

NIFTEM-K Hosts India's First AI × Food Tech Hackathon, 'Hack the Fork'

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National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management, Kundli (NIFTEM-K), hosted Hack the Fork, India's first AI × Food Tech Hackathon focused on leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) to address real-world challenges in the alternative protein industry. The 24-hour hackathon was inaugurated by Ms. Alice Pjie, Director, Hack the Fork, on October 24 and concluded on October 25, with participating teams presenting their innovative solutions before an expert jury.



Organised by Hack the Fork, a France-based non-profit initiative, in collaboration with NIFTEM-K, the event aimed to bring together young innovators, researchers and technology enthusiasts to explore AI-driven solutions for sustainable food systems. From an initial pool of over 85 applicant teams, 25 teams were shortlisted for the final round. Of these, 22 teams from 10 states, comprising over 90 participants, participated in the intensive innovation challenge at the institute. The participants represented diverse disciplines and institutions, including IITs, IIITs and the University of Delhi.



Dr. Harinder Singh Oberoi, Director, NIFTEM-K, highlighted the significance of India's first AI x Food Tech Hackathon in generating innovative ideas and strengthening the country's food ecosystem. He expressed confidence that the initiative would encourage creative thinking, interdisciplinary collaboration and the development of technology-driven solutions to address emerging challenges in the food sector. Dr. Oberoi also congratulated all participating teams for their enthusiasm, creativity and commitment to innovation. He encouraged the young innovators to make the most of this opportunity, explore new possibilities and develop practical solutions that could contribute to a stronger, more sustainable and future-ready food-processing ecosystem.

The event was coordinated by Dr. Vimal Pant, Professor at NIFTEM-K and CEO of NTIBIF. The hackathon was supported by a distinguished panel of mentors, including Mr. Chaitanya Chilukuri, Science and Technology Associate, Good Food Institute (GFI) India; Ms. Svarnim Samant, Regional Mentor, GFI India; Dr. Saurabh Jain, Associate Professor, IIIT Sonapat; and Mr. Abhishek Shukla, Research Scholar, University of Delhi. The mentors provided expert guidance to the participating teams, helping them refine their ideas and develop innovative, practical and technology-driven solutions to address emerging challenges in the alternative protein industry.



The challenge focused on harnessing Artificial Intelligence to advance the alternative protein industry, with applications spanning plant-based food innovation, fermentation technologies and broader food systems. Key areas of exploration included nutritional optimisation, food safety, sustainable food production and food waste reduction, encouraging participants to develop innovative, technology-driven solutions for a more sustainable and resilient food ecosystem.

The winning teams competed for prizes worth ₹1.5 lakh, along with opportunities to enter NIFTEM-K's Startup Incubation Programme. The initiative reinforced the institute's commitment to fostering interdisciplinary innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainable food technology.

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