

ASIA

Sustainability In Focus: Meet Asia's 30 Under 30 Food Entrepreneurs Working Towards A Cleaner And Healthier Future

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Latesha Randall, cofounder of Raglan Coconut Yoghurt. MARK HAMILTON FOR FORBES ASIA

Promoting healthy and sustainable eating habits is a goal that this year's 30 Under 30 Asia entrepreneurs in [The Arts category](#) are working towards—and the market is responding well to their ventures.

Latesha Randall is one of these entrepreneurs taking matters into her own hands. As demand surges for plant-based food, her company, Raglan Coconut Yoghurt, tagged by Deloitte as one of the fastest-growing companies in New Zealand, saw sales more than triple in 2019 from three years earlier.

Its start was by chance. In 2014, Randall made a batch of yogurt with coconut cream instead of dairy milk for her fiancé Seb Walter, who has a dairy allergy, at their home in the beach town of Raglan. With more than they could eat, Randall listed the extra jars for sale on a community Facebook page and had 60 responses in a day. Within six months, Randall and Walter were selling 1,000 jars a week, so they decided to turn these sales into a business.

Raglan Coconut Yoghurt produces 1.6 million 350g and 700g jars annually, which retail for between NZ\$8 and NZ\$14. The price point reflects the organic brand's ethos: Raglan Coconut Yoghurt says it pays a living wage, uses glass jars instead of plastic and offsets its carbon footprint with tree planting, among other sustainability initiatives.

The firm has already outgrown its current 220-square-meter space on Raglan's main street and is building a NZ\$2 million factory three times larger on the outskirts of town, with growth focused at home. About 700 stores stock Raglan's yogurt, mostly in New Zealand. Export markets have limited appeal, says Randall, who aims to keep the company's carbon footprint low. "We encourage people to eat locally so that doesn't add up." They see potential, however, in expanding into the Asia-Pacific region, where Pune, India-based market research firm Data Bridge expects the dairy-alternative food sector to grow roughly 11% a year to \$4.3 billion by 2025.



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Other fellow New Zealanders banking on a growing appetite for plant-based food are **Nicholas Harlow** and **Brittney Bryan**. The duo

cofounded Berkano Foods, a plant-based frozen and ready-to-eat meal manufacturer. Sold at supermarkets across the country and online, Berkano Foods' vegan meals include Thai chicken green curry, butter chicken, rigatoni bolognese and golden peanut satay tofu—where meat is replaced with plant-based ingredients.

With sustainability in mind, **Jonathan Ng** and **Chua Jian Yong** cofounded SinFooTech, a Singapore-based company focused on recycling waste byproducts in the food manufacturing industry. The company's latest patented innovation involves the bio-transformation of soy whey into an alcoholic beverage they've termed as Sachi. The drink launched earlier this year in Singapore and Southeast Asia.

Also in Singapore, **Lisa Tang** and **Chew Shian Kuah** cofounded Kausmo, a sustainability-focused restaurant backed by the Les Amis Group. The duo mainly utilize “aesthetically filtered foods,” defined as ingredients that are oddly shaped, oddly sized, overripe or over-stocked, and are focused on starting conversations on food norms and food waste at Kausmo. The 16-seat space allows Tang and Kuah to interact with their patrons and share more about the food served and the techniques involved.

Elsewhere in Asia, **Kazuma Kawagoe** in Japan cofounded CoCooking with **Taichi Isaku** in 2015 to hold culinary events and workshops. Currently, their main project, through its Tabete mobile app, is to reduce food waste by matching 210,000 users with some 500 restaurants, take-out food stores and bakeries that have excess food nearing expiration.





Kazuma Kawagoe and Taichi Isaku, cofounders of CoCooking. SUPPLIED PHOTO

India is catching up on the sustainable and healthy food habits as well. Falhari is an India-based F&B startup that packages and delivers fruit products, such as fresh fruit boxes, cold-pressed juices and yogurt on a subscription basis. Cofounded by **Gulshan Sharma**, the startup offers customized products based on a subscriber's needs or nutritional profile. With its own delivery network, Falhari ensures that a fruit box reaches the subscriber within 30 to 45 minutes of preparation. In 2019, Falhari won the CocaCola Golden Spoon Award for Most Admired Food and Grocery Innovation of the Year.

Meanwhile, **Pankaj Aswani** cofounded Coolberg, a zero alcohol beer brand based in India, to provide an alternative to alcoholic beverages. Available in seven different flavors, the drinks are packaged in glass bottles in a bid to be more environmentally friendly. In 2019, the company secured \$3.5 million in a Series A round led by RB Investments.

Additional reporting by Jennifer Wells.

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