

AGRITECH & FOOD SECURITY

Cut post-harvest losses for smallholder tomato growers

Agro-processor • Mashonaland East



Reduce the share of tomatoes lost between the farm and the processing plant.

POSTED BY	Agro-processor • Mashonaland East	PILOT BUDGET	US\$12,000
LOCATION	Mashonaland East (field testing with growers)	APPLICATIONS CLOSE	30 Nov 2026
SUB-THEME	Agritech & Food Security	TEAM SIZE	2-6 people

1 The problem

Background

The processor buys tomatoes from about 400 smallholder growers within 80 km of its plant. Growers deliver by scotch cart, pickup or bus, often after a day or more in the heat.

What's going wrong

Around a third of delivered tomatoes are rejected or downgraded for bruising and spoilage. Growers lose income, and the plant runs below capacity in peak season while fruit rots at the farm gate.

2 What we need

A strong solution will:

- ✓ Cut post-harvest losses on the route from farm to plant.
- ✓ Keep the cost per grower low enough to pay back within one season.
- ✓ Help growers time harvests to the plant's intake schedule.
- ✓ Work for growers who only have basic phones.

Constraints

- Most farms have no grid power.
- Must suit growers with low literacy and basic phones.
- The plant's food safety standards apply.

3 Deliverables

By forum week, matched teams are expected to bring:

01 A prototype or tested process used by at least 10 growers.

02 Loss measurements before and after.

03 A cost model per grower and per tonne.

04 A seven-minute pitch for forum week.

4 How teams are evaluated

Applications and final pitches are scored by the challenge owner and the ZBIF secretariat.

CRITERION	WHAT WE LOOK AT	WEIGHT
Fit to the problem	Does it solve the problem as the challenge owner describes it?	30%
Technical feasibility	Can the team build and run it with the resources available?	25%
Cost and scalability	Is it affordable to pilot, and to roll out if the pilot works?	20%
Team capability	Does the team have the skills and time to deliver?	15%
Local impact	Jobs, skills or value it keeps in Zimbabwe.	10%

Who can apply

- ✓ A registered ZBIF innovator account: innovators, consultancies, technologists, university teams or freelancers.
- ✓ At least one team member based in Zimbabwe.
- ✓ Able to attend forum week in Bulawayo on 27–28 April 2027 if shortlisted.
- ✓ IP ownership and pilot terms are agreed between your team and the challenge owner in the Deal Room.

5 Timeline

21 Sep 2026	Challenge posted
30 Nov 2026	Applications close
Within 3 weeks	Matching results sent to teams and the challenge owner
Until mid-April 2027	Build phase, with mentor and challenge-owner check-ins
27-28 Apr 2027	Live pitch and Deal Rooms at forum week, Bulawayo

6 Data and resources

Shared with matched teams after signing a simple data-use agreement.

Intake and rejection records, last two seasons	Spreadsheet
Group of lead farmers for field tests	Introduced after matching
Plant logistics manager as point of contact	Fortnightly check-in

7 How to apply

- 01** Create a free innovator account at zbif.bulconsultancy.com, or sign in.
- 02** Open this challenge (ref ZB-102) and press **Apply**.
- 03** Tell us your team name, size and how you would solve the problem. Applications close on **30 Nov 2026**.

Questions about the brief can be asked from the challenge page. Answers are shared with every applicant.