



NEWS RELEASE

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Women-owned Technology Start-ups to Take Center Stage at Ag Innovation Showcase in St. Louis

Firms are commercializing non-traditional innovations in bioplastics, water treatment, bio-based clothing dyes and renewable architectural products

LOS ANGELES Aug., 24, 2015 – The seventh annual Ag Innovation Showcase, the world’s premier event focusing on the convergence of agriculture and technology, will spotlight four women-owned start-ups whose non-traditional innovations are breaking new ground in renewable and sustainable agricultural technology. The companies will present their technologies during the Showcase, which will be held Sept. 14-16 at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis, Mo.

The women-owned firms are among 19 companies from Canada, India, Israel, Netherlands and the U.S. presenting some of the most promising innovations in renewables and sustainables, biological solutions, farming innovations and precision agriculture.

Women-owned Presenting Companies

- Oakland, Calif.-based [Mango Materials](#) produces biodegradable plastics from waste biogas (methane) that are economically competitive with conventional oil-based plastics. It aims to increase production to 10 million pounds of biodegradable plastic which will require 500 million cubic feet of methane that otherwise would be released into the atmosphere. All three company co-founders, including Molly Morse, chief executive officer, are women.
- Advanced water desalination and purification technology, Micro-Desal™, developed by Wise, Va.-based [Micronic Technologies](#) can clean water from any source using a mobile, high-efficiency, low-maintenance purification system free of chemicals, filters, and membranes. The firm’s ‘tornado’ mechanical evaporation technology is

well suited for removing ultra-high total dissolved solids and bacteria from agricultural runoff and mining, as well as oil and gas production and other industrial wastewater-producing operations. Karen Sorber is majority owner, chief executive officer, and executive chair.

- Based in Nashville, Tenn., [Stony Creek Colors](#) is the leading U.S. manufacturer of bio-based dyes for the textile industry. Working with small farmers in the southeastern U.S., the company has developed an innovative supply chain that sustainably produces natural indigo that meets the technical and volume requirements of textile mills and fashion brands worldwide. Led by Sarah Bellos, founder and chief executive officer, the firm aims to domestically cultivate 15,000 acres of indigo in the next five years.
- Madison, Wis.-based [Whole Trees Architecture & Structures](#) takes a previously ignored waste product – non-milled, round-timber renewable cullings that are four to 21 inches in diameter – from sustainably managed forests, and engineers cost-efficient, sustainable structural systems for commercial and residential buildings. Its products, which are 50 percent stronger in bending strength than milled lumber and pound for pound stronger than steel, include straight and branched columns, beams, joists, rafters and trusses. Amelia Baxter is president and co-founder.

“There is a significant underrepresentation of women-owned companies in ag tech, but we’re working to change that,” said Rohit Shukla, chief executive officer of Larta Institute, which is directing the Showcase and is one of its three organizers. “Ag Innovation Showcase is the ideal forum for promoting the tremendous potential of our presenting companies and attracting the investments that will enable them to expand and grow in a time of great promise.”

Since 2009, companies presenting at Ag Innovation Showcase have raised more than \$430 million in investments. Nearly 85 percent of them found new investor leads and 97 percent were introduced to new partnership opportunities. Six have been acquired by larger agribusiness and ag technology firms.

Increased investments in ag technology are vital to the future of the global ag industry, which faces the prospect of a doubling in worldwide food demand by 2050 when the world's population is expected to reach nearly 10 billion.

In the U.S., ag tech investments are growing. According to AgFunder, an online equity crowdfunding platform, domestic ag tech investments surpassed \$2 billion in the first half of 2015, slightly below the record-breaking nearly \$2.4 billion invested during all of 2014.

About Ag Innovation Showcase

Established in 2009, [Ag Innovation Showcase](#) is the world's premier event focusing on the convergence of agriculture and technology. It brings together those with a significant stake in agriculture and agricultural technology – innovators, researchers, government agencies, corporations, investors and others – to promote investment in cutting-edge technology and biotechnology to meet the world's growing food supply needs. Follow the event on Twitter: @agshowcase with event hashtag #aginshow2015.

Ag Innovation Showcase Organizers

- Larta Institute – [Larta Institute](#), founded in Los Angeles in 1993, is an internationally-recognized technology accelerator that has helped more than 10,000 companies transform ideas into commercialized, socially-beneficial innovations in science and technology, particularly in agriculture and the life sciences. With a global network of entrepreneurs, mentors, investors, industry leaders, research institutions, government agencies and support organizations, Larta conducts commercialization assistance programs throughout the U.S. and in more than 20 countries. www.larta.org. Follow us on Twitter: @LartaInstitute.
- Donald Danforth Plant Science Center – The [Danforth Plant Science Center](#) is a not-for-profit research institute with a mission to improve the human condition through plant science. Research aims to feed the hungry and improve human health, preserve and renew the environment and position the St. Louis region as a world center for plant science. Follow us on Twitter: @DanforthCenter.

- BRDG Park at the Danforth Center – [Bio Research & Development Growth \(BRDG\) Park](#) at the Danforth Plant Science Center helps life science companies bridge research, resources and relationships to achieve commercial success. In addition to providing world-class wet laboratories, office space and a prominent incubator, BRDG Park's location on the Danforth Center's campus facilitates access to the intellectual capital of top scientists, as well as to greenhouses, growth chambers, microscopy and proteomics facilities and other vital resources. Located in suburban St. Louis County, Missouri.

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