrating Professor Paszkowski’s contributions to plant science and sustainable agriculture. Her work spans fundamental scientific discovery and translational research, with a focus on developing nature-inspired solutions to some of agriculture’s most pressing challenges.

“This recognition reflects not only Uta’s extraordinary individual achievement, but also the importance of advancing science and crop innovation that can respond to the needs of smallholder farmers,” said Joe Cornelius, Chief Executive Officer of Gates Agricultural Innovations (Gates Ag One). “Uta’s leadership in plant science is helping deepen our understanding of how crops can work with beneficial soil microorganisms to improve nutrition, resilience and sustainability in farming systems that need these advances most.”

Gates Ag One supports ENSA as part of its work to translate moonshot scientific discoveries into crop innovations that can reach and benefit smallholder farmers.

Professor Paszkowski’s recognition underscores the growing importance of science-led crop innovation in building more resilient, sustainable and equitable food systems for the future.

The 2026 Top Agri-food Pioneers will be recognised during the Borlaug Dialogue in Des Moines, Iowa this October.

Harvey Presence
Marchmont Communications
+44 7582 195497
[email us here](#)

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