

Source: GREATER MSP

October 21, 2025 06:00 ET

MBOLD Launches 'Protein Catalyst' to Drive Animal & Plant Protein Innovation in Rapidly Growing Global Protein Industry

Catalyst brings together some of the world's leading food and agriculture companies, including General Mills, Cargill, Target, Schwan's Co., SunOpta, and more to pursue protein innovations benefiting farmers, consumers, businesses, planet

Catalyst will foster innovation through pre-competitive R&D for animal feed and plant-based proteins; mentorship for protein innovation start-ups; and personalized support for protein companies looking to engage in Minnesota's vibrant protein ecosystem

MINNEAPOLIS and ST. PAUL, Minn., Oct. 21, 2025 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- As global demand for protein rises, a coalition of Minnesota-based global leaders in food and agriculture is teaming up to develop new solutions. Today, the **MBOLD** coalition (an initiative of the GREATER MSP Partnership) has launched the **Protein Catalyst**—a pre-competitive, collaborative effort designed to drive innovation and help sustainably address the world's rapidly growing appetite for high-quality proteins.

The effort is a partnership with some of the world's leading food and agriculture organizations, from **General Mills, Cargill, Target, Schwan's Co., and Compeer Financial** to the **University of Minnesota, the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI), Naturally Minnesota, McKinsey & Co., SunOpta, Hormel Foods, Buhler Group, Northarvest Bean Growers Association, the Saskatchewan Food Industry Development Centre, NutriQuest, Ralco, CSA Nutrition** and the **Consulate General of Canada** in Minneapolis.

The **Protein Catalyst** will initially focus on 1) pre-competitive R&D and "public commons" research 2) in-depth mentorship for protein innovation start-ups (**'Bold Growth'**) and 3) providing a personalized gateway for protein companies to explore Minnesota's vibrant protein ecosystem, find their footing, and thrive (**'Protein Navigator'**).

Protein is a key part of the human diet and a vital building block for our lives. As a result of long-term consumption trends and rising populations, global protein demand is projected to rise by up to 50 percent by 2050. Protein production is essential to feeding the world, but it also affects our land, water, and climate in ways that make sustainability an important part of the conversation.

"At MBOLD, we know innovation isn't born from comfort. It's rooted in courage and creativity," said JoAnne Berkenkamp, MBOLD's managing director. "We're launching the **MBOLD Protein Catalyst** to take on one of the biggest challenges our food system is facing with the aim of collaborating across the value chain to deliver protein solutions that work for farmers, consumers, businesses, and the planet."

The **Protein Catalyst** aims to drive innovation in protein sustainability and resilience by:

- Exploring ways to lower the footprint of animal proteins by incorporating diverse, climate-resilient crops into animal feed
- Fueling the success of plant-based proteins through investments in pre-competitive R&D
- Supporting the success of start-up and scale-up businesses with high-potential protein innovations

Below you can find more information about the **Protein Catalyst**.

Pre-competitive R&D and "Public Commons" Research

The **Protein Catalyst** will work collaboratively to conduct and publicly share research to fuel innovation for animal agriculture and drive greater market traction for plant-based proteins.

For instance, **MBOLD** is evaluating opportunities for more diverse, climate-resilient crops to be incorporated into **animal feed**, with the aim of opening new markets for farmers and, over time, fueling a more resilient agricultural landscape. And with **plant-based proteins**, **MBOLD** will identify and address pre-competitive needs for research, development and commercialization support to enable plant-based proteins to be used in new ways and in a growing array of foods.

"Bold Growth" Mentorship Program

MBOLD recognizes the critical role that start-up companies play in driving needed innovation.

MBOLD's Bold Growth program will help high-potential protein innovation companies scale-up through in-depth, tailored corporate mentorship. To date, **Bold Growth** participants have benefited from mentorship—at zero cost—from executives at businesses like Target, Cargill, General Mills, Compeer Financial, Schwan's Co., McKinsey & Co., SunOpta, Ecolab, Hormel Foods, and Bread & Butter Ventures.

Protein Navigator

As part of the **Protein Catalyst**, **MBOLD** will also welcome more protein companies and innovators into Minnesota's vibrant protein ecosystem. **MBOLD's Protein Navigator** will help protein-focused companies from around the U.S. and the world get to know Minnesota's ecosystem through personalized support—including tailored market insights, strategic connections, and expert guidance.

And as **MBOLD** works to deepen collaboration, we will co-host the **Bridge2Food Summit**—the premier plant and alternative protein industry gathering in the Western hemisphere—in Minneapolis on October 21-23.

The challenges and opportunities of the protein economy are key to our collective future. **MBOLD** welcomes participation from across the value chain in the **MBOLD Protein Catalyst**.

Learn more: mbold.org/protein.

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About MBOLD

MBOLD is a coalition of leading Minnesota-based food and agriculture companies and nonprofit organizations including General Mills, Cargill, Target, Schwan's Co., Compeer Financial, the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI), McKinsey & Co., Naturally Minnesota and the University of Minnesota. Together, we are working to accelerate innovation and build a more sustainable and resilient food system. MBOLD is an initiative of the GREATER MSP Partnership. Learn more at mbold.org.