

Edinburgh fledgling business attracts significant investment

A baby company born during its founder's Masters at University of Edinburgh has just attracted investment of £500,000 from Equity Gap, SIB and Edinburgh University's Old College.

This will allow the company to grow the team, build a new plant and expand production.

MiAlgae grows algae rich in omega-3 using co-products from the whisky distillation process. It then uses the micro algae as raw material for agricultural food products.

The company was founded by Douglas Martin when he was a Masters student at University of Edinburgh in 2015-16.

"This is a huge deal for us," said Martin. "This investment will fund the initial scale-up steps and de-risk our commercial facility. It certainly sets us on track to achieve our ambitions."



Shell LiveWIRE 2017 photography – Douglas Martin, Edinburgh, 2017

The £500,000 seed investment in MiAlgae follows a series of competition and funding successes including Scottish EDGE Young EDGE and Innovate UK, Shell LiveWIRE Young Entrepreneur of the Year. Martin is still in with a chance of winning a further £100,000 of funding in the Scottish EDGE competition which will be announced on 14 June.

Kerry Sharp, head of the Scottish Investment Bank, commented: "This is an exciting new equity investment for Scottish Enterprise into a company that has utilised the circular economy to make an innovative and valuable product. The funding round will also allow high value R&D employment opportunities to be created in rural Scotland with the roll out of the new pilot plant.

"A forward thinking, ambitious company, Scottish Enterprise has worked with MiAlgae since its very early stages of development helping it with innovation and financial readiness support, including a By Design grant which helped with the cost analysis of the pilot plant. I'd like to congratulate the team in securing this latest round of funding and look forward to continue working with Douglas and his team as they continue along their exciting growth journey."

Martin has been supported by LAUNCH.ed, the University's service for student entrepreneurs, since January 2016 when he was studying MSC Synthetic Biology and Biotechnology. LAUNCH.ed has helped him to develop and launch his business, apply and pitch for grants and competitions, and connect with mentors and investors.

Dr George Baxter, Chief Executive Officer of Edinburgh Innovations, the University's industry engagement service, which manages LAUNCH.ed, said: "It's wonderful to see investors show confidence in Douglas and MiAlgae. The innovation of his process and the way it will help the environment have great potential. His journey shows what is possible for our entrepreneurial students, and we're delighted to see MiAlgae reach this important milestone."

Fraser Lusty, Director at Business Angel Group Equity Gap, added: "We're delighted to lead the first scale round for MiAlgae alongside OCC and SIB. Douglas is an exceptional talent and has made remarkable progress in a novel solution for sustainable food production. We look forward to supporting

him and the company through this exciting next phase.”

Martin will be looking to expand the company’s production capacity 30-fold and will be expanding his team of two, to reach five.

Aquaculture is worth £1.8 billion a year to the Scottish economy, according to latest Scottish Government figures, but Martin’s ambition does not stop with aquaculture or Scotland.

“We’re looking at multiple industries in the supply side, multiple industries at the product side, then diversification into multiple products beyond feeds,” said Martin. “There are lots of things we can do with our products.”