SOY INNOVATION CHALLENGE 2026

"Soy at Work"

Program Purpose

The Soy Innovation Challenge engages high school FFA members in designing a scalable, real-world project that educates visitors to the Farm for Soy Innovation about the value, versatility and impact of soybeans. Teams, acting as soybean staff, will develop and pitch their ideas to a panel of judges, acting as the Missouri Soybean Merchandising Council Board, working within a $20,000 budget. The winning concept will serve as the foundation for a future project at the Farm for Soy Innovation, with elements of the proposal considered for implementation by the Missouri Soybeans team.

Theme

Theme: Soy at Work
This year's challenge calls on FFA members to design a scalable, real-world project for the Farm for Soy Innovation that highlights the diverse uses and applications of soybeans. Projects should demonstrate how soy contributes to products, technologies and industries beyond traditional food and feed markets, while helping Farm visitors better understand the value these uses create for farmers and the soybean industry.

Visitors to the Farm for Soy Innovation include farmers, researchers, industry partners, trade teams and other agricultural professionals. Submissions should be educational, innovative and achievable within a $20,000 budget while communicating the versatility and value of soy in a meaningful and engaging way.

Project Parameters & Examples

Interactive Display: A hands-on exhibit demonstrating how soy-based materials are incorporated into everyday or industrial products.
Product Demonstration: An exhibit comparing a soy-based product or technology with a conventional alternative.
Simulation/Experience: An interactive experience demonstrating how soy moves from the farm into an innovative end use.
Digital/Media Tool: An interactive digital experience, video or technology-based exhibit exploring emerging or established uses of soy.
Physical Exhibit: A permanent or adaptable installation showcasing soy-based products, technologies or applications.

Teams should not limit their initial concepts based on specific exhibit dimensions. Finalist teams will receive additional guidance from Missouri Soybeans regarding available space, sizing, materials and other implementation considerations. Concepts may be adapted or scaled during the finalist phase while maintaining the team's original vision.

Objectives

The Soy Innovation Challenge provides contestants the opportunity to:

- Apply knowledge of soy innovation to address real-world challenges in agriculture, sustainability, and education.
- Design a scalable project that engages the diverse audiences who visit the Farm for Soy Innovation within a $20,000 budget.
- Demonstrate how innovative uses of soy create value and opportunities for farmers, agriculture and the soybean industry.
- Develop professional skills in research, budgeting, teamwork, and communication.
- Demonstrate employability competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, presentation, and collaboration. Design and showcase valuable visual aids.
- Pitch and defend a proposal to industry professionals in a format that simulates real-world consulting and entrepreneurship.

COMPETITION FORMAT

Initial Proposal Guidelines

Written Submission (40%)
Due December 1st. Teams submit one document (12 pt., Times New Roman, Double Space, 5 pages Maximum) including:

- Project overview and purpose
- Intended audience and engagement strategy
- Connection to soy uses, innovation and value
- Logistics, design and timeline
- Full budget (≤ $20,000)
- Anticipated outcomes and scalability plan
- AI use disclosure

Finalist Selection (December)
Judges select the **top 5 proposals.**

Each finalist team will have the opportunity to schedule an optional 1-hour virtual mentorship session with a Missouri Soybean staff member to discuss feasibility, sizing, scalability and implementation before the final presentation. Finalist teams are responsible for reaching out to schedule their session.

Pitch Presentation (60%)
Held on February 12th in Jefferson City.

The same panel of judges will judge both the written submission and Pitch Presentation.

Format:

- Setup: 2 minutes
- Presentation: 10 minutes
- Q&A: 3 minutes

Teams may use slides, posters, models, prototypes, or other visual aids. A prototype/model is not required, but encouraged if it strengthens the pitch.

Awards & Outcome

Chapter placings will be announced on-stage at the 2027 FFA State Convention. Of the final five chapters, the top three will be awarded cash prizes to be used however they choose, with preference on soy-related activities, such as agronomy, greenhouse, aquaculture, etc.Missouri Soybeans may use the winning proposal, or elements of the proposal, to guide the development of a future project at the Farm for Soy Innovation. The winning chapter is not responsible for funding implementation.
Cash prizes will be awarded as follows:

- 1st Place: $7,500
- 2nd Place: $4,000
- 3rd Place: $2,000

Tiebreaker

In the event of a tie, the Written Submission score will serve as the deciding factor.

Content Knowledge Standards for Presentation

The Content Knowledge portion of the rubric ensures participants demonstrate depth of understanding in:
Science: Plant biology, genetics, sustainability, soil, water, carbon cycle, climate, engineering applications.
Economics & Business: Soy market economics, supply chains, exports, consumer products, biofuels, trade policy.
Agricultural Systems (CTE): Plant science, biotechnology, agribusiness, food systems, global agriculture.
Health & Nutrition: Soy protein benefits, sustainability of soy vs. animal protein.
Innovation, Technology & Soy Uses: Established and emerging uses of soy, including biofuels, rubber, plastics, construction materials, coatings, adhesives, lubricants, foams and other soy-based products and technologies.

Scoring Descriptions for Content Knowledge (0–10 points)

- Exceeds Expectations (9–10 points): Demonstrates in-depth knowledge of the soy-related concepts relevant to the proposed project. Explains concepts clearly, applies research, and integrates knowledge seamlessly into the pitch.
- Meets Expectations (6–8 points): Demonstrates accurate understanding of at least two soy-related domains. Explains content clearly but with limited depth or application.
- Below Expectations (3–5 points): Demonstrates surface-level knowledge with gaps in accuracy or application. Content integration into pitch is weak.
- Not Demonstrated (0–2 points): Shows minimal or no evidence of soy-related content knowledge. Major inaccuracies or omissions present.

Written Submission					
	Not Demonstrated 0-2	Below Expectations 3-5	Meets Expectations 6-8	Exceeds Expectations 9-10	Total Points
Concept & Soy Innovation — Clearly defines the project idea, its connection to soy uses and innovation, and its intended impact.					
Audience & Educational Value — Clearly identifies the intended Farm audience and demonstrates how the concept will effectively communicate the value and versatility of soy.					
Research & Content — Demonstrates accurate, well-supported knowledge of the selected soy use(s), including their relevance to farmers, agriculture and/or the soybean industry.					
Feasibility & Implementation — Provides a realistic timeline, implementation approach and budget of $20,000 or less, with consideration for future adaptation or scalability.					
Quality of Submission — Submission is well-written, logically organized, free of major errors and professionally formatted.					

Comments:

Pitch Presentation					
	Not Demonstrated 0-2	Below Expectations 3-5	Meets Expectations 6-8	Exceeds Expectations 9-10	Total Points
Concept Development – Clearly communicates a thoughtful, innovative concept and demonstrates how it has been strengthened since the initial proposal.					
Soy Content & Research – Demonstrates accurate and thorough understanding of the selected soy use(s), their applications and their value to the soybean industry.					
Feasibility & Decision-Making – Demonstrates critical thinking and can explain and defend choices related to design, audience, budget, scalability and implementation.					
Audience Impact – Demonstrates how the project would engage Farm visitors and effectively communicate the value and versatility of soy.					
Presentation & Communication – Presentation is clear, organized and professional; visuals effectively support the team's concept.					

Comments: