

Collaboration, the Secret to Building a Vibrant Foodtech Ecosystem

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ABSTRACT:

Food is an integral part of an individual's cultural identity. Food serves a central role in society with its ability to bring people together and bridge cultural divides. As food serves such an important role in society, and the global challenges being placed on the food system, the people working to bring new innovation to the food system must work with earnest and respect. Limitations on world's food resources are becoming clearer, the food of the future will be driven by innovations that reduce environmental impact, i.e cultured meat, single cell proteins, or byproduct upcycling to healthier products. Transition the food system to a sustainable path will create new opportunities and require collaboration across industries and sectors. The aspiring entrepreneurs who are willing to take the risk of bringing transformational innovations to market, can emerge from anywhere, including academia or industry. These entrepreneurs will need a supportive environment to thrive, which can be achieved through the collaboration of industry, academia and government. An example of a successful collaboration is illustrated by SPACE-F, Thailand's first global foodtech incubator and accelerator program. SPACE-F was formed as a collaboration between the National Innovation Agency of Thailand (NIA), Thai Union Group PCL, and Mahidol University, leveraging the strengths of each partner to create a supportive startup ecosystem. The program brings together domestic and international startups with deeptech solutions in the foodtech space. Annually a cohort of startups is selected that are at various stages of development, ranging from early stage (incubator) to scale-up candidates (accelerator). We have created a community where the entrepreneurs teach one another about the local culture, advise on how to grow their businesses and this community has led to cocreation of new products amongst the startups. SPACE-F has built a collaborative environment for startups over the past four years, with 55 startups graduating from the program, that have gone to raise over \$65 Million USD in funding. The success of the startups in the program has attracted additional corporate partners to participate in the program including; Thai Beverage PCL, Lotte Fine Chemical with more to be announced. SPACE-F will continue to grow this collaborative ecosystem, bringing together government, industry and academia to support innovative entrepreneurs' journey to their concepts of the future of food to your plate.

KEYWORDS:

SPACE-F, Startups, Sustainability, Future Food, Innovation