

Open Innovation Takes Center Stage at Expo Foodtech 2026, Bringing Together Startups and Leading Food Companies

The Open Innovation & Corporate Venturing Summit, led by Eatable Adventures, will connect 12 startups with companies such as Nestlé and Iansa to address challenges in circularity, AI, food security, and efficient agriculture

The forum will also explore how to scale open innovation projects and turn collaboration with startups into real-world solutions for the foodtech industry

Madrid, May 14, 2026 – [Expo Foodtech 2026](#) and [Pick&Pack for Food Industry](#), the leading technology trade fair for the food and beverage sector, will host the **Open Innovation & Corporate Venturing Summit** on **May 27 and 28** at the Bilbao Exhibition Centre (BEC). This is Europe’s first global open innovation forum in the foodtech sector, organized in partnership with **Eatable Adventures**, a leading global accelerator in Agrifoodtech.

The forum will bring together 12 innovative startups that will seek to solve challenges in the food industry posed by corporations such as **Nestlé and Iansa**, among others. The challenges focus on four key areas:

- Valorization of agro-industrial byproducts to generate new lines of business. For this challenge, the selected startups presenting their solutions or technologies in this area are **Tetis Biotech, MycoVibes Biotech, and Labre Gando**.
- AI and digitalization: Predictive AI and digitalization for the supply chain and quality in the agri-food sector. The startups addressing this challenge are **IOVI, The Food Chainers, and Comexsoft**.
- Pathogen detection and shelf-life extension. **Nulab, Aotech, and Oxpome** will present their solutions to improve food safety and extend product shelf life.
- Efficient agricultural practices: precision inputs, data, and soil technology for resource-efficient agriculture. Startups **Altered Materials, Agridata, and SmartSoil** will tackle this challenge.

From Startup to Business: The Challenge of Turning Innovation into Real Impact

In addition to “Open Innovation,” the two-day Expo Foodtech will also feature various sessions and panel discussions that will explore how to transform collaboration with startups into scalable, measurable projects that have a real impact on the business, overcoming one of the most common challenges in open innovation models: the transition from pilots and proof-of-concepts to effective implementation.

The Summit will bring together leading international figures in innovation, corporate venturing, R&D, and business development from companies such as **McCain, Eroski, Alianza Team,**

Lactalis, Tokyo Tatemono, Mahou San Miguel, Carozzi, Sigma Tastech, Dasca, Sodexo, and Barilla, among others, who will share models, lessons learned, and real-world case studies on how to integrate external innovation into corporate strategy. Open innovation, venture clienting, and corporate venturing are increasingly established as key tools for identifying emerging technologies, accelerating their adoption, and generating new growth and business opportunities. The key lies in how to structure these approaches, align them with corporate strategy, and generate tangible business impact through collaboration with startups and emerging technologies—a topic that the Open Innovation & Corporate Venturing Summit will address.

Another key focus of the event will be innovation governance within large organizations. Alignment among senior management, business units, and corporate venture capital teams has become a decisive factor in ensuring that innovative projects are not isolated but can be integrated into the company's core operations. In this regard, the Summit will examine the importance of defining clear responsibilities, shared incentives, dedicated resources, and internal collaboration mechanisms that enable innovation to be transformed into measurable impact.

The forum will also focus on scaling up from pilot projects, one of the major remaining challenges in collaboration between corporations and startups. Drawing on real-world experiences, experts will analyze why some proof-of-concept projects evolve into implemented solutions, while others fail to gain traction. The definition of KPIs, the involvement of internal teams, technological integration, and the adaptability of large organizations will be among the key topics discussed.

Circularity and sustainability will also take center stage, with a focus on how companies bridge the gap between strategy and execution, turning innovation goals into tangible business results. The event will also explore ways to reduce the risks associated with innovation projects. In the food industry, where processes are highly regulated and supply chains are complex, it is not enough to simply identify a promising technology; rather, it is necessary to structure collaborations from the outset with financial, operational, and governance mechanisms that minimize uncertainty, align expectations, and ensure that they evolve into sustainable and efficient solutions for companies.

Request your press pass for Expo FoodTech and Pick&Pack [here](#).

[About Expo FoodTech \(May 27 and 28, 2026, BEC-Bilbao\)](#): this is the leading innovation event for professionals across the entire value chain of the food and beverage sector. Over two days, F4F – Expo Foodtech will bring together food industry professionals at the Bilbao Exhibition Centre (BEC) to learn about the latest solutions in foodtech, robotics and automation, processing and packaging machinery for different segments of the food industry, as well as food safety and science. It will also host the Food 4 Future World Summit, the largest European congress where you can discover the latest trends, success stories, and tools to transform the food and beverage industry. F4F - Expo Foodtech, organized by NEBEXT and AZTI, will be held simultaneously with **[Pick&Pack for Food Industry](#)**, the only event in Spain specializing in packaging and logistics solutions for the food industry.



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[About NEBEXT](#): Next Business Exhibitions (NEBEXT) is Spain's largest private organizer of professional events specializing in technology, innovation, and sustainability for various industries.

[About AZTI](#): AZTI is a science and technology center that develops high-impact transformation projects and businesses with organizations aligned with the 2030 SDGs. Specializing in the marine environment and food, it provides cutting-edge, value-added products and technologies based on solid science and research.