

IFTSA Developing Solutions for Developing Countries Product Development Competition RULES AND GUIDELINES

BACKGROUND

The IFTSA is committed to engaging student members from around the world and utilizing their scientific skills to serve a bigger cause. The IFTSA Developing Solutions for Developing Countries (DSDC) competition promotes the application of food science and technology and the development of new products and processes that are targeted at improving the quality of life for people in developing countries.

PURPOSE

1. Promote global awareness of issues related to food availability, nutrition, and health.
2. Empower students to apply scientific knowledge and creativity toward building a more innovative and sustainable food system.
3. Enable students to build the technical and professional skills needed to thrive in and contribute to the evolving food industry.
4. Provide opportunities for students to practice effective science communication for both expert and general audiences, strengthening the link between research, innovation, and real-world impact.
5. Encourage creativity, collaboration, and innovation throughout all stages of product development - from creation to marketing.

SPONSOR

Cargill

SCHEDULE

Date	Event
February 1, 2026	Preliminary application deadline
March 2, 2026	Finalists notified
May 1, 2026	Finalist proposals due
July 12 - July 15, 2026	IFT FIRST in Chicago

2025-2026 THEME

Develop a nutritious and affordable food product that utilizes by-products or surplus from selected local agricultural/food processing industries and demonstrates a circular economy approach by reducing waste, generating added value for local supply chains, and supporting community-level economic development in a developing country context.

GENERAL COMPETITION RULES

1. The judges will be evaluating the rationale behind the proposal, the scientific value of the proposed concept, the technical problem-solving skills, the economic feasibility, and the societal impact on developing countries. Ultimately, the entry must benefit the quality of lives of people in developing countries and should be applicable to such a setting. The competition theme will be released during the fall of the current competition year. The purpose of the theme is to promote issues that are relevant and urgent and to allow for common ground when evaluating the entries.
2. Entries must consist of a proposal for a new food product. Teams may not enter their product in competitions outside of IFT.
3. Teams may not enter their product in more than one (1) IFTSA competition.
4. To control the emphasis and fairness of the competition, the following limitations will be enforced:
 - a. Judges will not award extra points for the size of sensory panels or source of panelists. The purpose of this rule is to eliminate the possibility of teams earning extra points for their ability to collect more sensory data due to a larger number of team members or ability to travel. Rather, teams will be judged on how they went about gaining insights about the approval of their product from their potential consumers
 - b. Since the focus of this competition is on food science skills in product development, judges will not give points for the quality of package graphics or other advertising material.
5. All parts of the competition will be conducted in English.
6. If a team is chosen as a finalist, all participants of the finalist team agree to not claim any intellectual property rights (including patent rights) as to any material created in connection with the competition. As the purpose of the competition is to create and develop ideas which can be leveraged in the developing world, all finalist submissions may be shared with the sponsoring company and affiliated groups.
7. All written proposals must be submitted via the submission portal on IFT.org in both .doc and .pdf format to the competition chair by the deadline.

ELIGIBILITY

1. At least one (1) team member must hold Student Member status in the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) at the time of the submission of the preliminary report. All team members must hold Student Member status if the team competes in finals.
2. Teams must have at least two (2) and no more than five (5) members.
3. All team members do not need to be enrolled at the same university.
4. Each team member must be registered as a student at the university they represent during the semester before the competition. If participating in the finals at IFT FIRST, the student need not be currently enrolled.
5. Teams may consist of undergraduate students, graduate students, or a combination thereof. One (1) member shall be elected team captain and retain that position throughout the competition for communications. Captains may change between the preliminary and final competitions.
6. Each university may submit as many unique entries (teams) as they wish per year. Students may not be on more than one (1) team and each submission must be unique to other entries.
7. Entries must be the students' work. Professors may be consulted and referenced but may not be a major contributor to the actual work.
8. Industry support such as donation of ingredients or use of equipment is allowed and encouraged but should not be acknowledged by any team in the preliminary or final proposal, oral presentation, or product tasting sessions. Penalties will apply if a violation occurs.
9. Projects from product development classes are eligible in the competition.
10. MS, Ph.D., summer internship, research, or other such projects are not eligible in the competition.
11. The Chair of the competition and VP of Competitions will be excluded from participating in any team competition during the year of their service.
12. Members of the most recent first place team of this competition are not eligible to compete in this competition. Members are encouraged to compete in another IFTSA competition.

PRELIMINARY ROUND PROCEDURES

Application

Teams must submit their application via the submission portal on IFT.org by February 1st at 11:59 p.m. CST (Chicago Time UTC-6). Applications received after February 1st will not be accepted.

Submissions include (but are not limited to): Proposal (both Word and PDF format), IFT membership numbers, and advisor letter. Please start your submission early to ensure you have all necessary information.

Preliminary Written Proposal

1. The preliminary proposal may not exceed six (6) pages including the title page, body, and the appendix page for a (process flow diagram, pictures, etc). Penalties will apply if a violation occurs.
 - a. Page 1: Title
 - b. Pages 2-5: Body
 - c. Page 6: Appendix
 - d. Additional page(s): references in *Journal of Food Science* format
2. The report must be typed double-spaced with 12-point Times New Roman font. All text and figures must be on 8.5 × 11.0" paper with 1" margins.
3. The Title Page should include the title of the report and date. No university affiliation or student names should be included on the title page.
4. Names of sponsor companies, any university, students, or other indication of team location are not acceptable in the preliminary proposals.
5. References: All references cited within the proposal must follow the *Journal of Food Science* formatting. The list of references must be submitted as separate .doc and PDF documents with the preliminary proposal. If a problem arises with reference credibility, a judge may contact the competition chair for verification.
6. A separate cover letter from the Department Head or a professor, verifying the originality of work and the team's compliance with the competition rules, is to be submitted as a separate PDF document with the preliminary proposal. The standard format for the certificate of originality may be obtained from ift.org.

Judging

1. Each submission will be reviewed by at least three (3) judges.
2. Each entry will be scored based on 100 points, with the points to be distributed as shown in the rubric.
3. Judges will select a maximum of six (6) finalists.
4. All competing teams will be informed of only their respective scores and judges' comments. Each judge will provide 1-2 sentences of feedback at a minimum.
5. The finalists will be selected as follows by the Judges and Chair
 - a. All point scores are converted into rank scores (highest score out of 100=1, second highest score out of 100=2, etc.).
 - b. Rank scores are totaled for each team (one rank score per judge).
 - c. The lowest six scores are designated as the finalists.

- d. In the event of a tie, the two lowest rank scores will be added for each group, and the team with the lowest score will advance. If this fails, the judges will be asked to make a decision.
6. Finalists will be notified of their status by March 2nd.

FINAL ROUND PROCEDURES

Responsibilities of finalists include the preparation of a final written proposal and oral presentation.

Application

Finalists must submit their final proposal, in both .doc and PDF formats, via the submission portal on IFT.org by May 1st at 11:59 p.m. CST. Proposals received after the deadline will not be accepted.

Final Written Proposal

1. The maximum number of pages for the final written proposal is fifteen (15). This number does include all portions of the document (Including but not limited to title page, photograph page, proposal body text, process flow diagram, and appendices).
2. The proposal must be typed, double-spaced with 12-point Times New Roman font. All text and figures must be on 8.5 × 11.0" white paper with 1" margins.
3. The title page, for which there is no specific required format, must include the title of the proposal and date.
4. Include a 5" × 7" color photograph in the final written proposal. Additional images throughout the report are optional.
5. References should be added at the end of the proposal and must be in the *Journal of Food Science* format and are not included in the page limit.
6. Teams' anonymity is no longer required.

Oral Presentation

1. For the components taking place at the IFT FIRST, please note the following: the oral presentations are meant to showcase your concept and how it fits the theme of the competition.
2. Finalists will present a fifteen (15) minute oral report followed by a fifteen (15) minute question/answer period. This presentation should give an overview of the product developed, how it was created, and how it fulfills the year's theme. The presentations will be open to the public; however, only judges may ask questions.
3. A minimum of two team (2) members will present the report; others may speak during Q&A if present.

4. A PowerPoint presentation is required. The Chair will provide finalists with details concerning the PowerPoint presentation (format, version, file size, etc.).
5. Time limits will be enforced. The Chair will keep track of time.
6. The oral presentation should include the product and process description clearly explained as well as the major technical difficulties. Other areas should include safety/shelf life, originality, economic feasibility, marketing, and sustainability. It is very important that you explain why your product is designed for developing countries and the theme.

Judging

Final proposals will be scored based on **200** points.

1. At least three (3) judges will be chosen from industry or academia, with practical product development experience.
2. Up to three (3) judges will be appointed by the sponsor whenever possible.
3. Judge identities will remain anonymous until the final competition.
4. Judges are required to evaluate products by point totals, not personal preferences.
5. Judges may penalize or disqualify submissions that they believe do not follow the year's theme.

AWARDS

1. A maximum of six (6) teams will make it to the finals. The teams will all be judged against one another in the finals.
2. Each finalist team will receive a travel and registration reimbursement of up to \$1,800.
3. The 1st place winner will receive \$3,000, the 2nd place winner will receive \$1,500, and the 3rd place winner will receive \$500.

NOTES

- Competitors are expected to participate in the IFTSA Product Show & Taste prior to the Closing Ceremony and are encouraged to present and share their product samples with attendees.
- Copyright and trademark violations will not be tolerated. Teams who submit a product that features a character or franchise that they do not have explicit rights will be disqualified.
- All participants of the finalist team agree not to claim any intellectual property rights (including patent rights) as to any material created in connection with the competition. As the purpose of the competition is to create and develop ideas which can be leveraged in the developing world, all finalist submissions may be shared with the sponsoring company and affiliated groups.
- Entry into this competition implies the release of IFT and IFTSA from any liability for damages incurred because of this competition.

- Any team or team member that does not follow the IFT Event Code of Conduct will risk being disqualified.

QUESTIONS

Contact the IFTSA DSDC Competition Chair via email at iftsa.dsdc@gmail.com.

Challenges and Penalties

Challenges based on rule infractions during oral presentations must be made immediately after the presentation, and no later than the finalization of scores. It is the duty of the Chair to ensure that infractions in written proposals and product tastings are noted. Scores should be considered finalized by one (1) hour prior to start of the IFTSA Closing Ceremony. No challenges will be entertained once this time has passed.

Challenges must be referred to the Chair and/or VP of Competitions. The Chair will refer challenges to the VP of Competitions, IFTSA Office of the President, and IFTSA Staff Liaison. It is the necessary duty that all Competition Chairs, VP of Competition, and IFTSA Office of the President report any infractions they receive or notice during competition. Final decisions on challenges, penalties, and IFT Code of Conduct will be made by the IFTSA Staff Liaison and disseminated to necessary parties. This may include input from judges.