

World Food Prize Foundation Announces Top 10 for the 2026 Innovate for Impact Challenge

Entrepreneurs from 10 countries recognized for breakthrough innovations advancing global food security, sustainability and resilient food systems

DES MOINES, IA, UNITED STATES, July 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The World Food Prize Foundation announced today the top 10 for the 2026 Innovate for Impact Challenge, a \$50,000 competition for early-stage, for-profit AgTech startups from around the world.

Selected from a pool of more than 1,500 initial applicants spanning the globe, this year's semi-finalists represent the next generation of entrepreneurs developing scalable solutions to reduce food loss, improve agricultural productivity, strengthen food safety, advance climate resilience and build more sustainable food systems.

"Each year, the Innovate for Impact Challenge demonstrates the extraordinary ingenuity of entrepreneurs who are redefining what's possible for global agriculture and food security," said Mashal Husain, President, World Food Prize Foundation. "This year's finalists are transforming scientific breakthroughs into practical solutions with the potential for impact at scale. Their work reflects the bold thinking and collaborative spirit needed to nourish a growing world."

The 2026 Innovate for Impact Challenge top 10 semi-finalists are:

- AgricFresh (Cameroon): A solar-powered, IoT-enabled cold storage system that extends the shelf life of fruits and vegetables from five to 30 days while connecting smallholder farmers directly to buyers, reducing post-harvest losses and increasing incomes.
- Biotech4Life Soluções (Brazil): A circular biorefinery platform that converts shrimp farming residues into biofertilizers and biostimulants, helping farmers reduce synthetic fertilizer use while improving crop yields and creating value from agricultural waste.
- CeluNova (Mexico): A sustainable materials company transforming discarded pineapple leaves into tree-free absorbent materials for hygiene products, creating new income opportunities for farmers while reducing agricultural waste and open-field burning.
- Ciencia y Tecnología de Fagos SciPhage S.A.S. (Colombia): A scalable bacteriophage platform that replaces antibiotics in livestock production, helping combat antimicrobial resistance while improving animal health, food safety and productivity.

- Cooling Crops (Israel): Develops patented sprayable biostimulants that restore soil, cool crops, improve water retention, and protect yields from heat, frost and land degradation using natural, scalable technology.
- Lyrata Inc. (Canada): Developer of SmartSoil™, a reusable, biodegradable growing medium designed to replace conventional substrates in controlled-environment agriculture, reducing emissions, improving crop health and lowering production costs.
- metaBIX Biotech (Uruguay): An AI-powered biosurveillance platform that predicts disease outbreaks in livestock through environmental sampling and molecular diagnostics, enabling producers to prevent outbreaks before they occur.
- Michroma (United States): A precision fermentation company producing stable, natural food colorants from fungi, providing sustainable alternatives to synthetic dyes while reducing land, water and resource use.
- Tana Lab (Indonesia): An AI-driven biological crop protection platform that combines microbial science, diagnostics and regenerative soil health solutions to reduce dependence on chemical agricultural inputs.
- Umami Meats B.V. (Netherlands): A cultivated seafood company producing fish biomass for food, pet nutrition and bioactive ingredients through cell cultivation, helping reduce pressure on wild fisheries while delivering a safe, traceable protein source.

Collectively, these semi-finalists showcase innovations spanning biotechnology, artificial intelligence, precision agriculture, circular economy solutions, sustainable materials, food safety and climate-smart production systems.

From this top 10 list, three finalists will be selected to participate in a live pitch round at the World Food Prize Foundation's annual Norman E. Borlaug International Dialogue in Des Moines, Iowa, October 20-22, 2026. They will present their ventures to an international panel of judges representing agriculture, science, investment and entrepreneurship.

"The caliber of innovation represented by this year's semi-finalists is remarkable," said Mashal Husain, President, World Food Prize Foundation. "These entrepreneurs are tackling complex global challenges with solutions that combine scientific excellence, commercial potential and measurable social impact. We look forward to seeing how their innovations continue to advance and inspire the future of food."

Now in its second year, the Innovate for Impact Challenge has already demonstrated the breadth and creativity of AgTech entrepreneurs whose ideas have the potential to reshape agriculture and accelerate progress toward a more food-secure world.

Last year, in its inaugural year, Argentinian start-up APOLO Biotech won the Challenge for its pioneering RNA-based technology that helps farmers reduce reliance on synthetic pesticides, with Nigeria's Vet Konect and India's Capsber Agriscience rounding out the finalists.

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