

Mars announces 6 Food Start-ups in Inaugural Accelerator Program

23 July 2019 | News | By Kalyani Sharma

Participants will join a four-month mentorship program with industry experts and receive grants up to \$50,000



Mars, Incorporated has selected the inaugural class for their SEEDS of CHANGE™ Accelerator program, designed to help early stage food-focused companies fast-track growth and live their purpose to build a healthier and more sustainable future. The six selected companies are Brooklyn Delhi, Fora, NoBull Burger, Oxtale, Prommus, and True Made Foods

The final SEEDS of CHANGE™ Accelerator class was carefully selected from over 200 applicants. The applicants were narrowed down to 10 finalists, who were then invited to Chicago on Friday, July 19 to present in front of a live audience and comprised of Stephen Badger, Chairman of the Board for Mars, Incorporated; Fiona Dawson, global President of Mars Food, Multisales and Global Customers; Rohan Oza, an iconic brand builder and recent "guest shark" on Shark Tank; Jarek Swigulski, Regional President, Mars Food North America; James Nixon, CEO of JKR Ventures; Clarence Mak, Global Chief Marketing Sales & Innovation Officer, Mars Food; Natalie Shmulik, CEO of The Hatchery and Nick Green, Co-Founder and CEO of reduced-cost natural and organic food online retailer Thrive Market. The selection day event fittingly took place at The Hatchery, a non-profit food and beverage incubator dedicated to helping local entrepreneurs build and grow successful businesses.

The panel selected these six US participants out of the search that focused on companies that share the Mars Food purpose – Better Food Today. A Better World Tomorrow. – through world flavors, plant-based eating, easy-meal solutions, responsible food and creating with care. The final six companies include:

- Brooklyn Delhi creates delicious and nutritious condiments and sauces for modern American meals inspired by the timeless culinary traditions of India.
- Fora makes non-dairy butter, Faba Butter, and soon to release future products with a taste, functionality and convenience superior to their animal-based counterparts.

- NoBull Burger is a line of hand-crafted, premium veggie burgers that uses only real-food, high-quality ingredients to make an exceptional tasting plant-based veggie burger.
- Oxtale partners with acclaimed chefs from each cuisine it represents to craft delicious, convenient "starters" to help people cook traditional dishes in under 30 minutes.
- Prommus is bringing purpose to traditional Middle Eastern cuisine, starting with a delicious line of value-added hummus while helping provide school meals to children in food-insecure areas of the world.
- True Made Foods turned America's favorite empty-calorie staples—Ketchup, BBQ Sauce and Sriracha—into superfoods by replacing added sugar with real vegetables.

Gary Arora, Mars SEEDS of CHANGE™ Accelerator Lead said, "The world is changing at a rapid pace with consumer needs evolving and new approaches and technologies transforming business. The SEEDS of CHANGE™ Accelerator acts as a catalyst to help forward-thinking innovators bring their purpose-driven food-focused visions to life. And, in turn, we will gain valuable insight to further enable the world we want tomorrow."

In addition to a grant of up to \$50,000 (U.S.), each start-up will undertake a tailored four-month program to scale its operations. The program, led by Arora, global lead of open innovation at Launchpad for Mars, will give the start-ups access to a panel of industry expert mentors. These include Jarek Swigulski and JKR, as well as start-up incubator and food optimizer MISTA; leading global ingredients solutions company, Ingredion, and venture capital firms such as Cleveland Avenue and Rocana Ventures

"We were impressed by the quality of pitches prepared and presented by each of the 10 finalists, and it made our decision a very difficult one," said Arora. "We selected the final six companies for this first cohort because we thought we were best-suited to meet their specific needs, they are at the forefront of shaping the meals of tomorrow, and they have strong alignment to our mission. We are proud of each of the 10 finalists and look forward to seeing their continued success."

The other four finalists included:

- Crafty Counter makes easy-to-prepare vegetable packed foods that solve lunch or dinner for a family in a pinch and/or adopting "flexitarian" diets.
- Renewal Mill is on a journey to create a new circular economy of food by upcycling byproducts from food manufacturing into high-quality ingredients and products.
- Splendid Spoon provides convenient and healthy meals that are chock full of clean, nutrient-dense ingredients and always 100% plant-based.
- Wild For is a superfood company making healthy, tasty foods based on the ancient Ethiopian grain, teff.