

Call for applications

Technology-powered solutions to ensure **zero hunger** for all in Africa



Kofi Annan Award for Innovation in Africa Call for Applications

Technology-powered solutions to achieve zero hunger for all.

Application Deadline: 8 February 2024 11:59 pm (CEST)

Introduction

The [Kofi Annan Award for Innovation in Africa](#) has been initiated by the Austrian Federal Chancellery, in collaboration with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Innovation Accelerator, the Austrian Development Agency and the Kofi Annan Foundation. The Award aims to identify and support promising **social entrepreneurs with digital or technology-powered solutions for people in Africa** to help them build the foundations to scale.

After a successful first edition, the second edition of the Kofi Annan Award for Innovation in Africa is committed to identifying and supporting innovative solutions that enhance food security and food systems resilience throughout Africa. As such, we seek innovative solutions from across Africa that contribute to **Sustainable Development Goal 2, Zero Hunger**, with a strong focus on achieving food security and improving nutrition.

Background

In a world marked by complexity and challenges, it is clear that we need innovative, collaborative and sustainable solutions to address pressing issues. Food security is a paramount concern, and it is especially critical in the African continent. According to FAO, over 828 million people worldwide suffered from undernourishment in 2022, and Africa bears a significant burden, with

118 million of its population facing this challenge. Climate change exacerbates these issues, acting as a driving force behind the challenges to food security. This edition of the Kofi Annan Award for Innovation in Africa aims to address this issue directly by focusing on identifying and supporting innovations working towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2): Zero Hunger, emphasizing Africa, marginalized groups, displaced farmers, and circular principles. In the pursuit of food security, it is essential to integrate climate-resilient strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on global food security.

Africa, celebrated for its rich diversity and natural beauty, grapples with persistent food insecurity. According to the United Nations (UN), approximately 24% of sub-Saharan Africa's population faces chronic food insecurity. Behind each statistic is an individual facing the difficult reality of hunger and their own unfulfilled potential, as well as the opportunity cost of human capital development across the continent.

Africa holds vast untapped potential in agriculture, yet gender disparities persist and present a formidable challenge. Women are at the heart of agriculture in Africa, often serving as the backbone of rural communities. Still, they face significant barriers to access land, resources, and education. Addressing these gender disparities is an ethical and strategic imperative for food security. When women in agriculture thrive, their communities prosper alongside them.

Moreover, marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons, are also disproportionately affected by hunger. The issue of displaced farmers and marginalized groups has emerged in recent years as a critical concern, as forced conflict, climate change and economic instability have led to a rise in forced displacement. These individuals often find themselves in precarious conditions, far from the lands they once tilled and the communities they once sustained. Supporting displaced farmers and marginalized groups is necessary to rebuild communities and ensure future food security.

Circular principles offer a beacon of hope in this complex landscape. Adopting circular practices in agriculture can enhance resource efficiency, reduce waste and mitigate environmental impacts. Furthermore, as climate change intensifies, incorporating circular principles becomes imperative to build resilience and adaptability in agricultural systems, addressing the escalating challenges posed by shifting weather patterns and environmental degradation. A circular economy is not merely a concept but a tangible pathway to sustainable food production that preserves our planet's resources for generations to come.

Together, let us accelerate change, strengthen food security, empower women, support displaced farmers, and promote circular agricultural principles in Africa. Join us in this mission to create a more sustainable, equitable, and nourished future for all.

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What We Offer

The WFP Innovation Accelerator, together with the Federal Chancellery of Austria (BKA), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the Kofi Annan Foundation (KAF), wish to support innovative solutions that address the urgent food security needs of people across Africa. The programme offers:

- **Acceleration Bootcamp:** Nine (9) promising teams will participate in a fully virtual WFP Innovation Bootcamp. During this bootcamp, participants will have valuable opportunities to collaborate with technical and industry mentors who will provide expert guidance to refine further and develop their innovative solutions.
- **Funding opportunities:** Ventures that successfully progress to the bootcamp stage will gain the eligibility to apply for equity-free funding, with the possibility of receiving financial support of up to EUR 250,000 per innovation for a total of three awards.
- **Sprint programme:** The three ventures selected to receive EUR 250,000 in equity-free funding will also be welcomed into a WFP Sprint Programme. This 12-month acceleration program grants access to mentorship, a global network of influential partners, and resources designed to expedite their growth and impact.
- **Network of innovators:** All nine ventures, regardless of funding outcomes, will have the opportunity to harness and leverage a robust network of pertinent businesses, investors, and mentors, enhancing their potential for long-term success and sustainability.

What We Are Looking For

The 2023 Kofi Annan Award seeks to support technology-powered solutions and approaches that are helping to improve food security and systems in African countries.

We welcome applications from **social entrepreneurs with digital or technology-powered solutions for people in Africa** who are addressing one or more of the following priority topics:

1. Inclusion of Marginalized Groups in Food Security

Ensuring the participation and benefit of marginalized and underserved groups, such as persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and other disadvantaged communities.

Innovation Focus: Exploring technology-driven solutions that promote equitable access to food resources and empower marginalized groups to actively engage in food production, distribution, and decision-making processes, such as accessible farming tools and digital market access for displaced farmers.

2. Enhanced Nutrition for women (pregnant and lactating)

Advancing nutritional well-being for women, with a specific emphasis on pregnant and lactating women, children under five years of age, and the elderly.

Innovation Focus: Identifying technological solutions that address nutritional deficiencies in these target groups through innovative approaches, such as digital tools for personalized dietary guidance, nutrient-rich food production, and nutritional monitoring.

3. Circular solutions and reduction of post-harvest losses

Encouraging the adoption of circular business models in the agriculture and food sectors with a special emphasis on creating cost-effective and sustainable food preservation technologies. These technologies should minimize post-harvest losses and address food wastage in urban and rural areas, providing tangible benefits to women farmers and other marginalized communities. As climate change intensifies, the vulnerability of agricultural supply chains to extreme weather events and unpredictable conditions becomes more pronounced, making the implementation of circular solutions a strategic response to enhance resilience and adaptability in the food sector.

Innovation Focus: Developing innovative and scalable solutions that specifically target the challenges of managing food surplus, redistributing excess food, recovering valuable resources, and preservation, particularly in the context of climate change. In addition, these innovations should empower women farmers and marginalized groups with knowledge and skills to reduce post-harvest losses. This can be achieved through various means such as training programs, educational mobile apps for agriculture, or community-based extension services tailored to their needs and circumstances.

Eligibility Criteria

- Your venture must be a for-profit legal entity and incorporated for at least two years at the time of application.
- Your solution is anchored in at least one African country.
- The applicant must have existing contacts/presence in the country of implementation: country office or other permanent presence, subsidiary, long-term operations or partnerships in the country.
- Your innovation clearly addresses one or more priority topics included in this call for applications.
- Your innovation has more than 1 million people in the total addressable market.
- Your innovation must be at least at the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) stage; a validated prototype with user testing can also be eligible.
- Your solution should have a committed founding team with at least three full-time employees.

- Applicants should be able to provide evidence of user/customer validation of the value proposition.
- Your venture should be developing a clear path to commercial viability and financial sustainability (business model fit).
- Your solution should have a potential plan to implement as part of the 12-month Sprint programme.
- Innovations should change existing or establish new routines and positively impact one or more of the following aspects: food security, employment and income generation and/or climate resilience and natural resource protection.
- Ventures should be able to demonstrate they have a diverse, non-discriminatory, gender-balanced venture with demonstrated leadership and entrepreneurial mindset, and the vision of the team.
- We prioritize ventures that focus on promoting gender equality and empowering women through their beneficiaries, job creation, or having a high representation of women in leadership positions.
- The entity does not fall under any of the points listed in the solemn declaration.
- The venture pays attention to environmental protection and climate change, gender equality and women empowerment, as well as social inclusion (leave no one behind).

Selection Criteria

In accordance with the above, applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- **Impact & Scalability:** Applicants should have a defined vision, an identified target group, and be able to demonstrate the potential to solve the posed challenge(s).
- **Team:** Applicants should be able to demonstrate they have a diverse, non-discriminatory, gender-balanced organization with demonstrated leadership and entrepreneurial mindset.
- **Novelty:** Applicants should be able to show how their solution and business model are innovative while being technically suitable, and viable.
- **Traction:** Applicants should be able to present evidence of feasibility and adoption by the target group.
- **Business Model:** Applicants should demonstrate the viability of their business model, how they intend to achieve a sustainable business, pricing, and financial model.

**We reserve the right to adjust eligibility criteria based on the changing context as new information becomes available.*

Application Process

1. To submit your application, please complete the [Application Form](#) before **8 February 2024 at 11:59 pm (CET)**.

2. If you know a relevant venture or solution for us to consider for this programme, please let us know by filling out our [Referral Submission Form](#).
3. We will review and select successful applications to participate in a fully virtual WFP Innovation Bootcamp in February 2024. While we value all applications, we are only able to contact shortlisted applicants.
4. Interested, but don't feel your idea is ready yet? Don't let this stop you! You can still send your application, as we are creating a pool of solutions with a focus on climate-resilient agriculture. This pool of solutions could be invited for future programmes.
5. At least one of the team members must be fluent in English. Please note the entire programme is delivered in English.
6. For more information, see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Data Protection

No part of the information provided during the application will be made public nor used for any other purposes outside the Kofi Annan Award without the consent of the applicants.

About the WFP Innovation Accelerator

The WFP Innovation Accelerator was launched by the UN World Food Programme in 2015 to source new ideas, sprint pilot projects, and scale high-impact innovations by connecting them with WFP's global network of more than 23,000 staff and field operations in over 120 countries and territories. From its base in Munich, Germany, the WFP Innovation Accelerator has grown to become one of the world's leading social impact startup accelerators. Each year, it offers 15 programmes addressing a wide range of social impact and sustainability issues, including climate change, primary healthcare, gender equality, and emergency response. In 2022 alone, its portfolio of over 150 innovations reached 37 million people worldwide, with a 2X growth rate every year since its launch, and secured over \$200 million in grants.

Find out more about us at innovation.wfp.org. Subscribe to our [e-newsletter](#). Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#), and watch our videos on [YouTube](#).