



WHERE SPACE MEETS AGRIFOOD

PARTICIPANT GUIDE 2026



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1. VeneTo Stars Challenge: "Space data for Agrifood"

VeneTo Stars is a Space Data-focused challenge promoted by the Veneto Region in Italy and open to European residents aged 18-25. **The initiative aims to foster innovative ideas that leverage Space Data and Space Technologies to support the AGRIFOOD sector (aka AGRITECH in a broader sense) and to** facilitate connections between young European innovators and Veneto Region local enterprises.

As defined by the World Economic Forum, "Space technology is transforming how we do things on Earth, but it is in agriculture that the impact will be strong and definitely transform the sector by 2030". Space-based data/technology is of value to farmers, agronomists, food manufacturers and agricultural policymakers if we look at the broad range of elements like, for example, aquaculture, land management, silviculture, smart harvesting, yield optimization, autonomous tools, etc.

Agriculture in the Veneto region is a key sector, with a strong focus on winemaking, which accounts for approximately 14% of the national vineyard area, as well as cereal, fruit, and vegetable crops. Forest management, sustainable innovation, and the application of new technologies to address climate change have been consistent priorities in recent years.

The Space Economy has long been recognized as a sector of entrepreneurial excellence in the Veneto Region, recently securing major public contracts from the Italian Space Agency (ASI) and the European Space Agency (ESA). Most regional companies operating in the Space Economy focus on the "upstream" segment. Moreover, initiatives like the ESA BIC, participation in the IRIDE project, and the Veneto Digital Agenda's emphasis on Space Data are increasingly driving the development of the "downstream" sector.

The interplay between the Agrifood and Space offers also the potential to create new applications and services for the population, businesses, and the environment, as well as unlock global market opportunities.

Ideas submitted to the challenge must utilize Space Data or Technology and demonstrate applicability within the Veneto Region, highlighting a clear application. **Potential areas of interest include (but are not limited to):**

- **Pesticides and sulfites monitoring in agriculture**
- **Water resources management**
- **Crop fields monitoring and smart harvesting**
- **Aquaculture and seafood^{1,2} production**
- **Flavescence dorée and other diseases prevention in viticulture**
- **Logistics in agriculture, production planning**
- **Reuse/retrain of rural areas³**
- **Soil consumption and land monitoring⁴ (health check)**
- **Precise weather forecasting for agriculture, fish production/aquaculture**
- **Forestry and silviculture management**
- **Vineyards health monitoring⁵**
- **Inland waterways management and monitoring**

VeneTo Stars twofold objectives are to boost **the interest of the European young generation towards Space Data/Tech sources and promote the use of Space Data/Tech to support the Agrifood sector.**

¹ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2012/495826/IPOL-PECH_NT\(2012\)495826_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2012/495826/IPOL-PECH_NT(2012)495826_EN.pdf)

² <http://www.sinab.it/sites/default/files/2020%20-%20Pulcini%20et%20al.%20-%20Organic%20Aquaculture%20Production%20in%20Italy%20from%202015%20to%202018%20Species%20Pro.pdf>

³ <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/quasi-5mila-edifici-abbandonati-mappa-tesoretto-veneto-AEPUXrKC>

⁴ <https://www.snpambiente.it/2020/12/30/rapporto-2020-sullo-stato-dellambiente-in-veneto/>

⁵ <https://www.wine-searcher.com/regions-veneto>

1.1 Eligibility

The Challenge is open to teams consisting of *recent graduates, students, and young professionals* residing in the EEA⁶ and Switzerland.

Teams must have a **minimum of 2 and a maximum of 7 members**.

The majority of team members must be aged 18-25 at the time of submission.

1.2 Timeline



The VeneTo Stars Challenge covers a five months period and is composed of:

- **APPLICATION**

Teams can register and submit their ideas/concepts from 15th January to 3rd April 2026 hrs 23:59 CET.

- **SELECTION**

Ten (**10**) ideas/concepts will be selected and the correspondent teams notified by the 10th of April 2026 hrs 23:59 CET.

- **AWARD - SPACE MEETINGS VENETO (11-13 May, 2026)**

The 10 selected teams will be hosted in Venice during the “Space Meetings Veneto 2026” (SMV) where they will have the opportunity to connect with companies and professionals from the Agrifood and Space domains.

⁶ European Economic Area

An international jury will select and award the top **three** proposals.

- **EXPLOITATION (June 2026)**

The three winning teams will have the opportunity to spend one week in the Veneto Region in July 2026, participating in a tailor-made program. This program will include coaching, entrepreneurial and technical sessions, as well as advisory activities designed to further develop their prototypes and maybe run a pilot test in a real environment and interact with interested stakeholders. The week will be held in a state-of-the-art campus and will include entrepreneurial and technical sessions as well as outdoor activities.

At the end of the week there will be a final event to present the results of the activities.

2. Four Phases of the Challenge



2.1 Application

1. Ideas can only be submitted through the form available on the official Challenge website www.venetostars.com by the designated team contact person.
2. The contact person will be required to provide details for all other team members.
3. Applications must be submitted between 15th January and 3rd April, not later than 23:59 CET. Any deadline extensions will be appropriately announced through communication channels, social media, and official web pages.
4. Submission materials must include:
 - a. **A deck of up to 10 slides**, structured as follows:
 - i. Problem
 - ii. Solution
 - iii. How your idea can be applied to the Veneto Region

- iv. Comparison with other existing solutions or similar applications (if any)
- v. Team presentation
- vi. Development Timeline
- vii. Final concept to pitch if selected for the Award phase in May
- viii. Type of support the Veneto Region could provide to further develop idea (if selected as overall winner)

b. Acceptance of the Privacy Statement on the submission page.

- 5. Please notice that an incomplete submission can lead to an exclusion from the Challenge.
- 6. Intellectual property will remain with the idea owners and the submitting team members.

2.2 Selection

An internal committee will evaluate the proposals and select the ten finalists. The selected teams will be notified via email by 10th April 2026 at 23:59 CET.

The selection committee for the first phase (SELECTION) will include experts from the Veneto Region, supported by representatives from research centres and Space Data/Tech specialists.

The selection criteria are as follows:

- **Relevance:** The alignment of the idea with the goals of the VeneTo Stars Challenge, particularly its applicability to the Veneto Region and adherence to the specified topics (see Section 1).
- **Impact:** The scale and timeframe at which the idea delivers tangible socio-economic benefits to the region, as well as the measurable outcomes of its application.

- **Feasibility:** The extent to which the idea can be implemented using existing technologies, its Technology Readiness Level (TRL), and the time required to transform it into a prototype.
- **Scalability:** The clarity of the steps outlined for progressing from concept to a mock-up, prototype, or demo, to be presented during the SMV if selected.
- **Presentation:** The quality, organization, and overall clarity of the submission.
- **Team:** Gender balance and multidisciplinary composition.

Each criterion will be scored on a scale from 0 to 5, as outlined in the table below:

Criteria	Weight
Relevance	0 - 5
Impact	0 - 5
Feasibility	0 - 5
Scalability	0 - 5
Presentation	0 - 5
Team	0 - 5

To qualify, proposals must achieve a minimum score of 2 for each criterion. Only 10 teams will be selected, and the jury's decisions are final.

The selected teams will pitch their ideas during the Space Meetings Veneto, to be held in Venice from May 11-13, 2026. Participants will have the chance to present their mock-ups or prototypes and connect with investors, end-users, and stakeholders.

After notification, each team must inform the organizers the names of **up to three** members by 15th April 2026 who will be sponsored by the Veneto Region to attend SMV and deliver their pitch.

2.3 Award - Space Meetings Veneto 2026

The (10) ten selected teams (finalists) will be invited to visit Veneto and participate in the unique three-day event in Venice “Space Meetings Veneto” (<https://spacemeetingsveneto.com/>). During the event, they will have the opportunity to meet professionals and firms, gaining valuable insights to enhance their proposals and further develop them from concepts to mock-ups or prototypes.

The best advancements from ideas/concepts to mock-up/prototype during the finalists’ pitch session at SMV (May 11-13, 2026) will receive an award.

A purely indicative schedule for the teams attending the Space Meetings Veneto 2026 could be:

May 10th	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• arrival and welcoming
May 11th	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• dedicated workshop (including 1-2-1 session with enterprises TBD) and lecture• meeting and visit to relevant site• social dinner
May 12th	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• exhibition access• dedicated workshop (including 1-2- session with enterprises TBD)• pitching session (finals)
May 13th	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• dedicated workshop• winners announcement and award ceremony

Updated info about Space Meetings Veneto and program details will be available on the official website <https://spacemeetingsveneto.com/> and www.venetostars.com

The jury will include experts from Veneto Region, national and international stakeholders like the Italian Space Agency and the National Copernicus User Forum, investors, end-users, and research centers. The jury will select the three best proposals and those teams will be invited to the Veneto Region (tentatively in June/July) for the EXPLOITATION phase.

The jury will also evaluate the advancement of the ideas/concepts submitted during the first phase (deadline 10th of April), and their progress towards the final pitch at SMV.

Important notes:

- A maximum of 3 members per team will be covered for travel and lodging expenses.
- The decision of the jury is unquestionable.
- Each of the 3 winning teams of the finals at SMV will receive a €1,000 prize.

2.4 Exploitation

- **coaching/mentoring**
- **presentation of the reviewed project (considering all the inputs gathered during the mentoring phase)**

The three winning teams members will be invited to spend one week in Veneto Region in July 2026 and a maximum of 3 members per team will be covered expenses. A tailor-made program will be designed to favor meetings, mentoring, coaching and also advisory activities to further advance the prototype and maybe run a pilot test (i.e. real case application): *learn, develop, enhance and potentially apply the prototype to a real context*. The week will be held in a state-of-the-art campus and include entrepreneurial and technical sessions as well as outdoor activities. At the end of the week a final event is envisaged to present the results of the activities and the best prototype will be awarded a prize of €2,000, the second one a prize of €1,500 and the third one a prize of €1,000.

3. Resources

The main Space Data sources related to the EU Space Programme can be divided into five main packages:

- Copernicus
- Galileo

- EGNOS
- Govsatcom
- EUSST

The VeneTo Stars Challenge: "Space data for Agrifood" is interested in ideas using the first **three** plus ECMWF (see below).

[Copernicus](#) is the European Union's Earth observation programme, looking at our planet and its environment to benefit all European citizens. It offers information services that draw from satellite Earth Observation and in-situ (non-space) data.

EUSPA has created a simple guide on how to access Copernicus data for people who hear about it for the first time.

[Galileo](#) is Europe's Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), providing improved positioning and timing information with significant positive implications for many European services and users.

[EGNOS](#) The European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) is Europe's regional satellite-based augmentation system (SBAS) that is used to improve the performance of global navigation satellite systems (GNSSs).

[ECMWF](#) is the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts whose objective is to produce and disseminate weather forecast data for the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NHMSs) of ECMWF Member and Co-operating States and their authorised users.

ECMWF is both a research institute and a 24/7 operational service; the Centre has one of the largest supercomputer facilities and meteorological data archives in the world.

ECMWF is a key player in Copernicus, the Earth Observation component of the European Union's Space programme, offering quality-assured information on climate change (**Copernicus Climate Change Service**), atmospheric composition (Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service), flooding and fire danger (**Copernicus Emergency Management Service**), and through the EU's Destination Earth initiative, ECMWF is developing prototype digital twins of the Earth.

Data are accessible following the links:

- [C3S and the Climate Data Store](#) [CAMS and the Atmosphere Data Store](#)

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