

Enhancing Climate Resilience and Water Security Award

Overview

As climate change intensifies, the need to enhance climate resilience and water security has never been more urgent. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)'s [Strategy on Climate Change \(2022-2031\)](#) emphasizes the importance of integrated water resource management, climate-smart agriculture and innovative solutions to address growing water stress, which now affects nearly two-thirds of the global population. Key strategies include improving water-use efficiency, leveraging digital technologies for water monitoring and implementing nature-based solutions. These measures are essential for building resilience, securing water resources and ensuring the sustainability of food systems in the face of ongoing climate change.

The Enhancing Climate Resilience and Water Security Award recognizes groundbreaking solutions that significantly improve resilience to climate impacts, optimize water resource management and contribute to ecosystem sustainability and community stability. This Award directly supports the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). This award seeks to identify scalable and impactful projects that address the increasing challenges of climate change and water scarcity, particularly in rural and vulnerable communities. Solutions must focus on enhancing water efficiency, promoting climate-resilient agricultural practices and protecting ecosystems that are essential for food security and community stability. As underscored in FAO's [State of Food and Agriculture 2024](#) report highlights that climate change and water shortages are major threats to global food supply, stressing the urgent need for new solutions that make agriculture and water management more resilient and effective, especially in vulnerable communities.

Targeted solutions

- Advanced technologies for efficient water usage, including smart irrigation systems, rainwater harvesting and sensor-driven solutions;
- Climate-smart agricultural practices optimizing water utilization and enhancing resilience;
- Innovative and sustainable infrastructure systems for water management, recycling and purification;
- Data-driven platforms leveraging remote sensing, IoT sensors and predictive analytics for real-time monitoring and climate risk forecasting; and
- Ecosystem-based approaches integrating biodiversity conservation with climate resilience and water security.

Objectives

This award aims to:

- Identify and support innovative solutions that enhance climate resilience and sustainable water resource management;
- Promote scalable and impactful approaches to water security and resilience-building, particularly for vulnerable communities and ecosystems; and
- Foster integrated solutions balancing ecosystem health, human well-being and long-term resource sustainability amidst climate variability.

Eligibility criteria

The award is open to youth-led startups (pre-seed and seed stage) developing technological innovations, sustainable practices or management strategies addressing climate resilience and water security. We are looking for youth-led startups with a founder or C-level executive between 18 and 35 years old at the time of submission of the application. Applicants must present validated evidence demonstrating the effectiveness and tangible impacts of their solutions. Priority will be given to scalable innovations addressing the needs of marginalized populations, including smallholder farmers, rural communities and Indigenous groups, especially in the Global South.

Important dates & timeline

- Application deadline: 22 May 2025
- Semi-finalist announcement: 2 July 2025
- Finalist announcement: 24 July 2025
- Final Pitch and Award Ceremony: 15 October 2025, World Food Forum (WFF) flagship event, FAO Headquarters, Rome

Prize and Benefits

- Cash prize of up to USD 15,000 for the winner;
- Potential inclusion in a Startup Accelerator Programme offering implementation support to Startup Innovation Awards winners;
- Travel support for two finalists to attend the WFF flagship event in Rome;

- Comprehensive virtual communication and pitch training boot camp;
- Extensive visibility and promotional opportunities via WFF global communication platforms and FAO and United Nations networks; and
- Qualified semi-finalists can compete for the [MassChallenge Switzerland](#): Fighting Malnutrition and Enhancing Food Security Prize ([more information here](#)) on an additional prize of EUR 10 000.