Source: thekitchenhub.com

Israeli Food-Tech Delegation Visits New York

Fung Global Retail & Technology attended an event featuring the Israeli Food-Tech Delegation in New York City. The event was hosted by the Israel Economic Mission, which is responsible for initiating strategic partnerships with foreign companies and organizations, and Israel-based food technology incubator The Kitchen FoodTech Hub. Founded in 2015, The Kitchen provides seed funding and mentorship to early-stage ventures operating in all areas of the food and beverage value chain.

1) Amir Zaidman, VP of Business Development for The Kitchen, kicked off the event by discussing trends and challenges in the food industry and providing an overview of the program and the presenting startup companies.

2) Zaidman discussed the type of solutions The Kitchen is trying to address. The incubator's focus areas include improving agricultural processes, supply chain technologies, efficient food processing, sensors for food safety and quality, prolonged shelf life and reduction of food spoilage, smart packaging, improved nutritional profiles, and reduction of environmental footprint.

3) Eight startup companies presented at the event: AseptoRay, DouxMatok, Flying Spark, Inno-Bev, OlfaGuard, ShakeUp, Unispectral and Yofix Probiotics.

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The incubator was initiated by the Strauss Group, Israel's second-largest food manufacturer. Companies apply to join an 18–24-month program and receive a $500,000 initial investment. Because the incubator operates under the Incubators Program of Israel, the Israeli government provides conditional grants of up to 50% of the initial investment.

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Amir Zaidman, VP of Business Development for The Kitchen, kicked off the event by discussing trends and challenges in the food industry and providing an overview of the program and the presenting startup companies. Zaidman discussed the type of solutions The Kitchen is trying to address. The incubator's focus areas include improving agricultural processes, supply chain technologies, efficient food processing, sensors for food safety and quality, prolonged shelf life and reduction of food spoilage, smart packaging, improved nutritional profiles, and reduction of environmental footprint. The overall goal, according to Zaidman, is to disrupt the global food system, making it more productive, affordable, sustainable and healthy.

The Kitchen FoodTech Hub: Participating Startups

Below, we highlight the eight startup companies that presented their solutions at the event.

ASEPTORAY™
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AseptoRay has developed an ecofriendly way to pasteurize drinks without using heat. Motti Koren, Business Unit Director, said that some 117 billion drinks are pasteurized globally each year. All of this pasteurization requires a significant amount of energy. Traditional pasteurization makes beverages and foods safer, but also damages beneficial elements such as probiotics, vitamins and minerals. Instead of heat, AseptoRay uses ultraviolet light to kill bacteria in liquids. UV-ray pasteurization is already used in the bottled water industry, but UV light cannot penetrate colored and opaque liquids. AseptoRay's technology allows UV-ray pasteurization to be used for nontransparent beverages. Koren said the technology increases food safety, quality and shelf life while using 73% less energy. The company is currently running pilot tests at PepsiCo's development center in Chicago and at a large juice-manufacturing plant in Spain.

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DouxMatok has developed a solution that reduces the amount of sugar and salt consumed in food and beverages without compromising taste. Scientific research is increasingly showing that too much sugar can pose serious health risks, ranging from diabetes to heart disease, according to DouxMatok's CTO, Alejandro Marabi. The company has found a way to attach sugar molecules to tiny silica, which increases the surface size of the particles and exposes the taste receptors on the tongue to more of the sweet taste. The redesign involves adjusting the shape of sugar molecules to deliver the same sweetness, but with a lower amount of actual sugar. Marabi claims the solution enables the use of 20%–50% less sugar and salt in multiple applications, while retaining identical taste and sensory profiles, with no aftertaste. The company is raising a $7.5 million series A funding round ahead of an international marketing rollout aimed for mid-2018.

Flying Spark produces fruit fly larvae as a healthier and sustainable alternative to animal protein for human consumption. According to Cofounder and CEO Eran Gronich, insect protein is cholesterol free, has a great omega-3 to omega-6 ratio, and is free of hormones, antibiotics and pesticides. Fruit flies are highly rich in iron, calcium and magnesium. They have a short lifecycle and an impressive body mass growth rate, making them a very affordable animal protein source. In addition, insects have a minimal ecological footprint; they utilize almost no water or land and, most importantly, do not contribute to waste or greenhouse gas emissions. The company is building out its facility in Israel to grow fruit fly larvae and process them into protein powders.

Inno-Bev develops and produces beverages and nutritional supplements as an alternative to coffee and energy drinks. The company has developed a drink with no added caffeine, chemicals or any stimulants that can impact heart rate or blood pressure. The drink, called WakeUp, is a lemongrass-flavored beverage with patent-protected ingredients, including guarana, ginkgo, elderberry and a unique apple sugar with a low glycemic index that reduces sugar fluctuation. The company won the "Best Functional Drink" award at the annual Drinktec beverage and liquid food industry expo in Munich, Germany, and has partnered with Israeli airline El Al, according to Inno-Bev CEO Eli Faraggi.

OlfaGuard is a food-safety bio-nanotech startup that is developing an electronic solution for smelling pathogens on food. The company is building sensors to identify microbial volatile organic compounds in foods and has been able to identify these different compounds for salmonella and *E. coli*. The current solutions for detecting pathogens in food are time consuming and require qualified laboratory technicians, according to Pierre Salameh, Founder and CEO. OlfaGuard's sensor can be operated by someone who is not a professional scientist and it does not require a lab, as it can be used by simply pointing the sensor at the food. According to Salameh, pathogen detection accounted for a little more than 38% of the $10.5 billion food-safety testing market in 2015.

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ShakeUp produces a line of low-fat, low-carb ice cream products. The company's products are healthy and allow consumers with dietary constraints, as well as the ever-growing number of health-conscious consumers, to enjoy ice cream, according to Cofounder Tsachee Zilberfarb. The company is targeting dairy manufacturers, ice cream brand holders, and grocery and convenience stores.

Unispectral is developing camera sensors with next-generation imaging technology to replace the current color-sensing technology found in traditional cameras. According to the company, its camera sensor is able to provide two to four times higher resolution, a stabilized image, enhanced color, improved low-light performance and hyperspectral imaging capability. The sensor is being developed to be implemented into smartphones, potentially allowing cameras to analyze the chemical components of objects without a person needing to input any physical specimens. A farmer, for example, could use hyperspectral imaging to examine the components of a strawberry to determine its ripeness and nutrient levels. The sensor will be applicable to a wide range of use cases such as wearables, digital health and medical imaging, and industrial and agricultural applications. The company recently closed a series A funding round of $7.5 million.

Yofix Probiotics produces Yofix, a nondairy, probiotic food based on a blend of cereals, nuts and seeds. The company's first product, a vegan yogurt, is ready for market after three years of research and trials. The nondairy yogurt style developed by Yofix consists of only natural ingredients, with no artificial additives. The company is currently focused on a marketing pilot due to launch in Israel in the third quarter of 2017. According to CEO Ronen Lavee, the company has several products in the pipeline, including drinkable yogurt, frozen yogurt and an ice cream base. Yofix is targeting dairy manufacturers that are interested in diversifying their business into nondairy foods as well as food distributors that focus on the health food market.

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