

Nestlé announces winners of sub-Saharan Africa innovation challenge

African startups Shopit, Exportunity and Wakulima from South Africa, Benin and Tanzania respectively, emerged the winners of the Nestlé Research and Development (R&D) sub-Saharan innovation challenge.



Image credit: Nestlé via APO Group

Selected from among a competitive group of 174 submissions received from 27 different countries across Africa, these startups projects were judged by a panel of Nestlé executives as the most promising.

In addition, the initiative Mafani, led by 2 students from University Gaston Berger of Saint Louis (Senegal), was selected as the winner of university category of the challenge and will receive CHF 10,000 in prize money.

Platform to commercialise idea

The three start-up winners have been awarded a 4-month residency in the new Nestlé R&D Accelerator for sub-Saharan Africa, located at the Nestlé R&D Centre in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. During their stay, the three selected start-ups will have the opportunity to tap into Nestlé's R&D's expertise, as well as have access to state-of-the-art infrastructure such as hot desks, labs, kitchens and pilot testing equipment to further advance and potentially commercialise their ideas.

According to Joëlle Abega-Oyouomi, head of the Nestlé R&D Centre in Abidjan, "the sub-Saharan African innovation ecosystem is filled with creative energy and strong entrepreneurial minds. However, there is not enough infrastructure to test and validate new ideas, therefore, limiting access to a wider market". She highlighted that Nestlé's R&D science and technology expertise will contribute by providing a platform to deliver innovations adapted to African consumers' needs and preferences.



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28 May 2019



Stimulating innovative solutions

In May 2019, [Nestlé launched](#) the R&D innovation challenge in sub-Saharan Africa as part of its efforts to stimulate

innovative solutions across four areas: **affordable nutrition, environmentally-friendly packing solutions, sustainable cocoa plantlets, and new routes to markets**. It has set a particular focus on universities and startups in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa.

Chair of the challenge selection panel, Rémy Ejel, market head for Nestlé in Central and West Africa, was pleased with the high level of participation from the region. "I am impressed by the original ideas pitched to us today. With a majority of the submissions coming from Ghana and Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire, the region is in an exceptional position to become an innovation hub for the African continent."



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Bruno Olierhoek, market head for Nestlé East and Southern African Region expressed his delight at the dedication showed by students and startups to this initiative. "We are thrilled that this innovation challenge resulted in such great interest from the East and Southern African Region. In the spirit of co-creation, we can now look forward to joint ideation between the winners and Nestlé for solutions that will contribute to a healthier future of the people of Africa".

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