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Land O'Lakes, Inc. Issues Drone Challenge to Tech Innovators

Land O'Lakes Prize offers up \$150,000 to help make drones more useable for farmers

ARDEN HILLS, Minn. (Feb. 16, 2017)—Land O'Lakes, Inc. is calling on innovators from the tech industry to enter the Land O'Lakes Prize: Drone Challenge, a crowdsourcing competition designed to develop proposed solutions that enable scalable, autonomous drone usage in precision agriculture. A prize of \$140,000 will be awarded to a grand prize winner who is found to meet all the requirements of the challenge, and two \$5,000 prizes are available to two runners up. Winners will retain intellectual property rights to the solutions they develop to help farmers use drone technology more effectively.

In connection with [HeroX](#), which democratizes the innovation model of XPRIZE through a platform and process that can lead to breakthrough innovation, Land O'Lakes, a Fortune-200 farm-to-fork cooperative, hopes to surface valuable, user-friendly drone solutions that will enable farmers to make better decisions for their crops as they work to produce more food to feed more people. Today's drone solutions require a great deal of time and effort in the data collection and processing workflow, which greatly decreases the desire and ability of farmers to tap into the potential benefits.

"We're offering the Land O'Lakes Prize to accelerate the development of drones for the ag industry. We believe with a few more years of work and the direction we're providing, backed by insights from [our network of 300,000](#) farmers, we can create a marketplace for drones that ultimately creates better solutions for the farming community," said Mike Macrie, chief information officer for Land O'Lakes.

As a farmer-owned cooperative, Land O'Lakes offers its member-owners a rich Ag Tech portfolio through its [Geosys](#) and [WinField® United](#) businesses, including tools like [R7® by WinField](#). Combining this world class imagery and existing precision agriculture tools with an automated, scalable drone solution has the potential to provide even more valuable decision making data to farmers.

"Drones don't offer a good return on investment for farmers today," said Mike Vande Logt, EVP and COO for WinField United. "A farmer has to get to the field, launch the drone, take the pictures, pack up, download the data, stitch the images together, then figure out what the images are telling him...it's time consuming and the applications are difficult to use."

Innovators have until Aug. 1, 2017 to enter. The new drone hardware and software solutions being sought will solve critical issues for farmers. They will limit the need for human involvement in field data collection, decrease the time needed to access crop imagery and improve the ability for a farmer to make decisions based on field health data. Eligibility and complete guidelines are available here: <https://herox.com/LOLdrones>.

Working with judges from the University of Minnesota and WinField United ag tech experts, Land O'Lakes will invite finalists to attend a live demonstration event at an FAA approved test location. Performance at this live demonstration event will support the determination of prize winners.

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About Land O'Lakes, Inc.

Land O'Lakes, Inc., one of America's premier agribusiness and food companies, is a member-owned cooperative with industry-leading operations that span the spectrum from agricultural production to consumer foods. With 2015 annual sales of \$13 billion, Land O'Lakes is one of the nation's largest cooperatives, ranking 215 on the Fortune 500. Building on a legacy of more than 95 years of operation, Land O'Lakes today operates some of the most respected brands in agribusiness and food production including LAND O LAKES® Dairy Foods, Purina Animal Nutrition, WinField United and Land O'Lakes SUSTAIN®. The company does business in all 50 states and more than 60 countries. Land O'Lakes, Inc. corporate headquarters are located in Arden Hills, Minn.

About HeroX

Founded in 2013, HeroX exists at the intersection of crowdsourcing, competition and collaboration. The HeroX crowdsourcing platform brings together global communities of problem solvers to deliver breakthrough solutions to social, economic, and strategic challenges.