

Fighting Malnutrition and Enhancing Food Security Award

Overview

Building on the success of its first edition, the Fighting Malnutrition and Enhancing Food Security Award returns for its second edition. Last year's award recognized [Koji es Transformación](#), whose Koji Lab combines traditional fermentation with modern biotechnology to enhance flavor, texture and nutritional value, supporting food producers across sectors.

Malnutrition and food insecurity remain major global challenges. According to the [2025 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World \(SOFI\) report](#), while global hunger showed modest improvements, hundreds of millions still face chronic undernourishment and many cannot afford healthy diets, especially in low-income and crisis-affected regions. Strengthening agrifood systems is essential to improve access to nutritious,, safe and affordable diets for all.

Improving nutrition requires not only increasing food availability but also ensuring diverse, healthy diets and reducing barriers that keep nutritious food out of reach. [FAO's policy guidance on nutrition-sensitive food systems](#) highlights that coordinated action across agriculture value chains, including processing, storage and distribution, is key to addressing both hunger and malnutrition.

This award recognizes practical and scalable solutions that contribute to combating malnutrition and enhancing food security, while advancing progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and helping reduce inequalities in access to nutritious food.

Thematic priorities and targeted solutions

Startups should propose scalable, inclusive solutions adaptable to diverse contexts.

- Nutrition education
 - Initiatives promoting awareness of healthy eating, nutrition and addressing specific deficiencies, for example, developing educational community programmes on balanced diets and how to tackle key nutritional gaps like micronutrient shortages.
- Food accessibility
 - Programmes that enhance availability and affordability of quality, safe and nutritious foods especially for underserved populations and vulnerable groups.
- Sustainable agriculture

- Innovate practices that boost productivity, soil health and nutrient-dense outputs in resilient farming systems.
- Nutrient-rich local products
 - Strengthen supply chains, nutritional quality and climate resilience for local products by promoting cultivation, processing and market linkages for nutrient-dense foods to build robust, adaptive agrifood systems.
- Food losses and waste reduction
 - Minimize losses, waste and enable food recovery across the value chains through the deployment of technologies and processes to cut post-harvest losses, recover surplus, and extend shelf life of products
- Digital innovation in value chains
 - Platforms connecting farmers to markets for better yields and supply chain consistency for example, apps or digital tools that link producers to buyers, optimize yields, reduce wastage and create resilient supply chains

Eligibility Criteria

Startups must demonstrate innovations related to nutritional education, food accessibility, sustainable agriculture, food loss and waste reduction, digital agrifood chains or policy advocacy, with priority given to Global South startups or those significantly impacting these regions.

- **Youth leadership:** Startups must be youth-led, with at least one founder or C-level executive between 18 and 35 years old at the time of application;
- **Programme eligibility:** Startup representatives who present during the online demos and pitching sessions, participate in [the MassChallenge, Switzerland accelerator programme](#) and pitch at the FF flagship event in Rome, must be 35 years old or younger;
- **Proof of concept:** Applicants must demonstrate validated evidence of their solution, such as pilots, early adoption by producers, processors, or value-chain actors, partnerships, or measurable results that show clear contributions to improving nutrition, food safety, food availability, or access to affordable and nutritious foods.
- **Funds raised and sales:** Startups should have less than USD 2 million capital raised and generated less than USD 2 million in sales.
- **Scalability and inclusion:** The solution demonstrates potential to scale across different food production, value chains and contexts and is accessible especially to rural communities particularly in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) and Small Island Developing States

(SIDS). Preference is given to innovations that support women- and youth-led businesses or address barriers to technology adoption;

- **Impact and sustainability:** Solutions should clearly articulate their impact on agrifood systems improving access to safe, affordable and nutritious food that contributes to long-term agrifood system sustainability.

Important dates and timeline

Phase 1: Application and selection

- 1 April - Application deadline
- 4–13 May - Online pitches for selected startups
- 19 May - Finalists selected

Phase 2: Acceleration

- 29 June – 10 July MassChallenge Acceleration Bootcamp - Lausanne, Switzerland
- 31 August – 4 September Halftime and Collaboration events - Lausanne, Switzerland

Phase 3: Demo day and judging

- 29 September – Online Demo-day (selection of the SIA finalists to present at the WFF flagship event)
- 5-8 October – Pre-final judging for MassChallenge Switzerland Award

Phase 4: Final pitch and awards

- 12-16 October – Finals pitch and Award Ceremony, WFF flagship event - FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy
- 29 October – MassChallenge Switzerland Award Ceremony - Lausanne, Switzerland

Prize and benefits

- Award winners will receive at least USD 7 500 per category, with USD 2 500 awarded to runners-up. The overall Startup Innovation Awards winner will receive an additional USD 10 000;
- Selected startups will be invited to the [MassChallenge Switzerland accelerator programme](#), benefiting from world class mentoring, tailored and comprehensive curriculum of lectures and workshops, market guidance and access to MassChallenge's global corporate partners;
- All finalists will also be eligible to compete for MassChallenge Switzerland's CHF 500 000 prize pool;
- Travel support for two finalist teams per award category to attend the WFF flagship event in Rome, Italy; and
- Extensive visibility and promotional opportunities via WFF Youth Initiative social media platforms and website.



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