

# Call for Applications

Iraq is one of the countries, most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, facing extreme temperatures, unpredictable precipitation, intensified drought and increasing water scarcity. At the same time, rapid population growth, urbanization and inefficient water use by the agricultural and industrial sectors are propelling a demand for more water. The multifaceted stressors have led to further losses of agricultural livelihoods, especially in southern governorates, thus aggravating food insecurity. As Iraq transitions from a humanitarian to a development context after decades of conflict and political unrest, the country is focused on building a strong, home-grown innovation ecosystem that supports a climate-smart and resilient future capable of withstanding the challenges posed by climate change.

To address these challenges, the World Food Programme (WFP) is launching its first-ever call for applications in Iraq. The [PALM \(Promoting Adaptation through Localized Methods\) Iraq Innovation Challenge](#) aims to identify and support local cost-effective solutions, both low-tech and high-tech, to build resilience and enhance climate adaptation of affected communities.

We invite innovators, entrepreneurs and organizations from Iraq to contribute **impactful and fit-for-purpose** solutions to **strengthen the capacities of local communities to adapt to climate change and improve livelihood opportunities**. WFP in Iraq will provide comprehensive support to selected teams, facilitating the development and scaling of the most promising solutions. Our focus is on nurturing innovations that are not only novel to the context of Iraq but also sustainable, scalable, and capable of bringing long-term change within the local ecosystem.

**Application deadline: 12 October 2024, 11:59 pm (AST)**

## What is offered

The selected innovation teams:

- will be eligible to receive **up to US\$25,000 equity free grant** from WFP;
- will have the opportunity to take part in an **innovation coaching workshop** held in Iraq in Jan 2025, combining business mentoring, ecosystem mobilization and roadmap planning facilitated by the WFP Innovation Accelerator;
- will participate in a **three-month WFP Sprint Programme** (Feb - April 2025) to pilot the solutions and receive operational support, with the potential to be integrated into the programmatic activities in WFP in Iraq in the long term; and
- may qualify for further support and fundraising opportunities.

## What we are looking for

For this innovation challenge, we are looking for **cost-effective, context-appropriate solutions, both low-tech and high-tech**, to enhance WFP in Iraq's climate resilience activities. We aim to identify homegrown innovations based in Iraq that could be implemented in governorates across Iraq. While we encourage innovative wildcard proposals, please ensure they align with WFP Iraq's current innovation priorities listed below:

### 1. Promote sustainable and climate-smart agricultural practices

Iraqi smallholder farmers face significant barriers to adopting climate-smart technologies essential for sustainable food production. Limited access to affordable innovations continues to drive reliance on traditional farming practices, which deplete natural resources, generate excessive waste and are economically inefficient. *To address these issues, the Innovation Challenge is looking for:*

- *Solutions that promote approaches of rural and urban circularity converting and reusing wastes for agricultural purposes. This includes but is not limited to waste conversion for organic fertilizer, reuse of agricultural wastewater and the conversion of agricultural waste into energy;*
- *cost-efficient solutions that promote smallholder farmers in adopting climate-smart production methods, such as urban farming, soilless cultivation or drought-resilient crop varieties, and others;*
- *last-mile extension services that provide tailored guidance based on crop types, soil conditions, market demand, and other factors; and*
- *solutions that help develop 'green' skills or diversify livelihoods for farmers, women and youth.*

## 2. Reduce post-harvest losses

Iraqi smallholder farmers face challenges due to inadequate post-harvest skills and techniques, insufficient equipment and limited access to market and post-harvest services. These obstacles hinder investment opportunities and contribute to the perception of small-scale agriculture as a low-performing sector. *To address these issues, the Innovation Challenge is looking for:*

- *Affordable agro-processing equipment and cold storage solutions that enhance produce preservation and significantly reduce post-harvest losses;*
- *Innovative delivery models or financing solutions that make post-harvest equipment more accessible and affordable for agro-processors; and*
- *digital marketplace or platforms that effectively connect farmers to buyers improving their market access and enabling them to secure fair prices.*

## 3. Address water scarcity challenges

Iraq's agricultural lands are increasingly affected by erosion, salinization and the depletion of organic matter, with severe water scarcity compounding these issues. Particularly in the southern governorates, smallholder farmers face critical challenges due to insufficient water availability, adversely impacting crop production. *To mitigate these issues, the Innovation Challenge is looking for:*

- *Technologies that enhance soil water retention, reduce runoff, improve irrigation efficiency and optimize the use of limited water resources;*
- *cost-efficient solutions that desalinate brackish water and groundwater for agricultural purposes, or scalable solutions that treat wastewater for reuse; and*
- *sustainable land management practices and approaches designed to combat desertification and restore soil health.*

## Eligibility Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the minimum eligibility criteria set by the WFP Innovation Accelerator. These include:

- Your organization must be a **legal established entity registered in Iraq**. Both for-profit and not-for-profit entities are eligible;
- Your organization should have an **operational presence in Iraq**, whether through a

subsidiary, in-country office, distributors, or partnerships

- Your innovation must address one or more of the priority innovation areas listed above;
- Your innovation must be at least at the **Minimum Viable Product (MVP)** stage, with proof-of-concept and initial traction being preferred; and
- Your application should include a pilot plan and budget proposal within the three months of receiving funding from WFP.

## Evaluation Criteria

In addition to the eligibility requirements mentioned above, applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Impact:** The solution has the potential to impact the people WFP in Iraq serves, therefore contributing to WFP's mission of achieving zero hunger;
- **Level of innovation:** The project involves either a new technology, a new way of using existing technology, or a process or business model that solves at least one of the problems mentioned above;
- **Feasibility:** The team has evidence of its ability to make and implement the proposed solution and indicates demand from the targeted users or customers of its solution;
- **Team quality:** The team has relevant experience and a strong commitment to the project;
- **Potential financial viability:** The application outlines a plan and ability to generate sustainable revenue beyond WFP funding in the medium term; and
- **Context relevance:** The solution directly addresses at least one of the priority areas mentioned above and is suitable for implement in WFP's programme in Iraq.

## Application Process

- Please complete the [Application Form](#) by **12 October 2024, 11:59 pm (AST)** to submit your application.
- We will review and select successful applications in October and November 2024. While we value all applications, please note that we can only contact shortlisted applicants.
- For more information, please refer to the [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

## About WFP in Iraq

In 2022, WFP launched a broader vision for its operations in Iraq focusing on resilience, recovery and development. This vision is underpinned by a comprehensive understanding of Iraq's political, security, socio-economic, environmental, economic, and human capital development landscape. By 2025, WFP aims to solidify its role as a relevant partner to the Government of Iraq in sustainable development, enabling Iraq's vision 2030 through innovative solutions that mitigate vulnerability and improve lives. To achieve its vision, WFP designed and implemented interventions that align with Iraq's developmental priorities, introducing innovative solutions to address the adverse impacts of climate change, tackling high youth unemployment, fostering a conducive ground for entrepreneurship and supporting livelihoods recovery for displaced people in conflict and climate-impacted areas. Through this holistic strategy, WFP ensured that its response extends beyond addressing immediate needs to actively contributing to Iraq's sustainable development and resilience.

Aligned with this vision, WFP in Iraq partners with the WFP Innovation Accelerator to further promote youth economic empowerment by supporting innovative Iraqi ventures and contribute to strengthening the local youth-led innovation ecosystem. At the same time, identified initiatives complement WFP's Livelihoods & Resilience programmes, creating a strong programmatic synergy.

## About the WFP Innovation Accelerator

The [WFP Innovation Accelerator](#) was established in 2015 by the United Nations (UN) World Food Programme with the support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) and the Bavarian State Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism (StMELF). Its goal is to source new ideas, sprint pilot projects, and scale high-impact innovations by connecting them with WFP's global network and field operations in over 120 countries and territories. From its base in Munich, Germany, the WFP Innovation Accelerator runs programmes addressing a wide range of social impact and sustainability issues, including climate change, primary healthcare, justice between the sexes, and emergency response. Together with the network of WFP regional innovation hubs and country office innovation teams, portfolio ventures and with the support of our partners, in 2023 the WFP Innovation Accelerator ran 14 programmes and its portfolio, comprising over 70 active innovations and 66 alumni innovation initiatives, reached 60.7 million individuals across 70 countries and territories. Since its launch, innovations supported by the WFP Innovation Accelerator have secured over US\$295 million in grant funding.