

Two Mega Venues, One Commercial Powerhouse: Gulfood 2026 Delivers Record Global Trade Impact

Five days of deal-making, buyer engagement and market expansion positioned Gulfood 2026 as the world's most powerful food trade platform

Dubai, 09 February 2026: In January 2026, Dubai made global exhibition history as Gulfood, the world's largest annual food and beverage sourcing event, successfully delivered a record-breaking **100% expansion** by operating seamlessly across two mega venues. Running from 26-30 January at **Dubai World Trade Centre** and the newly unveiled **\$2.7 billion Dubai Exhibition Centre at Expo City**, Gulfood sold out more than **280,000 square metres** of exhibition space, setting a new global benchmark for scale, delivery and commercial ambition. Over five days, **close to 300,000 attendees from over 195 countries and 8,500+ exhibitors showcased more than 1.5 million products across 12 sectors**, engaging directly with international buyers and distributors through a fully integrated two-venue model that transformed unprecedented scale into measurable commercial outcomes and uninterrupted deal-making at a historic scale.

From Buyer Meetings to Signed Deals

At the commercial core of the show, the **Big Deal Hub** reinforced Gulfood's role as a deal-making engine, as it united 1,000+ premium buyers from around the world through 3,500+ curated meetings, generating AED 168 billion in deals.



Gil Ben Moshe, CEO, Nature Shield Trading FZCO, said: *“The Big Deal Hub is an excellent initiative. The concept of pre-arranging meetings in one place is extremely valuable and made our participation far more productive.”*

Commercial outcomes defined the 2026 edition. During the event, **Al Maya Distribution Group and Frío Beverages** signed a major distribution agreement to expand Frío's presence across Gulf markets. **Dilhan C. Fernando, Chairman and CEO, Dilmah Ceylon Tea Company PLC, said:** *“Gulfood 2026 was particularly significant for us as our beverage division formalised a distribution agreement with Al Maya for Dilmah iced tea across the UAE.”*

Sayed Ashraf Hashimi, Chairman, Asia Food Forum, said: *“Gulfood remains the most effective global platform for converting trade dialogue into real business. This year alone, our participation supported concrete outcomes, including an understanding linked to the purchase of approximately 12,000 metric tons of sugar.”*

Meanwhile, Brands Republic Limited signed exclusive distribution agreements representing a projected AED 500 million over the next five years. Dr Ghandy Abuhawash, Group CEO, Brands Republic Limited, said: “Gulfood 2026 was a defining milestone for Brands Republic, enabling us to secure distribution partnerships across multiple international markets and reinforcing the global potential of premium Emirati brands.”



Innovation with Commercial Intent

As the global agri-tech market is projected to exceed \$40 billion by 2030, Gulfood 2026 reinforced its evolution beyond food and beverage into a broader innovation ecosystem focused on scalability and market readiness. Gulfood Startups connected over 250 high-growth startups, investors and visionaries, to accelerate pathways from innovation to commercialisation, seizing the opportunity to align with Gulfood’s landmark scale and reach.



The inaugural **World Agri-Foodtech Startup Challenge**, organised by Gulfood and DMCC in partnership with the India Middle East Agri-Alliance (IMEAA), culminated on day five of the show, with Ahmed Bin Sulayem, Executive Chairman and CEO, DMCC, commenting: “The World Agri-FoodTech Startup Challenge, organised by DMCC in partnership with Gulfood and the India Middle East Agri-Alliance, made its debut at Gulfood 2026, underlining the scale and maturity of global food-tech innovation. With hundreds of startups participating in this inaugural edition—and a cash prize of USD 135,000, the largest of its kind globally—the challenge showcased commercially focused solutions spanning next-generation ingredients, sustainable food systems, and applied agri-technology. DMCC remains committed to translating such innovation into tangible trade outcomes by supporting high-potential startups to scale and grow from Dubai, while strengthening the emirate’s position as a leading global hub for food security, innovation, and agri-food trade.”

Two Mega Venues, One Integrated Trade Engine

Strong buyer participation from major retailers, distributors and food-service operators reinforced Gulfood's position as the industry's most effective buyer-seller platform, with **Awad Ahmed, Executive Chairman, Vendorr**, stating: *"Gulfood continues to play a critical role in our business. The expansion across Dubai World Trade Centre and Dubai Exhibition Centre has significantly enhanced supplier discovery and meeting efficiency. The Big Deal Hub in particular has been instrumental in connecting us with both existing partners and new suppliers, turning conversations into real commercial opportunities."*

Returning national pavilions further underscored Gulfood's pull as a global convening point, with **Mr Elisha Tham, Group Business Development Director, Yeo Hiap Seng International Pte Ltd**, commenting: *"We are delighted to be returning to the exhibition as part of the Singapore Pavilion after a 10-year hiatus, and to be part of the inaugural opening at Dubai Expo City. The energy was electrifying and reinforced Gulfood's role as a truly global platform for collaboration and growth."*

New Markets, Global Expansion, Real Trade Outcomes

The 2026 edition also welcomed first-time participation from **Ghana, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Maldives, Rwanda, Slovakia, Sweden and Uganda**, paving the way for measurable trade outcomes. **Kazakhstan's debut alone generated export and investment agreements worth \$335.4 million**, reinforcing Gulfood's role as a launchpad for national trade agendas.

Hon. Dr Monica Musenero Masanza, Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, Government of Uganda, said: *"Our first participation at Gulfood has enabled Ugandan exhibitors to connect directly with international markets. The response from buyers has been extremely encouraging and we are confident this exposure will significantly strengthen Uganda's global market access."*

The 2026 edition also marked a decisive step in Gulfood's global expansion strategy with the announcement of **Gulfood360 Africa/Kenya**, set to be held in **Nairobi from 4-6 May 2027**. Launched under the unified endorsement of Kenya's Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, our leading government partner - the Agriculture and Food Authority (AFA) and the Office of the Special Envoy on Technology, **Gulfood360 Africa/Kenya** will act as a gateway to the wider African market.

Gulfood 2027 Editions

Building on its strongest commercial edition to date, **Gulfood will return from 15-19 March 2027**, with an expanded mandate to unlock new markets, deepen buyer engagement and deliver even greater global trade outcomes for the food and beverage industry. The inaugural **Gulfood360 Africa/Kenya** is set to be held in **Nairobi from 4-6 May 2027**, signalling a new era of food trade as Nairobi opens the door to the wider African market.

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About Gulfood

Gulfood 2027, taking place from 15 - 19 March, marks the 32nd edition of the world's largest and most influential F&B sourcing and innovation event. With 8,500+ exhibitors, 195 countries, 280,000+ sqm across



15 –19 MARCH 2027

DUBAI WORLD TRADE CENTRE & DUBAI EXHIBITION CENTRE, EXPO CITY

Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) and Dubai Exhibition Centre (DEC) at Expo City Dubai, Gulfood 2027 reinforces Dubai's position as the global headquarters of food trade and food intelligence.

Sources:

- 1 - [Top Ten Food and Beverage Trends 2025. Our top trend for 2025](#)
- 2 - [Food and Beverage Market Size, Share & 2030 Trends Report](#)
- 3 - [Navigating the Future: How UAE Food Distributors Are Transforming the Middle East Supply Chain – Dubai's Trusted Global Food Distributor and Service Expert](#)

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