CRAFS
CENTRE FOR RESILIENT AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS

Food Innovation and Technology Hub (FIT-Hub)

FIT-Hub Incubation Program Call for Incubatees 2025

Cohort 1

The Food Innovation and Technology Hub (FIT-Hub) within the Center for Resilient Agri-Food Systems (CRAFS) at the University of Malawi, is currently seeking innovators to join their FIT-Hub Incubation Program 2025.

CRAFS is funded by the World Bank, through the Government of Malawi, under the Eastern and Southern Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence Additional Financing (ACE II AF) project.

CRAFS aims to stimulate and support research and development for holistic solutions focusing on innovations in agri-food systems and nutrition, agricultural risk management, climate change proofing, statistical analysis, digital agriculture, and market information management systems including AI and data analytics.

Food Innovation and Technology Hub (FIT-Hub) aims to promote and nurture a culture of entrepreneurship and inventions on Agri-food systems and product development and processing innovations in Malawi, while ensuring intellectual property protection. FIT-Hub is dedicated to advancing resilient agri-food systems through research, innovation, and collaboration. Successful applicants/ innovators will be guided through a step-by-step innovation ecosystem that will ultimately lead to the commercialization of their products and services.

Aim of FIT-Hub: Accelerating innovations and knowledge for multiple wins; reduced post-harvest loss, enhance productivity, nutrition, climate adaptation and mitigation, and inclusion.

Goal of FIT-Hub: To transform food tech start-ups into sustainable and investment-worthy business entities.

Purpose of this call: To encourage teams or individuals with products or services in line with the thematic areas below to apply. Incubatees will compete for seed grants to help them implement their prior set project activities and milestones.

Specific Objective:

- Providing services towards product development and food analysis (nutritional analysis, food safety and hygiene audits, shelf-life analysis, shelf-life improvement, informative packaging and marketing) and product profitability assessment.
- Facilitating the prototyping of novel food products to test feasibility, functionality, and consumer response before moving on to final production.
- Supporting the development of digital platforms for knowledge management and sharing, as well as linking incubatees to markets.
- Facilitating formal partnerships between incubatees, the university, and public and private organizations.

Thematic areas of this call:

- Agri-value added products
- Improved plant nutrition and production

- Functional and therapeutic foods
- Natural foods and beverages
- Feed formulation and processing
- Digital agri-solutions
- Any other agri-related products or services

What You Gain as an Incubatee:

1. **Capacity Building:**
   - Training in business plan development, financial management, grant writing, IP as business strategy
   - Workshops on market strategies, branding, pitching, and investor readiness
2. **Regulatory & Legal Guidance:**
   - Support in business incorporation
   - Support in intellectual property (IP) registration
   - Navigation of Malawi Bureau of Standards (MBS) and other regulatory approvals
   - Assistance with ethical/protocol approvals (e.g., IRB, NCST, or international equivalents)
3. **State-of-the-Art Facilities:**
   - Access to CRAFS/UNIMA laboratories (Microbiology, Food Science, Analytical Chemistry, Computing, and Physics) and libraries
   - Use of the FIT-Hub food processing lab and Technology and Innovation Support Centre (TISC)
4. **Funding & Exposure:**
   - Opportunity to compete for seed grants to implement project milestones
   - Publicity through CRAFS/FIT-Hub platforms and peer-to-peer networking

Eligibility: Students, staff from UNIMA and entrepreneurs in Malawi

Condition for participation: Participation is free for selected start-ups (trainings, workshops, facility access). Each participant is responsible for their own upkeep, travel costs and accommodation during their stay.

Procedure of Application: Eligible teams or individuals are invited to submit via online form (use this offline form to secure your information before submitting online) at https://crafs.unima.ac.mw/FIT-HUB

Submission of Application: Submit the filled ONLINE application form. If you can't access the online form contact crafs@unima.ac.mw for support. ***Only shortlisted applicants*** *will be notified by 10th June 2025.* Applicants can seek more information by contacting Dr. Victoria Uchizi Ndolo at +265 884 351 080 (during working hours) or via email: vndolo@unima.ac.mw.

Deadline for application: 30th May 2025

Kindly note ***only shortlisted applicants*** *will be notified by 10th June 2025. If your application is not successful, do not hesitate to apply during the next call.*

For more information about CRAFS and the FIT-Hub, visit our website at https://crafs.unima.ac.mw/**FIT-HUB**