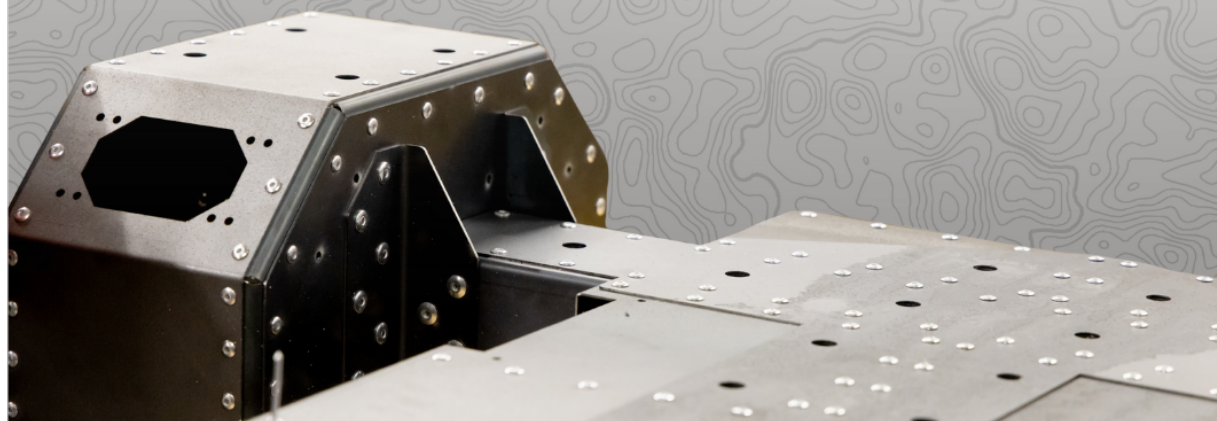




## **Five Companies Awarded in F3i's First Round of Innovation Grant Funding**



### **F3 Innovate Awards \$200,000 to Five Startups to Test and Scale Innovation in California's Central Valley**

**Fresno, California** - F3 Innovate (F3i) today announced \$200,000 in Innovation Grants awarded to five early-stage companies developing technologies in automation, water efficiency, soil health, and plant analytics. The awards mark the latest step in F3i's mission to build the Central Valley into a global hub for agricultural innovation by developing and testing solutions that shape agriculture's next era.

The first round of the F3i Innovation Grant Program focuses on technologies that address key challenges throughout the agricultural value chain - spanning plant nutrition and soil health, automation and robotics, early disease detection, and postharvest and supply chain optimization. In addition to funding, the program offers mentorship, pilot coordination, and commercialization support to help innovators test, refine, and deploy their solutions directly in farm environments.

"We're thrilled to partner with these five companies in the inaugural round of the Innovation Grant," said Priscilla Koepke, CEO of F3 Innovate. "Each team is developing critical technologies with the potential to make a real impact in agriculture. We're excited

to support these companies as they test, refine, and scale their solutions in collaboration with growers across the Valley.”

### **Among the 2025 F3i Innovation Grant Recipients Are:**

#### **Senseen**

Using its Nutriscope™ AI system, Senseen is developing almond-specific calibrations to measure macro and micronutrients directly from leaf scans, offering growers real-time nutrition insights and paving the way for next-generation plant health analytics.

#### **Eco2Mix’s Push Water Project**

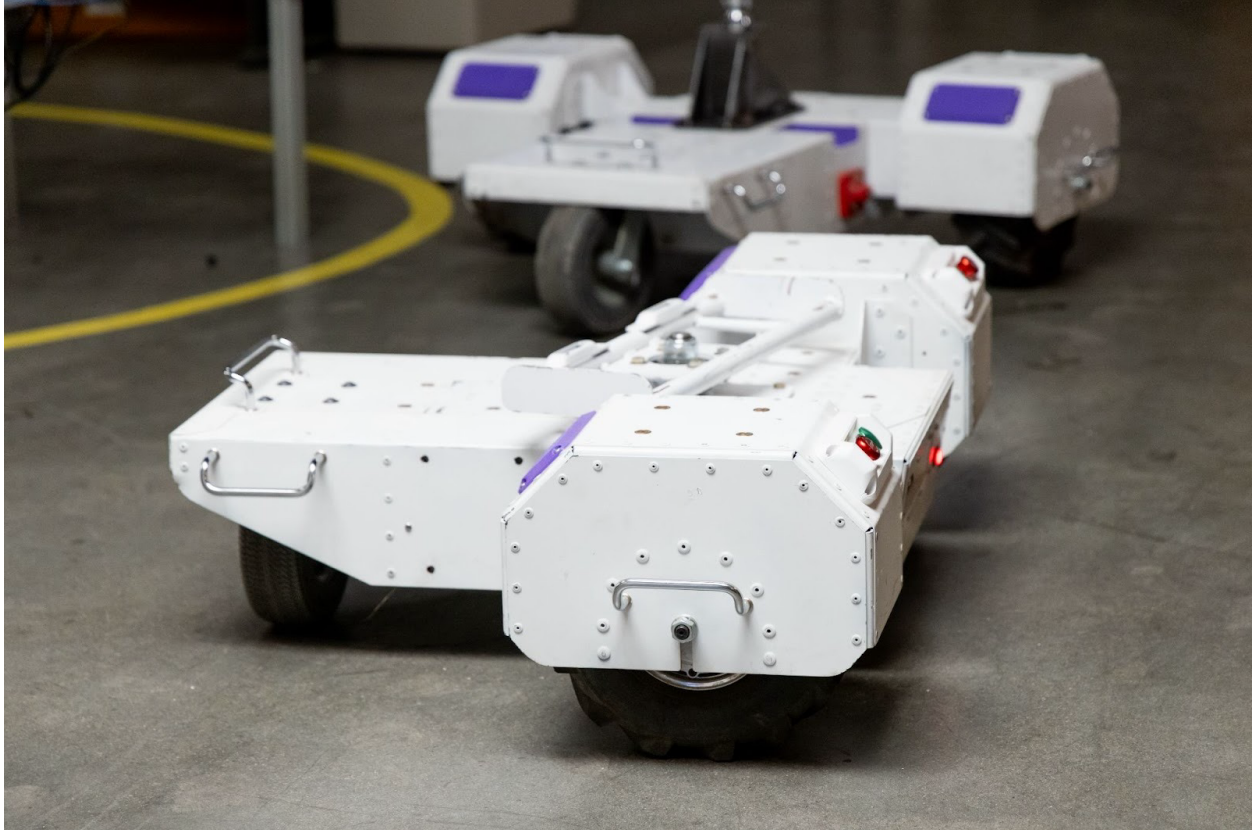
Building on research with American Pistachio Growers and Fresno State, the Push Water Project will quantify soil health improvement and nitrogen savings using carbonic acid and publish the first actionable data of its kind for the agriculture sector.



*An irrigation pipe delivers water treated by ECO2MIX’s onsite carbonic-acid system. Photo by F3 Innovate.*

#### **Gather**

Gather’s semi-autonomous Rover automates crop transport between pickers and packers in vineyards, improving harvest speed and worker safety. Compact and GPS-free, it delivers practical automation to farms of any size.



*An autonomous Gather robot designed to transport crops and materials in farm rows and around specialty crop operations. Photo by F3 Innovate.*

### **Milano Technical Group**

Milano Technical Group's autonomy software stack will provide navigation, fleet management, and telemetry as a plug-and-play API for any ag robot platform, allowing hardware developers to deploy fully functional autonomy within weeks instead of months.

### **Budbreak**

Budbreak's vineyard robots detect early signs of vine disease like red blotch and leafroll, flagging and marking affected vines for removal. Each robot captures high-res imagery synced to a web dashboard, giving growers a 24/7 digital field scout.

The selection panel for the inaugural Innovation Grant brought together leaders from across production agriculture, policy, workforce development, entrepreneurship, and venture innovation. Panelists included Priscilla Koepke, CEO of F3 Innovate; F3i board members Drew Ketelsen of HMC Farms and Danna Stroud of the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz); Christine Birdsong of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA); and Connie Bowen of Farmhand Ventures.

"As growers, we face constant variability - weather, labor, logistics, and regulatory environments. Technology needs to make a leap forward to help us manage that

complexity. Today, the \$200K invested across five companies is a powerful step in that direction - and importantly, it's only one part of a broader F3i ecosystem spanning commercialization, talent development, and funding," said Drew Ketelsen, Vice President at HMC Farms and F3i board member. "Today's milestone is part of a larger strategy that positions F3i and its partners to invest in ideas, nurture communication and learning across the sector, and create new resources and tools to overcome bottlenecks and deliver real impact in the field."

The Innovation Grant program is part of F3i's broader vision to build a global hub for agricultural innovation, where technologies don't develop in isolation but advance through collaboration and new infrastructure among university teams, workforce leaders, growers, and companies who test, validate, and scale them with speed and efficiency.

"We're not just funding isolated projects, we're building the foundation for agriculture's next era," said Priscilla Koepke. "Commercialization, talent, and capital can't operate in silos. The future depends on integrating these systems - aligning education and workforce development, commercialization, and investment - so breakthroughs can scale at the pace needed. And the Central Valley, with its unmatched agricultural production and network, is the place to prove it."

### **About F3 Innovate**

F3 Innovate (F3i) is a nonprofit founded in California's Central Valley, dedicated to developing the region into a global hub for agricultural and food security innovation. Leveraging the region's unmatched scale of production, F3i helps build and test solutions that strengthen one of the nation's most vital but vulnerable supply chains.

F3i serves as a vital nexus, bridging the gap between cutting-edge university research and the practical needs of growers and communities. Through collaborative partnerships among researchers from Fresno State, the University of California, Merced, and UC Agriculture and Natural Resources, as well as key industry partners and federal, state, and local government leaders, F3i delivers foundational entrepreneurial and engineering solutions and resources to the entire agriculture system, improving food security nationwide.

Learn more: [www.f3innovate.org](http://www.f3innovate.org)