



# Apps for Ag

A Series of Agricultural Hackathons

## About:

Apps for Ag is a series of agriculture focused hackathons. Our purpose is to bring together the seemingly disparate worlds of software development and commercial farming into a collaborative event. Our mission is

- To develop useful technology to address the needs of today's grower.
- To seed new enterprises in the AgTech and FoodTech sectors, which will,
- Create new jobs

The series will travel throughout the agricultural production areas of California and beyond. We welcome developers with diverse backgrounds, levels of experience and specialties to our events. Our next events is going to be hosted by University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) with the final round of judging to take place at the California State Fair.

Hackathons are a time tested Silicon Valley tradition. The purpose is not at all to "hack" into computer systems for malicious purposes. Rather, the term is based on the positive connotation of the word "hack": to write clever software programs that solve an old problem in a new and optimal way.

Hackathons are typically 24-48 hours long and are an endurance challenge of ideation, iteration, collaboration and focus. Participants will put in long hours, some don't even sleep, as they rush to develop as much of the concept as possible before judging. The event culminates in a judged contest, or "Pitchfest". The makeup of the judging panel reflects all of the respective industry stakeholders. It will include experienced growers, software engineers, entrepreneurs and investors. Judges are asked to rate each team on 1.) the impact of the concept, 2.) a compelling story of collaboration and 3.) the technical merit of the concept.

Participating growers benefit by giving voice to their needs during the "Industry Panel" that kicks off each event. The growers and industry representatives who participate may very well realize a purpose-built software application to address their stated challenge. They also get to observe what software development looks like, to see how challenging it can be, to learn a new vocabulary, to try something different and to discover many commonalities with another industry.

Developers benefit by showing off their skills, networking within their industry, obtaining domain expertise in a new industry, learning about the technology that already exists in agriculture and, ideally, making a productive impact on the Nation's food chain.

The Apps for Ag hackathons are organized so that, ideally, each team has at least one member to represent each of the following categories; a software engineer, an entrepreneur, a grower / agriculturalist and a designer. The participants on a team each own the intellectual property (IP) that

they create at the hackathon equally. No outside organization has rights to the IP (including employers, Universities, sponsors and host organizations), unless the team collectively agrees to transfer it. Teams form ad hoc at the start of the event, so it is a great opportunity for everyone to expand their comfort zone and to meet new people from diverse backgrounds. The Apps for Ag organizing team facilitates this mixing.

Growers and agriculturalist (crop advisers, irrigation experts, ag engineers, ag industry professionals) need no software development experience to participate. Their role is that of the domain expert and to help identify the real, pending needs of the industry. They are members of the team, and should be prepared to put in long hours, to provide the much needed ag insight, to help to develop the concept, to develop the business model and to help build the team's pitch for the judging panel. While they are not expected to write any software, we find that curiosity often wins out and growers can be observed learning the basics of writing code alongside a developer.

Currently, Apps for Ag is looking for sponsors to support our next event's costs such as food and location. More importantly, we are trying to sponsor substantial prize packages for the teams. Our intention is to give away cash prizes for first place, second place and third place. Additionally, we intend to develop "Seed Funds" for the top three teams. These awards are larger sums, which will be administered by an AgTech incubator, such as AgStart, to reimburse teams for approved business expenses incurred when / if they continue to develop and commercialize their hackathon project. Apps for Ag feels that these Seed Funds are critical to attracting top talent, displaying that the participants are valued and to support teams as they make the arduous journey from hackathon concept to real world application.

As of this writing, Apps for Ag has resulted in the formation of at least five startups. They include Ag for Hire, Agrialgo, Crop Rescue!, Green Thumb IO and PestScope.

The Apps for Ag organizing team is a purely volunteer effort envisioned by the AgTech Roundtable. The pro bono Roundtable consists of public and private members who convene regularly to enable the development of appropriate AgTech through focus on related key initiatives. The AgTech Roundtable's initiatives are the Apps for Ag Hackathon series, the support for improved rural access to broadband internet and the AgTech Policy Navigator sessions for entrepreneurs. Roundtable members include USDA, CDFA, University of California, California Department of Technology, California Public Utilities Commission, California Farm Bureau Federation, California Association of Pest Control Advisers, San Joaquin Valley Partnership, Valley Vision, Western Growers Association and others.

For more information, please visit [www.apps-for-ag.com](http://www.apps-for-ag.com) or email us at [info@apps-for-ag.com](mailto:info@apps-for-ag.com)