

Entrepreneurs called to tackle land restoration in Africa

The DOEN Foundation, a Dutch fund supporting green, socially-inclusive and creative initiatives that contribute to a better and cleaner world, has joined forces with Seedstars, an emerging startup community and investor.

They are launching the DOEN Land Restoration Prize, in order to find and award the best tech(-enabled) solutions in the land restoration and land degradation space.

While land degradation and deforestation date back millennia, industrialisation and a rising population have dramatically accelerated the process. Today we are seeing unprecedented land degradation, and the loss of arable land at 30 to 35 times the historical rate.



Source: pixabay.com

Currently, nearly two-thirds of Africa's land is degraded, which hinders sustainable economic development and resilience to climate change. As a result, Africa has the largest restoration opportunity of any continent: more than 700 million hectares of degraded forest landscapes that can be restored.

Restoration opportunities

The potential benefits include improved food and water security, biodiversity protection, climate change resilience, and economic growth. Recognising this opportunity, the African Union set an ambitious target to restore 100 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.

Land restoration is an urgent response to the poor management of land. Forest and landscape restoration is the process of reversing the degradation of soils, agricultural areas, forests, and watersheds thereby regaining their ecological functionality.

According to the World Resources Institute, for every \$1 invested in land restoration it can yield \$7-\$30 in benefits, and now is the time to prove it.

The winner of the challenge will be awarded nine months access to the Seedstars Investment Readiness Program, the hybrid program challenging traditional acceleration models by creating a unique mix to improve startup performance and get them ready to secure investment. They will also access a \$10,000 grant.

“Our current economic system does not meet the growing need to improve our society ecologically and socially. The problems arising from this can be tackled only if a different economic system is considered. DOEN sees opportunities to contribute to this necessary change. After all, the world is changing rapidly and the outlines of a new economy are becoming increasingly clear.”



Source: pixabay.com

“This new economy is circular and regenerative. Landscape restoration is a vital part of this regenerative economy and social entrepreneurs play an important role to establish innovative business models to counter land degradation and deforestation. Through this challenge, DOEN wants to highlight the work of early-stage restoration enterprises and inspire other frontrunners to follow suit.” says Saskia Werther, program manager at the DOEN Foundation.

Apply now!

Applications are open now and will be accepted until 15 October 2019.

To enter the competition, startups should meet the following criteria:

- Existing startups/young companies with less than four years of existence
- Startups that can adapt their current solution to the land restoration space
- The startup must have a demonstrable product or service (Minimum Viable Product, MVP)

- The startup needs to be scalable or have the potential to reach scalability in low resource areas.
- The startup can show clear environmental impact (either by reducing a negative impact or creating a positive one)
- The startup can show clear social impact
- Technology startups, tech-enabled startups and/or businesses that can show a clear innovation component (e.g. in their business model)

Also, a specific emphasis is laid, but not limited to: Finance the restoration of degraded land for production and/or conservation purposes; big data and technology to reverse land degradation; resource efficiency optimisation technologies, ecosystems impacts reduction and lower carbon emissions; water-saving soil technologies; technologies focused on improving livelihoods and communities ; planning, management and education tools for land restoration; agriculture (with a focus on precision conservation) and agroforestry; clean energy solutions that aid in the combat of land degradation; and responsible ecotourism that aids in the support of land restoration.

To apply, go to <http://seedsta.rs/doen>.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>