

# Media Update

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## FAO

PRESS RELEASE

### Agrisurge Innovation Challenge to digitize agriculture sector in Pakistan

**Islamabad, April 12, 2021.** In collaboration with Ministry of IT & Telecom (MoITT) and Ignite National Technology Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations had launched an Agrisurge Innovation Challenge to jointly work for the acceleration of development of Pakistan's agriculture sector using technology. Subsequent to signing of the framework collaboration agreement between Ministry of IT and FAO , Agrisurge Innovation Challenge was launched in 2020. The winners of the challenge were announced at a joint event held in Islamabad today. The event was attended by Mr. Shoaib Ahmed Siddiqui, Federal Secretary IT & Telecom, CEO and officials from Ignite, MoITT, the UN agencies, development partners and winning teams of the challenge.

Under the Agrisurge Innovation Challenge, FAO in collaboration with Ignite called for innovative solutions that can boost agriculture in Pakistan, and can increase the resilience of food systems and help with the transformation of small farmers through 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Wave (4IW) technologies. Around 738 participants applied for the challenge and the selected teams submitted their working prototypes for evaluation. The projects were evaluated by independent judges appointed by Ignite and FAO including local and international domain experts. **Smart Ecosystem for Bees** 'Silver Bees' won the first cash prize for its solution to digitalize the ecosystem for beekeeping and honey farming, whereas **Smart Poultry Farming** 'SmartFarms' secured the 2<sup>nd</sup> cash prize for their IoT sensors-based solution to collect data using Arduino/Raspberry Pi. The 3<sup>rd</sup> cash prize was won by **FarmMach Share** 'CyberVision' for providing a comprehensive digital solution to help farmers to fully exploit the potential of existing farm machinery by making them available as a shared resource. A

special cash prize was won by **Humaray Khayt** ‘Tech 3PO’ for developing an application which provides separate interfaces for each type of crop and operates with pictorials in Urdu.

Speaking on the occasion, Federal Secretary IT, Mr. Shoaib Ahmad Siddiqui, said that this innovation challenge was launched with a view to strengthen our agriculture sector which has a great importance in the economic development of Pakistan. Looking at the innovative solutions and the passion with which participants from all across Pakistan competed, it is evident that our tech-savvy youth is ready to address the challenges and problems faced by agriculture sector through technological interventions. He said, “I’m happy that the women led team clinched the 1<sup>st</sup> prize rather than settling for the special prize we earlier kept for any such team.”

FAO Representative ad interim in Pakistan stated that the AgriSurge innovation challenge will serve as an important step towards achieving food security and improving lives of the most vulnerable across Pakistan. People-centered intensification of digital technologies is the path to making the world’s agri-food systems capable of delivering healthy diets for all and using our planet’s finite natural resources more efficiently. The Fourth Agricultural Revolution is a marriage between data and technological innovation with farming that will further transform the industry and help us to achieve a new level of productivity, quality, diversity, efficiency and environmental sustainability, she said.

Mr. Asim Shahryar Husain, CEO Ignite, stated that “the overwhelming response to Ignite and FAO’s call for innovative solutions in the field of agriculture reflects the significance of the sensitivities of food security in the country. We will continue to explore new solutions besides strengthening the partnership with the winners of this challenge. I hope this competition will ignite the farming community and will be a founding step in solving agriculture-related problems using technology,” he said.

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