

# GROW<sup>2</sup>ASIA

## CASE STUDY: CIRCLE HARVEST

Circle Harvest is Australia's largest insect protein farm, developing superfood products suitable for Western diets with 'invisible' insect proteins.



### BACKGROUND

Founder, Skye Blackburn is a food scientist and entomologist passionate about sustainable food systems. Skye started Australia's first insect protein farm in 2007 and has used her experience to develop a viable commercialisation model for insect protein farming and to develop an extensive array of make food products that make insect protein accessible via familiar foods such as pasta, snacks, and baking flours.

Skye applied to the GROW2Asia program to learn more about ASEAN markets, assess the viability of the export of the Circle Harvest range and assess regulatory requirements for her products in the region. After attending the market education sessions, Skye identified that South Korea, the Philippines, and Malaysia were best suited for Circle Harvest as they have more westernised diets with urbanised populations and high uptake of social media and eCommerce. These countries also had a growing interest in healthy and functional foods.

In Australia, Circle Harvest has launched into over 1000 school canteens nationally and has been educating the next generation about novel proteins, with over 1 million students participating in their Future Foods program. Skye was keen to learn more about the ASEAN insect protein landscape and to determine whether a similar focus on educating younger consumers would be a successful market entry strategy into the region.

### USING ECOMMERCE TO TEST THE MARKET

Building on the insights developed from the masterclasses, 1:1 coaching and Advisory Board sessions, Circle Harvest documented an Internationalisation Game Plan to grow the business into the region which included the launch of country-specific eCommerce channels and projected sales of \$10K per month in Japan and South Korea. During the program sales increased by 100% each month. Using eCommerce to test the market, Circle Harvest was also able to assess the viability of the brand for distribution into larger scale retail outlets with a distribution contract secure to supply to a chain of sustainable supermarkets in China.



"The Grow2Asia program has helped us identify the markets within Asia that best suit our products and develop a plan to execute this successfully. Before completing the program, I had no idea how variable launching products within different counties within Asia was. Learning about the nuances between countries has allowed us to hone our export efforts to the counties that will have our ideal customer persona."

**Skye Blackburn**

Founder, Circle Harvest



# CASE STUDY: CIRCLE HARVEST

Food Futures Company GROW2Asia Program

## KEY RESULTS

- ✓ 100% revenue growth per month during the program and 120% growth in online sales since completion
- ✓ Raised \$168,280 from 128 investors via equity crowdfunding
- ✓ Built relationships in various markets including international buyers across Asia; distributor and logistics in Japan, South Korea and China; negotiations underway with organic supermarket chain in Singapore



## WHAT IT TAKES TO BE 'EXPORT READY'

The last 12 months has seen the business preparing to be 'export ready' utilizing the information and internationalization road map they worked on as part of the GROW2Asia program. Since completing the program Circle Harvest's online sales have increased 120% and they currently hold over 95% of the edible insect market in Australia. While exhibiting at the 2023 Fine Food Australia as part of the Flavors of NSW, Circle Harvest made connections and had purchase enquiries from many international buyers from across Asia and beyond with large retailers and convenience stores showing interest in the products as well as smaller customers such as bars and pharmacies looking to stock the insect protein products.

More recently they are receiving enquiries from international buyers, particularly from Singapore where the regulations for products containing insect protein have recently relaxed. Circle Harvest have been approached by Little Farms, an organic and all-natural supermarket chain in Singapore which is popular with expats to stock their insect protein products. Currently there are no other insect powder functional food products on the shelves at Little Farms and Circle Harvest would be first-to-market in this category.



In 2022 Circle Harvest raised \$168,280 from 128 investors in an equity crowd funding raise with Birchall Capital. This raise was popular with current customers and ambassadors of the brand as lifetime discounts for the products were also included. Circle Harvest smashed their goal of \$100,000 and will use the funds raised to scale up their operations required to expand on a global scale. Circle Harvest's rising B2C online sales in ASEAN markets is having a positive flow-on effect with new retail partners in country who can see traction and exposure which validates the insect protein product's market potential.

*An exclusive program developed by leading agrifood innovation systems design firm Food Futures Company in partnership with global agrifood tech impact accelerator GROW to help Australian scale ups capture the opportunity in Asia.*