

## Popular scientific project description for project funded by Ekhagastiftelsen

Popular scientific project description is to be submitted within 2 months of project grant.

Application number:	2025-233
Project title:	<b>INNOWILD: NATURAL BIOSTIMULANTS AND BIOPROTECTANTS FROM WILD GRASSES</b>
Receiver of grant (name, address):	Salim Bourras, Department of Plant Biology, Almas allé 5 756 51, Uppsala, Sweden.
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Project start (yyyy-mm-dd): *	2026-01-01
Project end (yyyy-mm-dd): *	2028-12-31
By Ekhagastiftelsen granted sum:	<b>2 090 000SEK</b>

Project description: (200 - 300 words)

How can we grow food more sustainably in Sweden without relying on so many chemical fertilizers and pesticides? The InnoWILD project believes the answer lies hidden inside our local wild grasses.

Modern cereals like wheat, barley, and oats—staples of Swedish agriculture—have lost much of their natural ability to fight disease and stress. Their ancient wild relatives, however, such as Timothy grass, remain strong. Their secret? A rich community of tiny fungi called endophytes living inside their tissues, acting as a natural immune system.

Modern farming has unfortunately depleted these beneficial microbes from our crops. InnoWILD is on a "microbe rescue mission" across Sweden. We will collect hundreds of these unique endophytes from wild grasses like Meadow fescue, Cocksfoot, and Timothy grass. We will then test them as natural 'bioprotectants' (protecting from stress/disease) and 'biostimulants (boosting growth) for our cereals. In doing, so InnoWILD will build the first and unique Swedish national library of microbes helpful for agriculture, ensuring that this project will result in a 'tresor' resource that will help Swedish agriculture for decades to come.

The goal is to find the right natural communities of fungi that can be reintroduced to our crops. By learning from nature, this project aims to develop greener, safer alternatives to chemicals. We're not just looking for a single quick fix; we want to build long-lasting, durable solutions that restore biodiversity to our farms, helping to protect our environment and make our food production 'nature smart' and truly sustainable for the future.

\* Dates for project start and end should be the dates for which the grant is received (Not dates for total project if longer than period for which grant is received)

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