SF4C Sustainable Food Systems for Canada
Systèmes alimentaires durables pour le Canada

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Hackathon Information

Judges

Judge - Laura Arrell *Managing Director, The Arrell Family Foundation*

Laura Arrell is the managing director of the Arrell Family Foundation, which works to improve human and planetary health through food. A director of her family's foundation for many years, she has been running it since 2015. Prior to working at the foundation, Laura worked at US investment bank, Raymond James. She was at Raymond James 15 years, working most recently as Managing Director, US Institutional Equity Sales. She is also mother to three children and is passionate about cooking and anything related to food, and travel.

Judge - Jessica Bowes, *Assistant Vice-President, Research (Innovation & Knowledge Mobilization), University of Guelph*

Jessica Bowes is the Assistant Vice-President, Research (Innovation & Knowledge Mobilization) at the University of Guelph's Research Innovation Office. She leads innovation initiatives across campus, fostering collaboration with private and public partners to translate research into commercial opportunities and support knowledge transfer. With an entrepreneurial outlook, Jessica is passionate about advancing commercialization and sustaining strategic research alliances. She holds an M.Sc. in Human Health and Nutritional Sciences from the University of Guelph.

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Judge - Dean Chudleigh, *Co-Owner, Chudleigh Farms*

Dean Chudleigh is the leader of Chudleigh's, a family-owned agri-food company that has grown from a small on-farm bakery into a 110,000 sq. ft. production facility with 250 employees, producing over 300,000 dessert servings daily for customers in six countries. He grew up working on his family's apple farm in Milton, Ontario, where he developed a passion for agriculture and food, and helped expand the farm's entertainment and baking business. Building on this foundation, Dean focused on taking the company's products beyond the farm, scaling it into a global food production operation. He is a proud graduate of the University of Guelph's Ontario Agricultural College.

Judge - Mohamad Yaghi, *Vice-President of Innovation Hub and AgExpert, FCC*

Mohamad Yaghi is the Vice President of Innovation Hub and AgExpert at Farm Credit Canada.
He was formally RBC's Climate and Agriculture Policy Lead at the Climate Action Institute. With over a decade of experience in the agriculture and agri-food industry, Mohamad shaped RBC's research and engagement in the sector to inform and inspire transition pathways across the economy and to push Canada to become the world's sustainable breadbasket. Before joining RBC, Mohamad led the successful market development of an international agriculture service provider in Canada and U.S., founded and led an AgTech start-up, Rakr Inc., that closely worked with livestock farmers across North America and Southeast Asia to promote energy efficient farming practices, and worked in the thought leadership groups at KPMG Lighthouse and GE Canada to propel innovation across Canada.

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Judge - Nevin McDougall,
Board Chair, Agricultural Research and Innovation Ontario

Nevin McDougall is a business executive, entrepreneur, and investor with over 30 years of leadership experience in the global agri-food sector. He has held senior executive roles with multinational companies including Cyanamid Crop Protection, BASF, and Sollio Cooperative Group, and currently serves as a partner at RHA Ventures Inc., supporting growth in Canadian agri-food businesses. His expertise spans commercial operations, R&D, and executive management, complemented by extensive governance experience on boards such as CropLife Asia, Bioenterprise Corp, and ARIO. A proud graduate of the University of Guelph's Ontario Agricultural College, where he earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees, Nevin is committed to advancing agricultural innovation.

Mentors

Mentor - Sara Edge, *Chair in Food, Policy, & Society Arrell Food Institute, Associate Professor University of Guelph*

Dr. Sara Edge is the Arrell Chair in Food, Policy & Society and an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, Environment & Geomatics at the University of Guelph. A health geographer by training, her research focuses on food systems equity, environmental justice, and the well-being of racialized and newcomer communities, exploring how place and policy shape access to food and health outcomes. She holds a PhD in Geography from McMaster University and a Master of Environmental Studies from the University of Waterloo.

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Mentor - Evan Fraser, *Director, Arrell Food Institute, Professor, University of Guelph*

Evan is Director of Arrell Food Institute and full Professor of Geography. He is an award-winning author, with five books, over 150 academic publications, and opinion editorials that have appeared on CNN, the Guardian, and all major Canadian media outlets. As one of Canada's most cited academics working on the future of food, sustainability, and climate change, he is a sought after expert and speaker and works with communities, the corporate sector, the Federal Government of Canada, and the United Nations.

He is an inaugural co-chair of the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council, which is a multi-stakeholder group that advises the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada on the implementation of Canada's food policy. He is one of fifteen international experts who sit on the United Nations' High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition. This is the scientific body that advises the Committee on World Food Security and is the top-most global body dealing with issues related to food systems and sustainability. As vice chair of the Maple Leaf Center for Food Security, he helps direct funding to community groups across Canada and as a scientific mentor for Creative Destruction Labs he works with agri-food technology start-ups and entrepreneurs.

Evan is also part of a team made up of producers, NGOs, and the senior leadership from some of Canada's largest corporate players (including the Royal Bank, Loblaw, Maple Leaf Food, McCains and Nutrien), that founded the Canadian Alliance for Net Zero Agrifood (CANZA). CANZA is initiating programs aimed at creating financial incentives and the infrastructure to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions caused by Canada's agri-food sector.

Other present and past leadership roles include holding a Canada Research Chair between 2010-2020, being a Fellow of the Pierre Elliot Trudeau foundation, acting as a scientific advisor to Genome Quebec and Proteins Industries Canada, being a member of the Royal Society of Canada's College of New Scholars, and a fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society.

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Mentor - Janice Leboeuf, *Sustainable Agriculture Lead, Arrell Food Institute*

Janice LeBoeuf is the Sustainable Agriculture Lead at the Arrell Food Institute, where she advances sustainable and equitable agri-food systems through science, policy, and collaboration. She previously worked as a provincial vegetable crop specialist with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and remains involved in her family farm in Southwestern Ontario. Janice holds an Honours B.Sc. in Agriculture from the University of Guelph and has experience across production, processing, research, and extension

Mentor - Andrew MacDougall, *Professor, Integrative Biology, University of Guelph*

Andrew MacDougall has been a faculty member in the Department of Integrative Biology at the University of Guelph since 2007. His research focuses on global change biology, food sustainability, Arctic ecology, and conservation. Since 2013, he has collaborated with ALUS to explore innovative approaches to integrating “new nature” into agricultural landscapes by restoring marginal lands. Andrew holds an MSc from York University and a PhD from the University of British Columbia.

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Mentor - Sadaf Mollaei, *Chair in Business of Food, Arrell Food Institute, Assistant Professor University of Guelph*

Dr. Sadaf Mollaei is the Arrell Chair in the Business of Food and an Assistant Professor in the School of Hospitality, Food and Tourism Management at the Gordon S. Lang School of Business and Economics. Dr. Mollaei also holds an Adjunct Assistant Professor position in the School of Environment, Enterprise, and Development at the University of Waterloo. Dr. Mollaei holds a PhD and MES in Sustainability Management from the University of Waterloo, and an MBA in marketing, where her research focused on the branding of food businesses. She also has over six years of managerial experience in the food service industry.

Mentor - Amy Proulx, *Professor and Academic Program Coordinator, Niagara College*

Amy Proulx is a distinguished academic and researcher with a strong background in food science and human nutrition. She holds degrees from the University of Guelph and Iowa State University, and has extensive experience in the field. Proulx's contributions to the food industry include developing recipes for non-alcoholic lagers and botanical beverages, as well as her role in the Niagara College Food Innovation Centre. Her work has been recognized with an Honorable Mention in Education Excellence at the 2024 Excellence in Agriculture Awards, highlighting her impact on agri-food leadership in Ontario.

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Mentor - Alex Sawatzky, Creative Advisor, Arrell Food Institute

As an interdisciplinary researcher and artist, Alex brings a unique blend of expertise to her role as Creative Advisor at Arrell Food Institute. Guided by a commitment to collaboration and community-driven approaches, Alex works at the intersection of research, art, and design, fostering relationships that co-create and mobilize knowledge.

Alex holds a PhD in Public Health from the University of Guelph, where she partnered with the Inuit community of Rigolet, Nunatsiavut, Labrador, to develop and strengthen place-based, Inuit-led climate change adaptation initiatives. This experience laid the foundation for her commitment to collaborative, intersectional approaches in research and knowledge mobilization.

Mentor - Elizabeth Shantz, *Knowledge Mobilization Manager, Arrell Food Institute*

Elizabeth Shantz is the Knowledge Mobilization Manager at the Arrell Food Institute, where she connects academia, government, and industry to enhance impact across food systems. She previously held roles at the Canadian Water Network and the University of Guelph's Research Innovation Office. Elizabeth holds a MASc in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the University of Waterloo and a BAH in English and Psychology from the University of Guelph, and is active in the knowledge mobilization community through Research Impact Canada and the Wellington Waterloo Knowledge Mobilization Community.

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Mentor - Wanhong Yang, *Professor Geography, Environment and Geomatics, University of Guelph*

Dr. Wanhong Yang is a professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Guelph. He obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2000. Dr. Yang's research focuses on integrated economic-hydrologic modeling, GIS applications, and agri-environmental management. His work addresses the cost-effectiveness of agricultural conservation programs and the evaluation of conservation investments on agricultural landscapes. Dr. Yang has been recognized with the 2018 Weston Family Ecosystem Innovation Award for his dedication to the conservation of Canada's agricultural watersheds. He has published widely in prestigious journals and serves as an associate editor for the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation.

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Judge -Tyler Zemlak, *Manager, Innovation Strategy, Research Innovation Office (RIO), University of Guelph*

Tyler Zem lak is the Manager of Innovation Strategy at the University of Guelph, where he leads initiatives to foster entrepreneurship, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the commercialization of research. With over a decade of experience in campus-linked innovation, he has supported early-stage startups, managed business incubation programs, and guided faculty and students in translating research into practical solutions. He also has entrepreneurial experience as the founder of multiple startups and holds a Ph.D. in Biology & Genetics from Dalhousie University, as well as an M.Sc. in DNA Barcoding from the University of Guelph.

Facilitators

Facilitator - Jessie Kennedy, *Manager, John F. Wood Centre*

Jessie Kennedy joined the John F. Wood Centre Team in 2021 and has experience in public speaking, marketing, branding, and relationship building. As an alumna of the University of Guelph, she brings a deep understanding of the institution and its values to her work. With her keen insights and exceptional communication skills, Jessie is a valuable asset to our team.

Previously, she spent 4 years working in the Admission and Recruitment office and travelled across Canada and presented to high school students about living and learning at the U of G. Jessie designs and maintains the Wood Centre's website and meets with external stakeholders to foster partnerships and collaborations that benefit the Centre's initiatives. Jessie also oversees programming, ensuring that all events and activities align with the Centre's mission and goals.

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Facilitator - Aaron Misener, *Communications Manager, Arrell Food Institute*

Aaron Misener is the Communications Manager for the Arrell Food Institute. His role encompasses strategic messaging and public facing touchpoints like the social channels and newsletter. Additionally, Aaron plays a key role in media relations and thought leadership strategy.

With a significant background in communications, government relations, professional and proposal writing, Aaron brings a passion for transforming messaging into accessible, actionable outcomes. He received his BA., Hons and MA from McMaster University's English and Cultural Studies program, harnessing a passion for creative writing into a deep understanding of language and critical thought. A communications position at Bioenterprise Canada gave Aaron the network and specialty to support sustainability and food systems in Canada, as well as a passion for the work being done in Guelph's premier institution in the agricultural sector, leading him to the University of Guelph and the Arrell Food Institute.

Aaron is an advocate for the value and skill development of young professionals and applies a leadership mentality of growth and celebration of excellence to his team. On his off time, you can find Aaron surrounded by children, cats, and dogs reading graphic novels, playing board games, or team chatting into a headset, controller in hand.

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Facilitator - Amy Lowther, *Intern, John F. Wood Centre*

Amy Lowther is joining the Wood Centre team this Fall as Marketing and Event Communications Coordinator. She is a third-year Marketing Management co-op student with a minor in Psychology and brings experience as a Social Media Coordinator. Outside of work, Amy enjoys traveling, going to the gym, and spending time with friends and family.

Facilitator - Jonathan Parkes, *PhD Candidate, Sessional Lecturer in Management, University of Guelph*

Jonathan is a Ph.D. candidate specializing in value creation and commercialization, with a strong focus on producing practical, high-impact outcomes through stakeholder engagement and strategic partnerships. His ability to bridge technical expertise with business strategy has made him a valued collaborator across academia, early-stage ventures, and government partnerships.

Jonathan is also known for his skill in engaging diverse audiences and explaining complex concepts clearly, which has earned him opportunities to teach premier courses in various colleges at the University of Guelph. With his thesis nearing completion, he continues to bring people, ideas, and opportunities together to develop innovative, stakeholder-driven solutions that deliver measurable impact.

Facilitator - Jeanna Rex, *Education Lead, Arrell Food Institute*

Jeanna is the Education Lead for the Arrell Food Institute, an Institute focused on connecting food research and expertise across all fields of study with global partners to support sustainability, safety, and security in the food supply chain from field to fork. In her role, Jeanna connects graduate student scholars with external industry and community partners to work on projects focused on identifying solutions for today's key agriculture and food challenges.
Jeanna has a Master of Education and over 15 years' experience programming for undergraduate and graduate students. As an educator, Jeanna believes we learn best by doing, reflecting and analyzing with others and that these types of experiences build better leaders.