



CANADIAN FOOD INNOVATION NETWORK AWARDS \$50K TO FIVE STUDENT-LED FOODTECH VENTURES

The funding will empower student entrepreneurs and advance the commercialization of novel food technologies

GUELPH, ON, MAY 6, 2025 — The [Canadian Food Innovation Network](#) (CFIN) is awarding \$49,982 to five student-led foodtech ventures through the organization's [NextGen Food Innovators program](#), which aims to accelerate the pre-competitive development of promising innovations into a new venture.

The funding recipients of the NextGen Food Innovators program are:

Venture Name: [PhyCo Technologies](#) (British Columbia)

Academic Institution: Simon Fraser University

Project Title: Seaweed Bio-Coating for Food Preservation

Funding: \$10,000

PhyCo Technologies aims to optimize and test a seaweed-based antimicrobial and antifungal coating to extend the shelf life of fresh produce, particularly cucumbers and berries. Using advanced spray coater technology, the team will evaluate coatings on simple packaging substrates to develop eco-friendly alternatives to single-use plastics—addressing food waste and sustainability challenges while supporting Canada's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from food loss.

Venture Name: [Chromasense Technologies](#) (Alberta)

Academic Institution: University of Calgary

Project Title: Ultra-Low Cost Food Freshness Indicators

Funding: \$10,000

Chromasense Technologies Inc. is developing low cost and sustainable food freshness sensors that indicate when food is no longer safe to consume. These innovations will monitor temperature history and quantify spoilage markers using novel sensing materials and facile fabrication methods. The goal is to reduce unnecessary food waste throughout the supply chain by providing affordable tools to monitor product safety and freshness in real-time.

Venture Name: [Genuine Taste](#) (Ontario)

Academic Institution: University of Toronto

Project Title: AI Model to Improve the Flavour of Cultivated Fat

Funding: \$10,000

Genuine Taste aims to improve the taste of alternative protein products by focusing on cultivated fat—real animal fat made from cells without harm to animals. The team will build an AI model to predict the optimal media formula for customizing the flavour profile of cultivated fat based on existing data. This will enable the production of fat with specific flavour profiles tailored to customer preferences in the pet food and plant-based meat sectors, addressing a key barrier to broader adoption of plant-based foods.

Venture Name: [Phoela Health](#) (Quebec)

Academic Institution: McGill University

Project Title: Rapid, Real-Time Biosensor for Enhanced Food Safety: Accelerating Pathogen Detection in the Canadian Agri-Food Chain

Funding: \$9,988

Phoela Health aims to revolutionize the food safety industry by developing a cost-effective, portable CMOS-based biosensor for detecting and identifying bacterial strains in food storage environments. Using a patented CMOS platform with bioluminescent immunoassays, the device will provide on-site bacterial strain identification at a fraction of the cost of existing tools. This innovation will empower food safety professionals with strain-specific data for targeted contamination responses, reducing recalls and economic losses while enhancing public health.

Venture Name: Dual Edge (Prince Edward Island)

Academic Institution: University of Prince Edward Island (Sustainable Food Automation Program, Faculty of Sustainable Design Engineering)

Project Title: 2-in-1 Digital and Photoacoustic Imaging Equipment Coupled with AI for Quality Evaluation of French Fries

Funding: \$9,994

Dual Edge is developing cutting-edge 2-in-1 digital and photoacoustic imaging equipment coupled with AI for the quality evaluation of French fries. The system will enable rapid, non-invasive assessment of critical quality attributes such as colour and texture. Digital imaging will analyze surface characteristics, while photoacoustic imaging will reveal internal structures. This approach seeks to enhance quality control processes, ensure consistent product standards, and reduce waste, contributing to more sustainable food processing practices.

CFIN's NextGen Food Innovators Program provides funding and support to students currently enrolled in Canadian post-secondary institutions who are developing innovative solutions for the food processing, foodservice, or grocery retail industries. The program focuses on intellectual property-driven projects with clear commercial applications and supports research and development at Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 1 to 7.

Across all funding programs, CFIN has awarded more than \$20M to 96 Canadian foodtech projects.

QUOTES

"Canada's food sector needs bold thinkers who can turn new ideas into real-world solutions and that need isn't going to pass. Through the NextGen Food Innovators Program, CFIN is equipping student entrepreneurs with the tools, support, and runway they need to bring their innovations to market and to develop the skills to become serial entrepreneurs. These ventures are tackling urgent challenges—like food waste, safety, and sustainability—and advancing the transition a stronger, more resilient Canadian food economy."

– Dana McCauley

CEO, Canadian Food Innovation Network

This support from CFIN's NextGen Food Innovators program is at a pivotal moment for PhyCo. It enables us to bring our seaweed-based coating one step closer to replacing plastic in Canada's food supply chain. With this pilot, we're not just extending shelf life—we're reshaping what food preservation can look like in a climate-conscious world."

– Ranah Chavoshi

Co-Founder & CEO, PhyCo Technologies Inc.

"Both Parker and myself have worked in the food and beverage industry, which means we have seen food waste from retailers firsthand. We are highly motivated to mitigate waste and increase safety throughout the food supply chain, and are willing to do what it takes to help reduce loss wherever possible."

– Kathryn Wolfe

Founder, Chromasense Technologies

"We're thrilled to receive CFIN's support, which accelerates the integration of cutting-edge AI into our production process. This funding is a major step forward in developing proprietary technology that enables our team to tailor the flavor profile of our product—helping us stand out in the growing alternative protein market."

– Emily Farrar

CEO & Co-Founder, Genuine Taste

"We're honored to receive this support from CFIN. This funding enables us to take a critical step toward making real-time, strain-specific food safety testing accessible and affordable. At Phoela Health, we're committed to empowering the food industry with tools that prevent contamination, reduce recalls, and protect public health."

– Reza Abbasi

CEO & Co-Founder, Phoela Health

"Receiving the CFIN Next Gen Food Innovator Award is a milestone made possible through the support of my mentor, Dr. Senthilkumar Thirupathi, who also supervises me in my graduate research program. This journey has deepened my passion for providing sustainable solutions to

the food processing industries to facilitate real-time monitoring, waste reduction, and cost efficiency, and I am excited to keep building toward a more efficient and responsible future."

– **Nikashini Thirugnanam**

Founder, Direct Edge

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The **NextGen Food Innovators Program** aims to accelerate the pre-competitive development of promising technology into a new venture. It provides funding to students who are currently or aspire to be entrepreneurs to advance the development and validation of their solutions, further substantiating the market opportunity for the innovation.

ABOUT THE CANADIAN FOOD INNOVATION NETWORK

The Canadian Food Innovation Network (CFIN) is a national organization that's stimulating transformative and transferrable innovation within the Canadian food sector. With over 6,500 members and counting, CFIN has built the fastest growing and most engaged food business community in the country and their members come from across the globe, representing all parts of the food value chain. [CFIN's free membership](#) includes access to exclusive funding programs, five Regional Innovation Directors, and [YODL](#).

CFIN was established in 2021 and is supported by the Government of Canada.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

[NextGen Food Innovators](#)

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