Giving Green

Renaissance Philanthropy

Grantee Spotlight: Alternative Protein Rescue Fund

The Giving Green Fund is awarding a restricted grant to Renaissance Philanthropy for its Alternative Protein Rescue Fund, which turns assets—including biological artifacts, tacit knowledge, and data—from failed alternative protein companies into public goods. The program is part of Renaissance Philanthropy's portfolio of independent projects.

The program's work falls within our philanthropic strategy of scaling alternative proteins. Please see Giving Green's strategy report for more information, including potential risks and co-benefits, recommended sub-strategies, theory of change, funding need, and key uncertainties.

Last updated: October 2026

What Is the Alternative Protein Rescue Fund?

The Alternative Protein Rescue Fund was established in 2026 to preserve the scientific knowledge and assets from alternative protein companies that are ceasing operations. It focuses mainly on cell lines and accompanying datasets, but also seeks to preserve tacit knowledge from outgoing company scientists. It is housed in Renaissance Philanthropy, a collection of initiatives to increase ambition in science, technology, and innovation.

What Are We Funding, and How Could It Help Address Climate Change?

A contraction in private capital has forced the first wave of alternative protein companies to cease operations. Salvaging cell lines, datasets, growth media recipes, and other assets from these companies and making them freely accessible to researchers and innovators could provide the industry with millions of dollars of intellectual property (IP) and reduce barriers to entry for future advancements.

Our grant contributes to the program's first year of rescues, which the program plans to use to test the viability of this theory of change. Planned activities include:

- Funding the rescue of biological assets such as cell lines and microbial strains, and freely distributing them to universities and companies.

- Organizing and open-sourcing datasets from closing companies, learning from and collaborating with Renaissance Philanthropy's larger portfolio of AI for Science programs.

- Capturing tacit knowledge to reduce barriers to IP uptake, for example, through exit interviews and bridging fellowships within academia and industry.

Why Do We Think the Alternative Protein Rescue Fund Will Use This Funding Well?

The fund's lead played a central role in the proof-of-concept acquisition that demonstrated the viability of asset rescue. While at Tufts University, the fund's lead and the Good Food Institute (GFI) acquired SCiFi Foods' bovine cell lines at a heavily discounted price, compared to the cost of resources to develop cell lines. Within one month, they received over 30 requests from academia and industry to use the acquired cell lines. In 2026, they deepened the fund's theory of change to be inclusive of the tacit knowledge that supports IP and teed up several more potential acquisitions. If successful, we also see potential for Renaissance Philanthropy to leverage this theory of change to support scientific progress in other sectors beyond alternative proteins.

The Alternative Protein Rescue Fund is currently fundraising to complete 10-15 acquisitions and preserve the corresponding tacit knowledge. It plans to continue working with trusted partners like GFI, and has a strong prioritization framework to identify the most impactful opportunities. We are excited about the fund's focus on providing open-access data for AI models, given that this has been highlighted as a key bottleneck limiting AI's utility in cultivated meat development.

Based on its success with previous acquisitions, strong partnerships, and broad connections across the innovation landscape, we think the fund is well positioned to execute further impactful acquisitions.

We publish grant spotlights to offer transparency to Giving Green Fund donors and resources for those interested in the impact strategies each grant supports. Giving Green believes our Top Climate Nonprofits have the greatest impact potential for large, unrestricted gifts. For several reasons, we also disburse and recommend grants to other organizations surfaced through our research process for work that we believe is at least as impactful as grants to our top recommendations.

This is a non-partisan analysis (study or research) and is provided for educational purposes.

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