



Cultivate Tomorrow
cellag.hackathon@gmail.com
<https://www.cultivate-tmrw.com/>

PRESS RELEASE

Grassroots Student Org Partners with Industry Innovators for a Greener Food Future

January 12, 2022 - While the cultivated food industry has seen record levels of investment and breakthroughs in the past two years, university curricula still do not cover topics that would prepare students to work in the field. The Cultivate Tomorrow initiative aims to help bridge that gap, organizing students from all disciplines to tackle key challenges in the industry through a cellular agriculture-focused hackathon, the first of its kind in the US.

The inaugural Cultivate Tomorrow hackathon is organized into three tracks: scientific communication, advertising strategy, and innovative resource use. Each team of 3-5 students is paired with an industry mentor. The Cultivate Tomorrow team recruited 170 student applicants from around the country last fall, and currently have about 130 students participating. Cultivate Tomorrow has also been providing students a crash course on Cultivated Food, drawing on a student-led course taught at MIT.

To conclude the Cultivate Tomorrow Hackathon, the organization will host a virtual Demo Day on February 12, 2022. This event will be open to everyone interested in the cultivated food industry, biotechnology applications, and sustainable food and agriculture sectors. The event will feature the awards ceremony and finalists' presentations, panel discussions on the future of the industry, and "new tech" lightning presentations. Attendees will also be able to join networking sessions and visit student hackers' expo booths to learn about their projects. Through this event, the organizers aim to bring together many important players in the industry from suppliers to food manufacturers, from biotechnology innovation and research to investing and marketing experts. This event will also culminate in the meeting and collaboration of like-minded and mission-driven people interested in learning more about the cultivated food industry.

The initiative has attracted involvement from exciting startups and players in the space. Industry mentors include leaders from groundbreaking startups such as Perfect Day, Wildtype, The Every Company, BIOMILQ, and Mission Barns. The event's primary sponsor is Merck, with TurtleTree Labs providing research sponsorship, and further support from Gingko Bioworks and CULT Food Science.

Cultivate Tomorrow is a grassroots initiative launched by students from MIT, Northwestern, Yale, UW Madison, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UC San Diego, UVM, and Ohio State University. The Founder and Director is Jasmin Kern, currently an undergraduate senior at MIT studying Chemistry with a focus on Food and Agriculture. Other organizers include PhD candidates in Biochemistry and Food Sciences, as well as MBA candidates. This interdisciplinary team hopes to spark excitement and support for more sustainable food technologies among students and changemakers.

In November 2021, Cultivate Tomorrow became a member of Nucleate, a national student-run organization that empowers biotech founders and facilitates the formation of pioneering life sciences companies.

Quotes:

“As an organizer, one of my jobs was to work with the teams and provide support for their projects. It was beyond incredible to see such a widespread interest for all facets of cellular agriculture from so many young, motivated students. Had it not been for the hackathon, I don't think I would've realized the scale of popularity for cellular agriculture in current university students.”

- Irfan Tahir, Cultivate Tomorrow VP of Education, PhD Candidate at UVM, New Harvest Research Fellow

“Solving our biggest sustainability challenges will require collaboration across sectors and industries. Through Cultivate Tomorrow, we hope to spark conversations about our food system, and how we could make it work better for everyone. You don't have to have a science background to work in cultivated food. In fact, we need more people from different disciplines to get involved in order to build a more sustainable and equitable food future.”

- Aga Gugala, Cultivate Tomorrow VP of Marketing & Programming, MBA at Berkeley Haas

“From conceptualizing the first nation-wide cultivated food hackathon to directing the first iteration of Cultivate Tomorrow, I have gotten to know so many impressive and inspiring people working towards revolutionizing the food industry. We were able to reach over a hundred of interested students and gain support from dozens of the top start-ups and organizations in the cellular agriculture and precision fermentation field. I am thrilled to see how much new talent has been waiting for a chance to step into this industry, and that we can offer them this opportunity.”

- Jasmin Kern, Cultivate Tomorrow Director, Undergraduate Chemistry Major at MIT

“Cultivate Tomorrow will prepare the next generation of leaders to apply themselves to challenges and opportunities in the cultivated meat industry. We need bright minds to think creatively and strategically about communicating science and identifying white spaces for innovation.”

- Jess Krieger, CEO and Co-Founder of Ohayo Valley

“I hope that people come to realize that these challenges are massive but not impossible.”

- Benny Larson, PhD, VP of Research and Product Development at Wildtype

“Cultivate Tomorrow bridges the gap between student talents and industrial experts and creates a win-win situation, where students can gain practical industrial experience and industry entities can learn from the fresh ideas that student talents propose.”

- Rita Huang, Head of Media Relations at Turtletree

“Cellular Agriculture is an exciting growing industry with lots of potential for planetary and human health. ‘Cultivate Tomorrow’ offers a fantastic opportunity for students to get access to the behind-the-scenes of Cell Ag. Building talent pipeline is crucial for the success and growth of the industry.”

- Charlotte Fron, Communications and Engagement Associate at BIOMILQ

Organization website: <https://www.cultivate-tmrw.com/>

Contact: cellag.hackathon@gmail.com

Background Information:

Cultivate Tomorrow is the first US hackathon focused solely on cellular agriculture and cell cultured food. This hackathon will work to lower the barrier to enter the cell cultured food industry for STEM and non-STEM individuals. We will create a large network and community of diverse individuals with different backgrounds, skills, and interests. Together we will brainstorm, innovate, and re-imagine the future of food. This event is open to all undergraduate and graduate students across the US who are interested in becoming more immersed in this field. We believe that only through cross-collaboration will this industry succeed in redefining the food system and allocation of our planet's natural resources. For more information: <https://www.cultivate-tmrw.com/>.

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