



Media Release: AgLaunch™ Accelerator, Startup Station and Farmer Network

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AgLaunch Propelling New Startups through Venture Investment & Farm-Centric Innovation Model

Applications Open for 2017 Accelerator with \$50,000 Investment and Opportunity to Pitch to Industry Panel at Mid-South Farm Show

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (February 3, 2017) — AgLaunch™ continues to expand its farm-centric innovation platform to accelerate the process of bringing new ideas into agriculture. The organization offers a one-stop shop for researchers, farmers, logistic providers, processors, non-profits, investors and corporate partners to help validate and grow new ideas in the agricultural space. The initiative is focused on the Mid-South region with an international footprint through its open source programs and support network.

“With a growing world population, agriculture must advance and adapt to keep up,” Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture **Jai Templeton** said. “Farmers are natural innovators. AgLaunch’s farm-focused model is matching farmers with new and improved technology and resources to help solve global problems, while catalyzing economic growth in our region.”

AgLaunch is pleased to announce three programs in 2017 that will advance agricultural innovation to the next level:

- *AgLaunch Accelerator* will invest \$50,000 and three months of intensive business development support, access to farm trials, and a robust mentor network to six startup companies. Participating startups will be immersed in a collaborative Summer of Acceleration experience in Memphis with six other business accelerators May 1- August 10. Entrepreneurial programming is supported through the expertise of EPIcenter and Start Co., a member of the Global Accelerator Network that has led more than 80 startup companies. Startups will also have access to expert agri-marketing and legal advice provided by Archer Malmo and Baker Donelson respectively.
- *AgLaunch Farmer Network* is working with a select group of startups to coordinate farm scale trials with new technologies across various production environments and key crops. Lead participants in the farmer network include Ritter Agribusiness and Mid-South Family Farms.
- *AgLaunch Startup Station* is an all-day pitch contest held on March 3 in conjunction with the Mid-South Farm & Gin Show, which hosts more than 400 exhibitors and 20,000 farmers. Startups will pitch to expert panels comprised of farmers, investors, and corporate partners, including Farm Bureau, Farm Credit, DuPont, Monsanto Growth Ventures, and Case IH. The event will be preceded by The Combine reception the evening of March 2.



These AgLaunch initiatives focus on a range of technologies, including precision agriculture, robotics, automation, biologic-based pest control, specialty crops, equipment modifications, food ingredients, supply chain integrity and traceability, soil health, reduction of spray drift, food safety and reduction of food waste, water/input efficiencies and innovations in the supply chain.

“AgLaunch has a global network that includes mentors, investors, growers and ag industry leaders,” said **Steve Bares**, Ph.D., president and executive director, Memphis Bioworks Foundation. “Memphis provides the perfect opportunity to connect with all these assets, as farmers are a short drive away, investors are down the road, and entrepreneurial training and mentors are in-house. The Mississippi River offers convenient logistics, and our unique geographical location allows for incredibly diverse agriculture opportunities.”

The program adds value to investors through creating quality deal flow. “AgLaunch is uniquely connecting new technology with real farm experience to change the way that deals are being created for the benefit of investors and the ag industry,” said **Matt Bell**, Principal, Cultivian Sandbox Ventures.

AgLaunch helps startups through its combination of entrepreneurship programming and deep agricultural knowledge. “AgLaunch is a world-class initiative that is connecting all of the right partners and resources to bring new agricultural technologies to market,” said **Barry Knight**, Senior Vice President of Commercial Operations, North America, Indigo Ag.

The AgLaunch Accelerator is funded in part through a grant from Launch Tennessee.

For more information and to apply to the AgLaunch Accelerator, Farmer Network or Startup Station, visit <http://aginnoationgroup.com/aglaunch/> or email brussell@aginnoationgroup.com.

To view a video on the AgLaunch program click: <https://youtu.be/BhfMFnJyS08> and to view pitches from the 2016 AgLaunch Accelerator participants, go to: <http://bit.ly/2hDTGN7>.

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About AgLaunch™

AgLaunch accelerates new innovations in food and agriculture. The organization addresses global issues while creating local opportunities in the Mid-South. AgLaunch connects agricultural researchers, entrepreneurs, farmers, investors, corporations and nonprofit organizations to address real farm and supply chain needs. AgLaunch is an initiative of Memphis Bioworks Foundation and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, and includes a robust group of public and private partners including University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture & Tennessee State University.