

Gulfood 2026 Launches 'Gulfood Startups' as the Global Gateway for Scaling the Next Generation of Food Innovation

Dubai strengthens its position as a global launchpad for food-tech founders as Gulfood introduces a high-impact startup platform connecting innovation, capital and international markets

DUBAI - January 20, 2026: **Gulfood**, the world's largest and most influential food and beverage sourcing event, announced the launch of **Gulfood Startups**, a dedicated platform designed to support high-growth food-tech companies seeking to scale internationally from Dubai. As the global food economy accelerates towards a projected value of USD 11.37 trillion by 2030¹, innovation across production, processing and distribution is increasingly being driven by startups reshaping how food is produced, distributed and commercialised.

Over 250 global visionaries will surface unseen breakthroughs across the food chain from origin to market, encompassing next-generation proteins, precision fermentation, Plant-Based 3.0, water-based frying technologies, predictive food intelligence powered by AI, and automated supply-chain systems. Industry disruptors including **ANT Systems Nanotechnology**, **Brad Technology**, **Choco**, **Onego Bio**, **Polysense** and **ZEEN Tech AG** will present innovations redefining the boundaries of food and technology.



Trixie LohMirmand, Executive Vice President - Events Management, Dubai World Trade Centre, commented: “*Embedded within Gulfood’s unmatched ecosystem, Gulfood Startups offers founders something few markets can: direct access to global buyers, investors, distributors and policymakers in a single, connected environment. The World Agri-FoodTech Startup Challenge features the largest prize fund of its kind, underscoring Dubai World Trade Centre’s commitment to accelerating high-impact innovation and meaningful commercial growth across the Gulf.*”

USD 135,000 on the Line as Global FoodTech Startups Compete Live at Gulfood 2026

Through a strategic collaboration with DMCC, the leading international business district that drives the flow of global trade through Dubai, and the India Middle East Agri-Alliance (IMEAA), The World Agri-FoodTech Startup Challenge, will see the world’s most promising food-tech founders pitch live at the Gulfood NXT Stage. Through three days of competition, startups will vie for a USD 135,000 prize, judged on innovation, scalability, market relevance and environmental and economic impact.

Ahmed Bin Sulayem, Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of DMCC, said: “Through our partnership with Gulfood across Gulfood Startups and the World AgriFoodTech Startup Challenge, DMCC is connecting high potential startups from across

the global food value chain with international markets, investors and commercial partners. This builds on DMCC's established agrifood ecosystem and global connectivity, with a clear focus on helping credible solutions scale, from next generation proteins and precision fermentation to AI powered food intelligence and advanced supply chain technologies. Together, these efforts reinforce Dubai's position as a global launchpad for food security, sustainable innovation and trade."

Sudhakar Tomar, President, India Middle East Agri Alliance, added: "*The World Agri-FoodTech Challenge is establishing a reliable deal-flow engine for founders, venture funds and institutions seeking viable solutions. We urge the world's best entrepreneurs to embrace Dubai as their launchpad and the Global South as their growth market.*"

The Gulfood Investor Programme connects visionary capital with unseen breakthroughs, investors include **Americana, Nuwa Capital, PeakBridge and Unovis**, who will gain privileged access to high-impact startups, groundbreaking technologies and actionable insights spanning the entire food chain.

One of the World's Most Fertile Grounds for F&B Startups

The United Arab Emirates has emerged as one of the most attractive global environments for food and beverage startups to launch, test and scale. The country's food and beverage market is projected to reach USD 44 billion by 2029², supported by rapid population growth, strong consumer demand, progressive regulation and sustained government investment in food security, innovation and sustainability.

World-class logistics infrastructure, access to capital, free-zone ecosystems and a rapidly digitising food supply chain position the UAE as a natural bridge between East and West, developed and emerging markets, and innovation and commercialisation.

Gulfood Startups takes place from **26-30 January 2026** as part of Gulfood 2026 in Dubai. For more information, visit: www.gulfood.com/startups and [Plan Your Trip to Gulfood 2025 - Travel & Stay Info.](#)

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Sources:

- 1- [Food and Beverage Market Size, Share & 2030 Trends Report](#)
- 2- [Food Sector | Ministry of Economy & Tourism - UAE](#)

About Gulfood

Gulfood 2026, taking place from **26-30 January**, marks the **31st edition** of the world's largest and most influential F&B sourcing and innovation event. With **8,500+ exhibitors, 195 countries, 280,000 sqm across Dubai World Trade Centre and Expo City Dubai, and five first-time sectors**, Gulfood 2026 reinforces Dubai's position as the global headquarters of food trade and food intelligence.

For further information, please contact:

Orient Planet Group (OPG)

Tel: +971 4 4562888

Email: media@orientplanet.com

Website: www.orientplanet.com

For More Information visit Gulfood on:

Website: <https://www.gulfood.com/>

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