
New UN Report on Global Food Wastage is encouraging for CombaGroup's Business Idea

Zug/Molondin, 30 September 2013 – *According to the recent UN report, "Food Wastage Footprint: Impacts on Natural Resources", approximately one-third of all food produced for human consumption in the world is lost or wasted each year. This wastage occurs at every step along the value chain. In the case of lettuce, one of the best-selling vegetables in the world, wastage issues play a big role in production and processing. Around half of the produce is lost during cultivation, transport, harvesting and packaging. CombaGroup, a young Swiss start-up, has developed an innovative, highly efficient and eco-friendly solution that significantly improves the logistics of supplying and distributing lettuce, by growing a high-quality product with a longer shelf-life close to consumers and all year round.*

Lettuce is traditionally grown on open fields and is thus exposed to climate risks and insects which necessitate the use of pesticides. By cultivating lettuce in a controlled greenhouse environment, CombaGroup eliminates these two issues. As a result, wastage during cultivation is minimized.

A second wastage problem occurs when the lettuce has to be transported hundreds of kilometers to packaging centers. In Europe this usually takes up to four days. CombaGroup grows lettuce directly on the client's site, thus disrupting the traditional value-chain, eliminating transportation and further cutting wastage.

Lastly, lettuce from traditional producers has to be washed intensively by packagers due to pesticides and soil residue. Here the loss rate is typically around 25%. CombaGroup's technology is based on a so-called "aeroponic system", a method for growing the plants in an air or moist environment instead of using soil. This method was optimized by NASA scientists who conducted extensive research on cultivation in a low gravity environment. Combined with much reduced use of pesticides, aeroponics leads to simpler and faster processing including washing and again, reduces wastage.

However, CombaGroup's method not only ensures higher resource efficiency and less wastage, it also guarantees fresher and cleaner lettuce. Consumers are increasingly worried about freshness, the germ-level and traces of pesticides in fresh produce. In the case of lettuce, this is especially important in the bagged and ready-to-use segment, which represents 30% of total lettuce consumption - especially in large markets such as France, UK and Germany. A recent test by Swiss consumer watchdog K-Tipp on packaged lettuce titled "Krankmachende Bakterien im Fertigsalat", came to the conclusion that only one out of 30 brands is worthy of the grade "good". The fact that this led to a vivid public debate is not surprising. By producing on site and using fewer

pesticides, CombaGroup enables packagers to provide cleaner and fresher products than those tested.

Having successfully tested their technology, CombaGroup will now set up a 500 m² pilot farm in collaboration with the Swiss packager Silvain & Co SA to test the viability of their production process on a larger scale. CombaGroup has mandated *investiere*, the leading Swiss startup investment platform for private investors, to help the company secure new funding for this project in Molondin, Vaud.

About CombaGroup

CombaGroup SA, with domicile in Molondin, Vaud, Switzerland, is developing and selling a cost-effective and eco-friendly solution for growing high-quality lettuce with a longer shelf-life. CombaGroup builds its high-tech, mechanized greenhouses right next to its clients - lettuce packagers in a first step, retailers and foodservice at a later stage – and provides them with a much fresher lettuce grown locally all year round. CombaGroup thus delivers a revolution in the supply and distribution of lettuce while considerably reducing the environmental impact. CombaGroup is now a 7 person-team, and agreements are already in place with leading packagers for market launch in Switzerland and France. CombaGroup won the Venture Kick prize this year and has just been elected one of the top 5 newcomers on the list of the 100 best Swiss Start-ups, ranking 32 overall.

About *investiere*

investiere is a community of about 3'000 top investors and industry experts focused on startup companies, as well as being one of Europe's leading online startup investment platforms. Since 2010, 20 outstanding startups have used *investiere* to raise funds from private investors who bring relevant industry expertise and networks. Using the platform, the community itself identifies the most promising investment opportunities which are then further reviewed by experts from the relevant industry. A final selection is made by the *investiere* team and its partners after a careful due diligence. Once approved by the *investiere* team, investors can directly choose a specific startup and become a shareholder with all voting and property rights provided by the law. *investiere* systematically combines private investors with selected lead investors as well as institutional co-investors. *investiere* is operated by Verve Capital Partners AG with domicile Switzerland.