Press release

UrbanFarmers and DistalMotion win venture kick

St. Gall/Zurich/Lausanne, March 30, 2012. – The new winners of venture kick come from Zurich and Lausanne: UrbanFarmers AG is developing a new urban agricultural system; DistalMotion is developing a cost-effective, minimally invasive surgical treatment for prostate cancer. Both start-ups were able to raise their overall prize money to the total of CHF 130'000 by winning the third and last round of venture kick.

The world population is rapidly growing, as is the realization that more has to be done for a greener environment with less emission, especially in the light of public health considerations. Up to 80% of the retail price asked by supermarkets for a salad goes to covering logistical and transportation costs. UrbanFarmers would like to revolutionize the current system by producing fresh fish, fruits and vegetables in a sustainable way and to be an integral part of the «future cities» that are in planning for the century to come.

Fresh food from the roofs of the cities

UrbanFarmers AG is an agriculture clean-tech start-up and spin-off from the ZHAW Wädenswil founded in 2011 by Roman Gaus und Andreas Graber. Their goal is to provide cost-efficient, sustainable and process-controlled systems and solutions to grow food in the city. The benefit is healthy, naturally grown food, produced in a safe environment, directly at the point of consumption, eliminating transportation and CO2 emissions in its distribution. The system is based on the Aquaponics technique that combines Fish breeding (Aquaculture) and Vegetable Garden in Water (Hydroponic). The core of Urban Farmers’ innovation is the control system to ensure productivity, safety and efficiency and to automate the nutrient balance between fish feed, fish population and plant cultures. The FARM Pilot Project is based on the LokDepot in Basel Dreispitz which will serve as the worldwide first ‘proof of concept’ of this system and will be a platform for further research & development.

A new kind of cost-effective surgery for prostate cancer

According to the American Cancer Society, 1 in 6 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during their lifetime. Today there good methods for performing this surgery, but the preferred robotic and minimally invasive method is only available in the context of large hospitals because of cost-efficiency considerations. About 85 % of hospitals offer only the open surgery procedure, which implies high hospital costs because of prolonged stays for the patients and an extremely invasive incision for them. Because of this, many smaller hospitals have stopped doing prostatectomies, as they refer them to larger medical establishments. The EPFL spin-off DistalMotion is developing a surgery tool that makes minimally invasive prostatectomies, with similar clinical outcomes, affordable for all hospitals. Their space saving co-dexterity machine is just one tenth of the cost of a huge robotic surgery system. The winner of venture leader 2011, CEO and Co-Founder of DistalMotion Ricardo Beira and COO and Co-Founder Lionel Flaction want to finish the first prototype in six months. With the money won at venture kick, the young entrepreneurs want to further promote their innovation.
in order to raise more financing capital, so as to be ready for market entry by 2015.

Final quotes for the final kick

Roman Gaus, Managing Partner and Co-Founder of UrbanFarmers: «We are very happy to have won the final kick. Our vision of urban agriculture might very well be 20 years too early for the mass market, but I think we convinced the jury with our range of projects in the pipeline, our top-class team and our track record of success.» Roman Gaus complements: «We are also thankful for the first successful rounds of venture kick, which helped develop an enormous buzz, enabling us to raise our first financing steps.» Ricardo Beira of DistalMotion: «venture kick has been one of the most valuable entrepreneurial programs in which we have been involved so far. More than the prize money we got, the feedback received from the venture kick team, jury members and other concurrent teams has been fundamental to further develop our business.»

More about venture kick

The private initiative venture kick is financed by the GEBERT RÜF STIFTUNG, the ERNST GÖHNER foundation, the OPO foundation, the AVINA STIFTUNG and FONDATION 1796. The project is managed by the IFJ Institut für Jungunternehmen in St. Gall. The objective of the initiative is to double the amount of startups originating from Swiss universities and technical colleges. The program is open to business visionaries which are active at a Swiss university, technical college or higher institution of learning (students, doctoral-students, professors, etc.), which haven't founded their company yet. Candidates can apply at any time.

Since its inception in the autumn of 2007, venture kick has awarded over 8 million francs in prize money and from an original pool of more than 950 candidatures, supported and coached 219 spin-off projects which can trace their origins back to Swiss universities. Our efforts have resulted in the creation of over 155 highly innovative companies, which have created 1,600 sustainable jobs. Furthermore, the supported startups have been able to attract equity, loans, support and prize money to the total tune of more than 230 million francs.

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The former winners of the venture kick’s CHF 130’000

- Bettina Ernst, Preclin Biosystems, ETH Zürich (Biotech), www.preclinbiosystems.com
- Manuel Aschwanden, Optotune, ETH Zürich (Optik), www.optotune.ch
- Patrizia Fischer, Pearltec, ETH Zürich (Medtech), www.pearltec.ch
- Martin Bartholet, Celeroton, ETH Zürich (Elektromechanik), www.celeroton.ch
- Marc Gitzinger, BioVersys, ETH Zürich (Biotech), www.bioversys.com
- Sadik Hafizovic, Zurich Instruments, ETH Zürich (Elektronik), www.zhinst.com
- Wolfgang Moritz, InSphere, Uni Zürich (Biotech), www.insphero.com
- Stefan Tuchschiend, Virtamed, ETH Zürich (Medtech), www.virtamed.com
- Barbara Yersin, Minsh, EPF Lausanne (Internet), www.minsh.com
- Stephane Doutiaux, Poken, IMD Lausanne (Elektronik/Internet), www.doyoupoken.com
- Jochen Mundinger, RouteRank, EPF Lausanne (Internet), www.routerank.com
- Giorgio Pietromaggiore, labseed, EPF Lausanne (Medtech), www.labseed.com
- Vincent Schickel, Prediggo, EPF Lausanne (Internet), www.prediggo.com
- Florian Kowalke, Aiducation International, ETH Zürich (NPO), www.aiducation.org
- Kristin Kapitza, StreamForge, ETH Zürich (Internet), www.streamforge.com
- Nicolas Burri, Stereotools, EPF Lausanne (MedTech), www.stereotools.com
- Christophe Canales, Imina Technologies, EPF Lausanne (Nanotech), www.imina.ch
- Ralph Schiess, ProteoMediX, ETH Zürich (Biotech), www.proteomedix.ch
- Christof Roduner, Mirasense, ETH Zürich (Internet), www.mirasense.com
- Christoph Gebald, Climeworks, ETH Zürich (Cleantech), www.climeworks.com
- Michael Dupertuis, Geroco, HES-S0 Valais (Cleantech/Internet), www.geroco.com
- Marcus Aebi, Malcisbo, ETH Zürich (Biotech), www.malcisbo.com
- Jean-Christophe Zufferey, SenseFly, EPF Lausanne (Elektronik), www.sensefly.com
- Alfredo E. Bruno, AdvancedOsteotomy Tools, Uni Basel (Medtech), www.aot-swiss.com
- Francesco Dell’Endice, QualySense, Uni Zürich (Industrie), www.qualysense.com
- Nicolas Durand, Abionic, EPF Lausanne (Medtech), www.abionic.com
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- Marc Spafford, deliciousTaste AG, FHNW (Food/E-Commerce), www.delicioustaste.ch
- Martin Odersky, Scala SolutionsSàrl, EPF Lausanne(ICT), www.scalasolutions.com
- Susanne Wechsler, Uni St. Gallen, BOOKBRIDGE (Social), www.bookbridge.org
- Dominik Bell, Aeon Scientific, ETH Zürich (Medtech), www.aeon-scientific.com
- David Bonzon, Pandora Underwater Equipment, EPFL (Elektronik), www.pandora-uwe.com
- Amin Shokrollahi, Kandou Technologies, EPF Lausanne (ICT), www.kandou.com
- Nils A. Reinke, Winterthur Instruments, ZHAW (Elektromechanik), www.winterthurinstruments.com
- Timo Hafner, Gastros AG, Uni St. Gallen(Food / Materials), www.gastros.ch
- Andreas Brühlhart, Bcomp, Hochschule für Wirtschaft Freiburg (Materials), www.bcomp.ch
- Matthias Haussmann, Uepaa(!!), ETH Zürich (ICT / Mobile) www.uepaa.ch
- Serguei Okhonin, ActLight, EPF Lausanne (Energy), www.act-light.com
- Andreas Graber, UrbanFarmers, ZHAW (Cleantech), www.urbanfarmers.ch
- Ricardo Beira, DistalMotion, EPF Lausanne (Medtech), www.distalmotion.com