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Australia's CSIRO opens program for SMEs developing farm and food technology solutions

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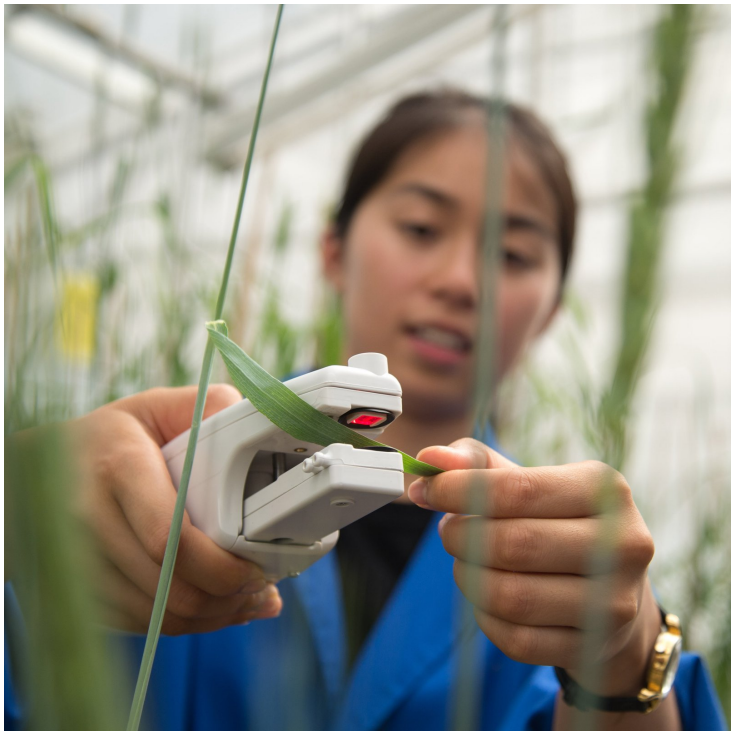
Innovate to Grow is helping Australiaâ??s farm and food innovators turn big ideas into real-world impact.



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Australia's national science agency, CSIRO, is calling on Australiaâ??s farm and food innovators to apply for its latest Innovate to Grow program â?? helping small-to-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) turn big ideas into research-driven solutions.

The free, eight-week online program is designed to help SMEs turn early ideas into clear R&D plans, build innovation capability and connect with the right research expertise â?? empowering them to seize new opportunities and reduce risk. Applications are now open and close by 15 February 2026.

Dr Ingrid Appelqvist, Senior Principal Food Material Scientist at CSIRO, said the program comes at a pivotal time for the sector as new digital, biological and advanced manufacturing technologies reshape Australia's food system.

"We're seeing rapid transformation across farm and food technology, including advances in areas like AI and process digitisation," Dr Appelqvist said.

"SMEs play an important role in this transformation, but many are still navigating how to progress early-stage ideas, reduce risk and access the right expertise. Innovate to Grow gives them the tools, networks and confidence to turn emerging opportunities into well-defined R&D pathways."

"From sustainability and waste optimisation to new value-add products and more resilient supply chains, Australian food and agriculture businesses are well-positioned to lead â?? and programs like this help them get there."

Since launching in 2020, CSIROâ??s Innovate to Grow has supported more than 750 SMEs across a range of sectors. The program provides participants with expert facilitators, self-paced learning modules and networking opportunities to turn emerging ideas into actionable research plans.

One recent participant, Esther Rupenovic, founder of Tasmanian business Jack and Chelo, joined Innovate to Grow in 2024. Her company creates chef-prepared, nutritionally balanced meals for dogs â?? developed with pet nutritionists and delivered via subscription.Â

Esther said the program unlocked practical research pathways she hadnâ??t previously considered, helping her see how science could scale the business.

CSIROâ??s Innovate to Grow: Farm and Food Technology is suitable for SMEs developing or supplying solutions in:

- Agritech and AI
- Food and beverage manufacturing, packaging and transport
- Livestock and aquaculture
- Value-add products
- Waste optimisation and recycling
- Energy reduction and circular economy
- Other emerging farm and food technology applications.