



## De-TECH Innovation Tech Challenge 2026 – Agriculture & Food Edition

*Call for Industry Challenges – Focus on **Agriculture & Food Technologies**, **Bio-Plastics** (Food Packaging), **Waste Utilization**, or **Soil Health***

*Funded by the European Union – EIT HEI Initiative*

### What is the De-TECH Innovation Tech Challenge 2026?

The *De-TECH Innovation Tech Challenge 2026* is part of the EU-funded EIT Higher Education Initiative. It aims to foster collaboration between academia and industry by connecting real-world industry challenges with interdisciplinary student teams across Europe.

### Our academic partners include:

- Technical University of Madrid (UPM)
- Estonian Business School (EBS)
- Istanbul Technical University (ITU)
- Leibniz University Hannover (LUH)

### What are Tech Challenges?

A Tech Challenge is a real-world problem provided by a company or industry stakeholder. The problem should relate to a technological or innovation-related challenge the company is currently facing. These challenges will be addressed by international student teams with diverse academic backgrounds who will develop innovative science-based solution concepts.

### The challenges should be:

- Related to Agriculture & Food Technologies, Bio-Plastics (Food Packaging), Waste Utilization, Soil Health, or related sectors and be high-tech-oriented.
- Open-ended, allowing for creative and interdisciplinary approaches.
- Optional: related to cross-over fields such as AI, sensor technologies, materials, robotics, etc.
- Based on real needs and relevant to current market or research trends.

See attached example Tech Challenge.

### Why participate as a company?

- Gain fresh ideas and perspectives from talented students across Europe.
- Connect with leading universities and young innovation talent.
- Receive tailored, early-stage solution concepts for your challenge.
- Engage in international knowledge exchange and visibility.

Companies should nominate a contact person for the challenge. Ideally, this person can participate in the final event.

## What happens next?

- **12 April 2026:** Deadline for companies to submit a Tech Challenge.
- **April 2026:** The most interesting Tech Challenges will be selected.
- **April – May 2026:** Student teams select a challenge and begin working on solution proposals.
- **17 May 2026:** Deadline for student teams to submit solution proposals.
- **End of May 2026:** Selection of the best proposals together with the participating companies.
- **6 – 7 July 2026:** Best teams will be invited to present and refine their ideas during a final workshop in Hannover, Germany. Participation in the final event is strongly encouraged.

Your company can engage further with selected teams and explore implementation options with the support of the De-TECH project. You will also have the option to visit our start-up competition and networking event in Hannover.

**Interested?** Submit your challenge via our online form: [Link](#)

For further information or to receive the application link, please contact:

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### **Example from a Previous Challenge: Aerospace Challenge – Space Debris and Orbital Safety**

*In a previous edition, students worked on solutions to reduce the environmental impact of satellites. The challenge addressed the problem that most satellite structures are made of aluminium, which produces alumina particles during atmospheric re-entry that can harm the ozone layer.*

*Student teams explored solutions such as:*

- *Alternative materials to replace aluminium*
- *Minimising metal dispersion during satellite re-entry*
- *New Design-for-Demise / Design-for-Non-Demise strategies*
- *Economic incentives such as orbital debris credits or insurance models*
- *Business models and policy frameworks supporting sustainable satellite technologies*

*This example illustrates how companies can bring complex technological challenges that interdisciplinary teams address from engineering, business and policy perspectives.*