

# Digital Innovation in Food Processing Award

co-hosted with SS4AF, HIGHFIVE, Qing & Next Tech Food Factories

Investing in agrifood processing creates opportunities for developing local entrepreneurship and generating employment and value addition in rural and peri-urban areas of Africa and across the Global South. Although food processing is often associated with highly processed foods that are high in fats, sugars and/or salt, it can also be used to improve food nutritional quality and reduce the cost of a healthy diet. Studies show that small and medium enterprise (SME) employment in agrifood systems in processing, wholesale, transport and retail can be especially important to the employment of women and youth ([FAO, 2023](#)). Hence, food processing plays a pivotal role in achieving SDG 2 - Zero Hunger, SDG 3 - Good Health and Wellbeing, SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production.

This Award, co-hosted with Smart Sensors for Agri-food (SS4AF), HIGHFIVE, Qing and Next Tech Food Factories, focuses on the need to find innovative solutions to ensure a sustainable and green development in food processing, specifically using digital solutions on SME-level.

Concrete challenges have been identified for the food processing industry: improved efficiency, higher quality, sustainable production & products, food safety and improving labor conditions. This Award challenges global startups to propose innovative digital and/or data-driven technological solutions to help tackle these challenges. The novelty of the innovative solutions will be assessed in the context of the geographic location and the possibility to scale the solution to other regions and or other product value chains.

Four thematic priorities are identified:

- Sensors to monitor real time critical control parameters
- Sensor integration and implementation
- Smart data management and analytics - from data to information to action
- Interoperability between food companies and in the food value chains

#### Eligibility criteria for the Award:

- The solution of the startup entrant has a focus on **food processing**, which refers to the transformation of raw agricultural materials or ingredients into food products through various physical, chemical, and biological methods. This includes cleaning, sorting, grinding, cooking, preserving, and packaging food to make it suitable for consumption.
- The solution of the startup entrant is based on **digital innovation** and aligns with at least one of the thematic priorities.

The startups may send their applications until the **8th of June 2024** to be eligible for this Award.

#### Finalists and winner will receive:

- Acceleration support within SS4AF ecosystem for the company to scale-up
- Access to the network and personalized mentorship from SS4AF partners covering 9 European countries
- Travel and accommodation for two (2) finalists to attend the Finals at the WFF flagship in Rome, Italy on 14-18 October 2024
- Up to USD 15 000 cash prize for the Award winner
- Communication boot camp for the Final pitches at the WFF flagship event
- Access to a global audience of young leaders and organizations from the public and private sectors, including FAO, UNIDO, and the United Nations network
- Branding and promotion through the the SS4AF network and its partners (e.g. Next Tech Food Factories) and WFF communication platforms