Startups Saving Workers’ Bodies and Developing Long-Lasting Flavors Both Win CHF 150,000

Founders of Auxivo and microPow win the highest level of Venture Kick support, with technologies that build on biomechanics research to take the strain for hard-working humans and develop an additive-free, micro-structured delivery system for food.

**Auxivo AG: wearable support systems**

Work-related injuries cost employers in Europe €30 billion every year. Auxivo co-founder and CEO Volker Bartenbach, who has a PhD in exoskeleton robotics from ETH Zurich, is developing – together with co-founder Michael Stucky and Oliver Steffen – a light exoskeleton for workers who regularly lift and carry loads of as much as 30 kg. By reducing the load on backs and joints, he aims to cut the risk of exhaustion, accidents, chronic injuries, and early retirements.

Exoskeletons have been researched for more than 20 years and are ripe for commercialization, says Bartenbach. In the past people tried to make ‘Iron Man suits’ for every type of work, which resulted in heavy devices too expensive to sell. Auxivo’s innovation is a stripped-down, passive device – without any motors – that’s light enough to be practical and comfortable for workers to wear all day, and cheap enough for companies to equip each employee.

Auxivo used Venture Kick’s support to conduct field tests with industry partners in the logistics and construction industries. The final tranche of pre-seed funding will help the startup hire more team members and refine its first product before launch in early 2020. Auxivo is currently raising a seed round to fund industrialization, certification and sales.

Venture Kick’s training camp with other entrepreneurs helped too: “The Kickers Camps are intense, and really valuable. You are forced to ask yourself the critical questions, which consciously or subconsciously you may have ignored until then,” says Bartenbach. “As a PhD you have deep technical knowledge. The camps help you identify the weak spots in the business aspects of your project.”

[www.auxivo.com](http://www.auxivo.com)

**microPow AG: enhancing natural aromas and flavors**

Consumers today demand food that is natural, additive-free and convenient. That’s often a contradiction, as the aromas and flavors used in convenience products are especially sensitive and volatile, which means chemicals are added to preserve their quality during food processing, storage and distribution.

MicroPow is developing micro-structured powders that enhance the perception and stability of food’s natural aromas and flavors. The startup produces natural, encapsulated ingredients for customers such as food, cosmetic, and pharmaceutical companies. The technology, developed by ETH Zurich researchers Pascal Guillet and Lea Pokorny, may allow the cosmetics industry to reduce additives too. Two patents are pending, and a third will be filed later this year to strengthen the startup’s intellectual property.

MicroPow will use Venture Kick’s pre-seed funding to launch the first microPow powders and scale production for larger volumes next year. The startup already has multiple projects with major food companies such as Mondelez and Coop, and plans further strategic partnerships, seed funding and non-food projects for 2020.

“Venture Kick was and remains crucial for microPow. We used the early support to develop a robust business model and ensure our brand and disruptive, high-potential technology is known industry-wide. Venture Kick’s pre-seed funding will enable us to broaden the application portfolio of microPow powders with partner companies and strengthen the microPow brand,” Guillet said.

[www.micropow.ch](http://www.micropow.ch)
About Venture Kick

The philanthropic initiative Venture Kick provides up to CHF 150,000 in seed funding to Swiss startups. In addition, it offers a well-structured entrepreneurial path towards building a winning business. Startups pitch to expert juries at three stages to obtain funding, gaining direct feedback and access to an international network of successful entrepreneurs and investors.

Since its launch in 2007, Venture Kick has supported 640 Swiss startup projects with 27.3 million francs. The program of financial support, training and network, has led to the creation of 494 companies and 6,033 jobs. Venture Kick alumni companies have attracted a total of 2.5 billion francs, and represent 54 companies ranked in the TOP 100 Swiss Startups 2019.

In 2019, Venture Kick will pay out 4.35 million francs to idea-stage startup projects to bring Swiss science to global markets. More information in the Venture Kick annual report.

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