

Meet Greener, the platform connecting businesses across the agrifood sector

As part of a series with Innovate UK KTN, Maddyness spoke to Dan Yates, cofounder and CEO of Greener. We will introduce several of the 13 'startups of the future' chosen by Innovate UK KTN to take part in its three-month sustainability accelerator programme. Working with Innovate UK KTN, Growth Studio and their ecosystems, these startups will prepare to raise external capital. The program aims to back the bright ideas that put biodiversity, the climate, and sustainability first.

Temps de lecture : minute

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The creation of Greener came from a frustrating realisation. The world is facing unprecedented destruction in the form of the climate crisis, and yet from what I saw very few resources were really being deployed to combat this.

Even more frustratingly, I realised that there are so many smart people in the world, the vast majority of whom are working in areas which at best do nothing to address the climate crisis, and at worst are exacerbating the issue. In fact until very recently I was in exactly this position myself.

There seems to be a worldwide willful ignorance to take action on the climate crisis. I tried to learn as much as possible about why that is; my cofounder Mehrnaz was and remains hugely instrumental in that process.

What I realised was that sustainability was overwhelmingly complicated

for people to get their heads around. I realised that until it is exponentially more accessible to take sustainable action, then it will never be a widespread practice.

So I set out to find a way to make sustainability simpler and more accessible for people across the world.

Tell me about your business – what it does, what it aims to achieve, who you are aiming to reach etc.

Greener is a network-based platform which connects businesses across the agrifood sector (all the way from farm to restaurants to waste management) who are looking for sustainable solutions, and the companies providing said solutions.

We've built a platform that is able to really accurately understand what your business does, the flows of goods and services, but also how you make decisions regarding sustainability. With this info, we are able to connect you with potential partners who are not just a possible fit, but are perfectly matched for your business's needs and requirements.

Explain your engagement with the InnovateUK KTN SIIP accelerator and why you applied for it.

The SIIP accelerator has been absolutely fantastic for us, and it came at exactly the right moment. When we first heard about it we were a bit sceptical - we've been part of programmes previously which did not meet our expectations or the claims they set out in the promotional materials. But we applied because our previous experience with InnovateUK - whose support early on in our startup journey made all the difference- was

incredibly positive.

However, I could not be more pleased with the programme. The team is so engaged and constantly working to help the cohort as much as possible, and in ways specific to each startup.

The cohort itself is exceptional. Each company has the potential to be industry-defining in their space, which really motivates me to work hard and match the incredible work being done.

The chance to work alongside such a great team as well as a truly exceptional cohort has been a huge privilege.



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Describe the working culture at your company.

I would describe our culture as collaborative. From day one we have known that we are all on the same page about what we are building, why we are building it, and where we want it to go in the long term.

Because we are all aligned on the core vision, we are free to be creative and experiment around other aspects of the business. We can test, trial, and adapt the way we work in order to improve, with everybody's voice being heard. This is also the beauty of having a small and close-knit team, everyone feels a huge amount of ownership over the product we're building. Our biggest goal as leaders is to keep fostering this sense of collaboration as we work to improve ourselves, our company, and the product.

What has been your biggest challenge so far with your company, and how did you overcome it?

The biggest challenge throughout this whole process was starting a business remotely during a pandemic. Having a fully remote team created an environment where nothing could be spontaneous and on the spot. This was particularly tough given how dynamic and constantly-changing early stage companies are. If we realised we needed to brainstorm something we would have to schedule a meeting, and we often had meetings or commitments that couldn't shift.

This was hard, however I was blown away by how well the whole team shouldered the challenge. We made it work, despite not being ideal, and obviously considering how far we've come since then I would say we certainly made the best out of it. It also helped to know that as a business

we were hardly alone in making the best of a unique and challenging moment.

How does your company answer an unmet need?

Sustainability means a lot of things for business owners, but for the most part it means uncertainty and complexity. This is a whole new paradigm of business which leaders are having to learn, understand, and implement at an unprecedented pace.

What Greener provides fundamentally is simplicity. We save the businesses who use our platform huge amounts of time and money which they can dedicate to running their business instead of having to research and learn to implement sustainability across their operations.

Thus our motto: "Sustainability, simplified."

What is in store for the future?

Well the past few years have been all about testing, refining, and iterating.

Now that we have gathered all these insights and data points, it's time to grow.

The near future will see us fundraising for our seed round. This is going to allow us to evolve Greener from being in a minimum viable product state to being a finalised, fully commercialised platform.

But more importantly it's going to allow us to start the growth phase of

our journey. There are a lot of agrifood businesses in the world, and team Greener are aiming to onboard a good chunk of them over the coming years. Personally I could not be more excited about growing, working with amazing businesses, and helping them to move forward sustainably.

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

Your team is everything, and I don't just mean that in regards to hiring. From day 0 you need to surround yourself with people whose opinions, expertise, and values you trust.

You are not going to build a company on your own, and if you find yourself in a position where you are constantly repeating your vision for the company while those around you remain indifferent then something has gone badly wrong. Yes, as a founder your job is to steer the ship and have a vision, but you need your team to buy into it and to help you to shape it.

It's also true that when you are at a very early stage, your team is the biggest asset that you have. Investors back teams with potential - even more than they back compelling business ideas.

So your first job when you are thinking about starting a company is to make sure you have the right people around you to build something special.

Having the right people around you will also help during the inevitable down-periods of starting a company - when the money is running out, when the user feedback is rubbish, when you get a scathing response from a potential investor. The right team will balance each other out and make it easier to weather the storm.

I know for a fact that I would not be where I am today without the support and balance of my team.

Dan Yates is cofounder and CEO of *Greener*.

The *Sustainable Impact Investment Programmme* (SIIP) is a three-month accelerator, specially designed for selected startups who have previously received funding from Innovate UK's Sustainable Innovation Fund (SIF). The objective of the SIIP accelerator is to prepare both the business and founders of the winning startups with the knowledge, tools and investor connections to raise their next round of investment up to £5M through a confident proposition, materials, and communications.

SIIP is an initiative led and funded by *Innovate UK KTN* to support high growth impact-driven startups from the UK who were awarded grants from the Sustainable Innovation Fund to aid economic recovery after Covid. This programme is a collaborative effort by Innovate UK KTN and *Growth Studio*.

Article by Dan Yates