

Celebrating humanitarian and development innovations at scale for zero hunger and across the United Nations

Side event on the margins of the first regular session of the Executive Board, 2021
Tuesday, 23 February 2021, 13:30–14:30
Virtual Event via ZOOM

The World Food Programme Innovation Accelerator is inviting Executive Board members and partners to a side event showcasing the role of humanitarian and development innovations. The event will be facilitated by the Innovation Accelerator in cooperation with the Government of Germany.

Context

Innovation is crucial to achieving zero hunger. Building on WFP's legacy of innovation, the Innovation Accelerator was launched in 2015 to seek new solutions and scale promising innovations to disrupt hunger.

The Accelerator sources, supports and scales high-impact innovations to contribute to WFP's mission. Based in Munich, Germany, the Accelerator provides WFP operations, entrepreneurs and startups with funding, hands-on support and access to WFP's global operations. Through the Accelerator, WFP is leveraging unprecedented advances in digital innovation – such as mobile technology, artificial intelligence, big data and blockchain – and new business models to transform the way we serve vulnerable communities across the world.

The Accelerator provides innovation services, such as 'innovation bootcamps' and project mentorship for external partners like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Humanitarian Grand Challenge, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and has run an interagency bootcamp for eleven United Nations agencies.

In just five years, the Accelerator has supported more than 100 projects around the world, with 14 innovations scaling up to reach over 3.7 million people. In 2020, the Innovation Accelerator was named Fast Company's "Best Workplace for Innovators" and "Innovation Team of the Year."

This side event showcases the important partnership between the Government of Germany and WFP in pushing innovation forward in the humanitarian and development space. From the beginning, Germany has believed in the power of innovation and has been joined by government supporters such as Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United States of America.

The event marks the **Innovation Accelerator's Five-Year Strategy** and a further five years of Germany's support to the Accelerator in Munich, and underscores Germany's key role as an advocate for innovative solutions to zero hunger across WFP's global operations.

Objectives

The Executive Board members and partners will be introduced to the work of the Accelerator, and how it sources, supports and especially scales high-potential solutions to end hunger worldwide and how these projects are received in the field, e.g. "[EMPACT](#)", (providing digital skills to young refugees and host communities), "Autonomous Humanitarian Emergency Aid Devices" ([AHEAD](#) - developing remote-controlled trucks to safely bring aid supplies to their destination. In partnership with German Aerospace Center) and "[Building Blocks](#)" (WFP is harnessing blockchain technology as an effective means to empower people to meet their essential needs).

Agenda

13:30 Welcome and opening comments

- Mr David Beasley, Executive Director, WFP
- Ms Ute Klamert, Assistant Executive Director, Partnerships and Advocacy Department, WFP
- Dr. Elke Löbel, Commissioner for Refugee Policy and Director for Displacement and Migration, Crisis Prevention and Management, Government of Germany

13:45 Introduction to the work of the Innovation Accelerator – Five-Year Strategy for Innovation

- Mr Bernhard Kowatsch, Head of WFP Innovation Accelerator

13:55 Fireside Chat/Panel Discussion – *"How innovation powers our mission forward"*

- Moderator: Ms Hila Cohen, Head of Business Development, WFP Innovation Accelerator
- Panelists:
 - Ms Valerie Guarnieri, Assistant Executive Director, Programme and Policy Development Department, WFP
 - Mr Jean-Martin Bauer, Senior Advisor, Data, Digital Transformation and Innovation, WFP
 - Mr Dirk Primbs, Developer Relations, European Ecosystem Lead, Google

14:10 Q&A session

- Moderator: Ms Hila Cohen, Head of Business Development, WFP Innovation Accelerator

14:20 Message from the Innovation Accelerator's Bavarian host via video message

- Ms Michaela Kaniber, Bavarian State Minister for Food, Agriculture and Forestry

14:25 Closing comments

- Mr Bernhard Kowatsch, Head of WFP Innovation Accelerator