



NourishNext

WEST AFRICA

Youth-led innovation
powering fruit and vegetable
value chains.



BENIN



CÔTE D'IVOIRE



NIGERIA



SENEGAL

NourishNext West Africa Youth Agrifood Innovation Challenge 2026



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



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Improved Nutrition

About NourishNext West Africa 2026

NourishNext WestAfrica - Youth AgrifoodInnovation Challenge 2026 (NourishNext) is a national and regional innovation challenge that backs a new generation of West African entrepreneurs in the fruit and vegetables agrifood value chain. It surfaces youth-led solutions that make fruits and vegetables more available, affordable, and appealing; turning one of the region's biggest development gaps into an opportunity for healthier diets, stronger local markets for nutritious produce, more resilient livelihoods, and greater enterprise leadership among youth and women.

An initiative of the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) with partners SUN (Scaling Up Nutrition) Supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation & The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

NourishNext identifies, supports, and accelerates youth-led innovations that strengthen fruit and vegetable value chains across West Africa. The Challenge invites solutions from four countries - Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Senegal; that improve how fruits and vegetables are processed, preserved, packaged, transported, marketed, distributed, purchased, prepared, and consumed, contributing to more resilient, inclusive, and nutrition-sensitive food systems.

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Benin's food and nutrition architecture, from the Food and Nutrition Council to dietary guidelines, means we are ready to translate commitment into action. NourishNext will help young Beninese innovators commercialise value-added produce, plug into school feeding and public procurement, and reduce barriers that keep nutritious food out of households.

Françoise Sayi, Country Director, GAIN Benin



NourishNext is designed for youth-led enterprises that are already beyond the idea stage, with prototype, pilot or early market traction. It builds on GAIN Nigeria's ongoing work to strengthen nutritious food value chains, support small and medium enterprises, and create the market linkages and ecosystem support that help promising solutions become scalable businesses.

Dr. Michael Ojo, Country Director, GAIN Nigeria

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Innovate locally, Nourish regionally

Despite abundant production, post-harvest losses, fragmented markets and weak processing capacity keep fruit and vegetable consumption low, contributing to stunting being above 30%, and anaemia rates at above 50% among women in several countries; even as youth unemployment persists alongside untapped opportunity across the fruits and vegetables value chain.

Young West Africans.

Building better food systems with fruits & vegetables

West Africa is home to one of the world’s youngest populations, yet young people, especially young women, continue to face high unemployment and significant barriers to entrepreneurship. At the same time, fruit and vegetable consumption remains well below healthy levels, even in countries where production is substantial.



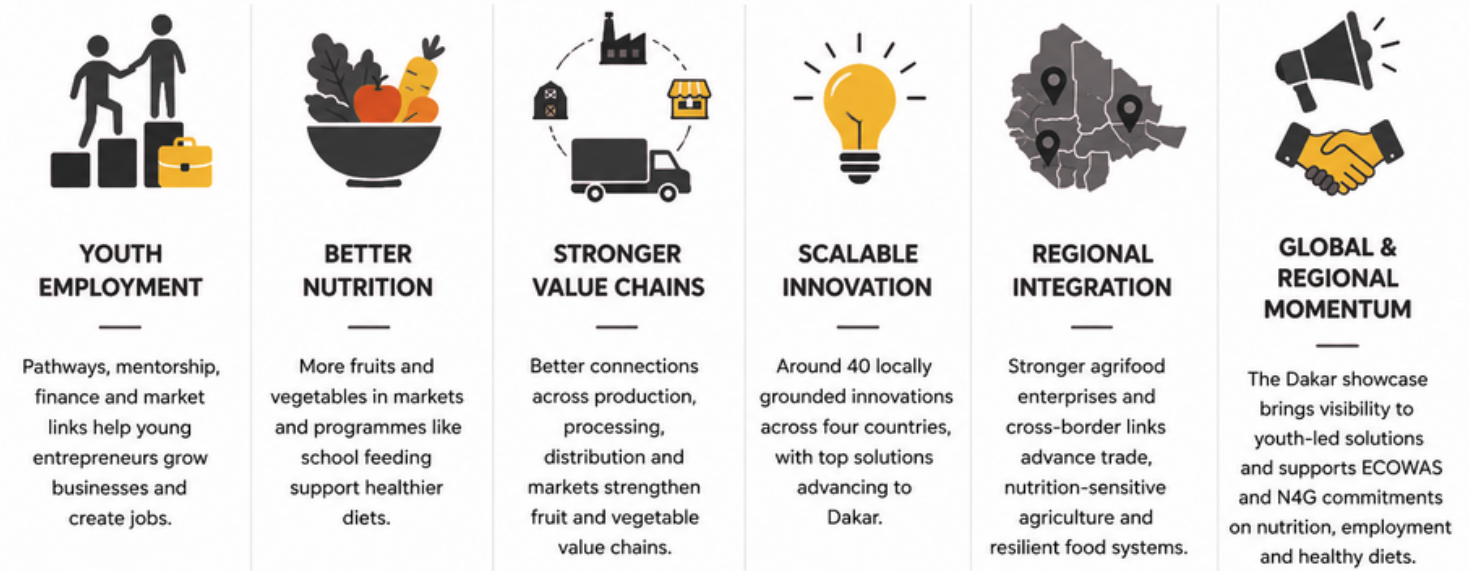
A Strategic Opportunity

West Africa’s agrifood sector supports millions of livelihoods, yet post-harvest losses, limited processing and storage, and fragmented markets keep nutritious fruits and vegetables from reaching people efficiently. The result: poorer diets, lost economic value and missed opportunities.

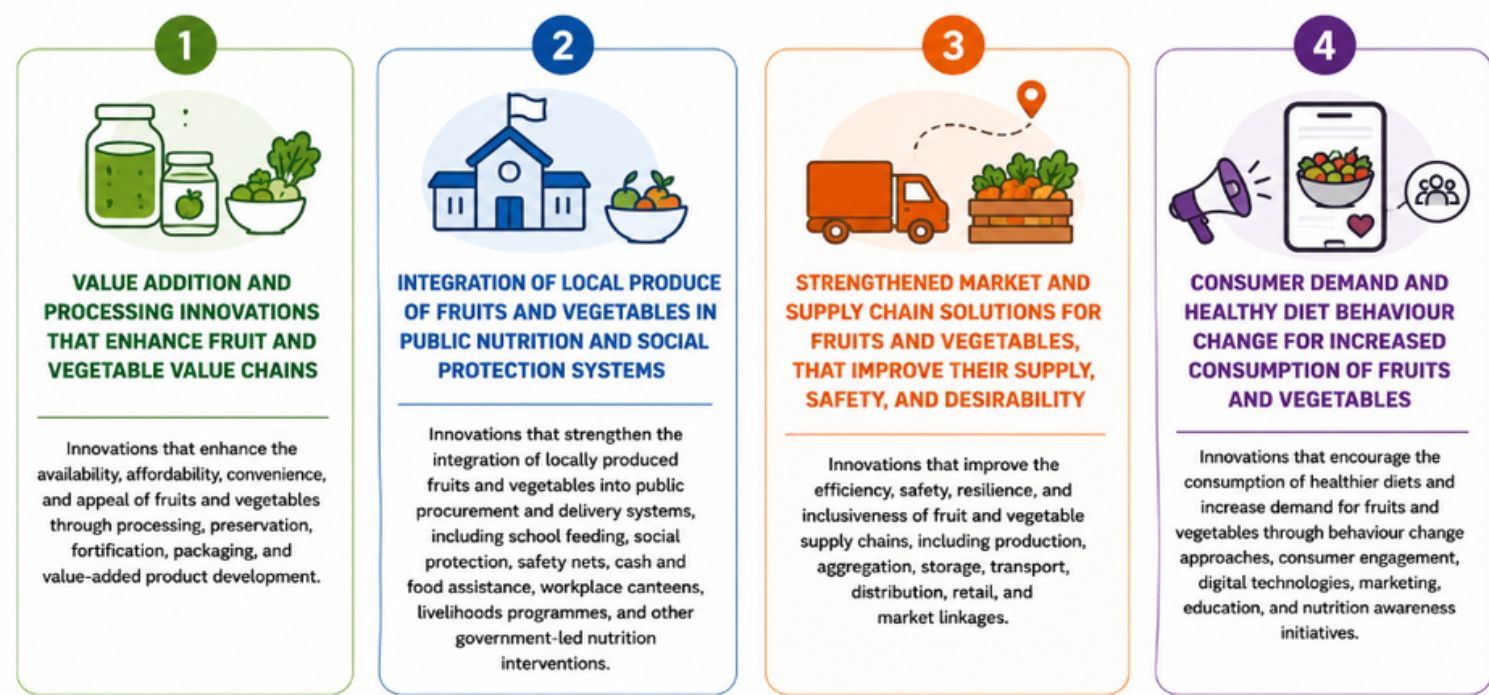
The opportunity? West Africa’s youth

This creates a powerful opportunity: the very agrifood value chains that need innovation and modernisation can also generate dignified jobs, strengthen local food systems and improve access to nutritious diets.

NourishNext brings these priorities together, turning today’s food-system challenges into opportunities for youth-led innovation, enterprise and impact. With finance, skills, mentorship and market connections, young entrepreneurs (18-35 years) and Women (18-40 years) can turn these gaps into thriving businesses, reducing losses, adding value, creating jobs and making nutritious foods more accessible.



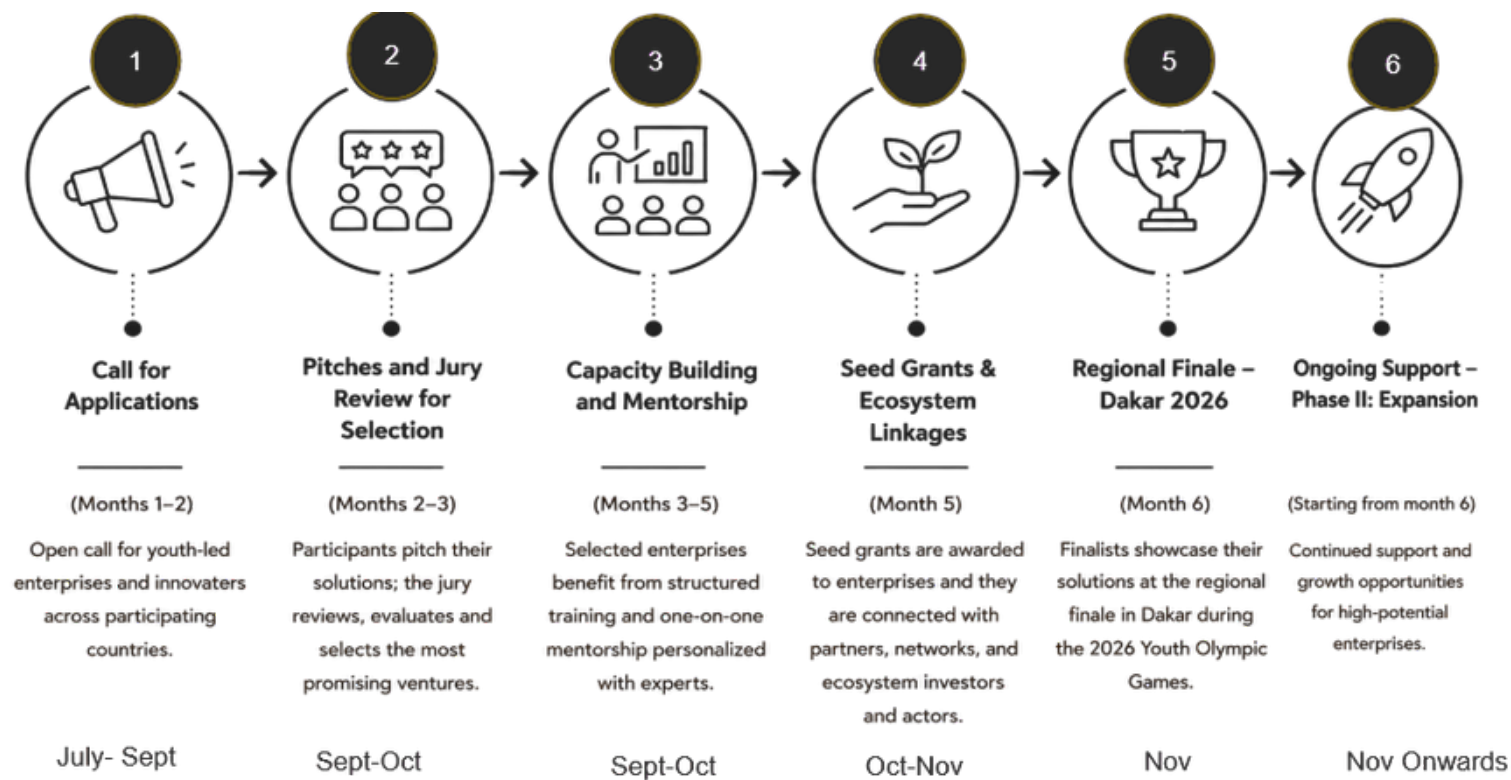
Competition Categories



Who Can Apply



NourishNext - How the Challenge Works



Benefits for Winners



NourishNext - A Snapshot

	Duration	July to December 2026
	Four countries	Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal
	Who can apply	Youth aged 18–35 (up to 40 years for women-led innovations) who are : entrepreneurs, start-ups, SMEs, cooperatives and researchers in fruit & vegetable value chains
	Competition Stages	Solutions submitted must be beyond the concept stage, with early traction or an operational presence in the market or with users
	Organisers & partners	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) & SUN Movement Supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
	National Finales	Seed Funding of \$ 5000 to each winner (Ten winners per country) felicitated at National Finales, showcasing youth-led agrifood innovations.
	Regional Showcasing	Showcasing Top 2 solutions at a regional platform at Dakar, Senegal
	Beyond the Challenge	The NourishNext journey continues as an experiential learning for winners, with expert mentorships, investor connections, peer learning, and opportunities to grow and scale innovations.

Scan to apply & read more:

Application Deadline 7 September (Nigeria) ;
30 September (Benin, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire)



<https://tinyurl.com/NNIC-Eng-Apply>

For further information and to partner with us, contact: nourishnextwa@gmail.com



Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is a Swiss-based foundation launched at the United Nations in 2002 to tackle malnutrition, with country offices across Africa and Asia. Working with governments and businesses to transform food systems to deliver more nutritious food for all.

Nutrition Connect is a global initiative of the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), and a knowledge platform mobilising evidence, shares experiences, and stimulates dialogue focused on enhancing public-private engagement for nutrition, while advancing learning and collaboration for stronger, more inclusive and nutrition-sensitive agrifood systems.