

For food security, invest in seeds, not selfies

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On Monday, during a [panel on food security](#), venture capitalist [Mark Kahn](#) made a bold request to his fellow investors, “Please stop investing in naked selfie apps.” What should they be investing in besides social media crazes like SnapChat and Instagram, according to the founding partner of Omnivore Partners? Food businesses.

But what does investing in food businesses actually mean and why is it important? Feeding the world’s 9 billion people will require new seed technologies, better data to monitor and track crops in the wake of climate change, and innovative food companies. There is a growing \$1 billion market of investable companies that are creating more effective and efficient food systems around the world.

[Kenneth Quinn](#), a former U.S. ambassador to Cambodia, kicked off the discussion with anecdotes about Norman Borlaug, the agricultural pioneer and Nobel laureate who launched the “Green Revolution” in the 1960s by breeding wheat that produced more grain than conventional varieties yet was resistant to disease and pests. Borlaug is considered “the man who saved a billion lives.” Who will be the next Borlaug? Or more realistically, the next three or four Borlaugs, given the amount of the world’s population that is currently identified as “food insecure.”

Nigerian Agricultural Minister [Akinwumi Adesina](#) discussed how his government is trying to help fund the next great pioneer by creating incentives for investors to support small and medium-sized food businesses. Under his efforts, nearly \$4 billion of private capital has flowed into the country’s agricultural and food sectors.

Panelist [Doron Gal](#), CEO of Kalima, is giving Borlaug a run for his title, with his company creating new seeds that can greatly increase yields and lessen the need for resources like land and water to get these yields.

Panelists outlined the need for more technological innovation and more financial capital to support these new companies and entrepreneurs. Together, the public and private sectors can address food security, create new business and jobs, support economic growth, and hopefully give naked selfie apps some real competition for venture capital.