

Team KMC – InnovateFood Challenge 2017

InnovateFood Challenge is a case competition for students and graduates being held for the first time in Aarhus. With over 2000 applicants only 30 top-qualified and motivated students made it through to the final competition held 29th of August to 1st of September 2017.

Mads Kinch Clemmensen, head of the recruitment process and director of Foodjob Nordic explains; *“It has been overwhelming to see so much talent joined for this event. All students have been extremely motivated and have applied for this competition as an actual job position. We asked them to write a motivated cover letter, and tell us why food innovation is their passion and what they can contribute with in this type of innovation collaboration.”*

Six companies participated, among others Chr. Hansen, Arla and KMC. The KMC Challenge “Natural Fiber Ingredients in the Future – sourcing, technology and consumer health” put the five students on Team KMC to the test. The students were also given valuable insights and inputs from creative consultants from DesignIt, big data experts from IBM, as well as an in-depth introduction from KMC themselves.

Team KMC

The team was composed of five students who were given five different roles: Sustainability/Innovation, Nutritionist, Food Scientist, Innovation and Business Developer. The roles represented the students’ academic or professional competences, and each student was asked to do a personality test before arriving in Aarhus, in order to compose a strong and complimentary team. Mateusz Ciasnocha from Poland was the business developer of the team; *“It was my great pleasure to participate in the student case competition during InnovateFood. The business case provided by our client KMC was not only intriguing, but also fascinating to work on.”*

Business Development Director from KMC Gitte Graverholt was in cooperation with HR Manager Eva Remmer Søndergaard the company representatives: *“KMC got a lot out of participating in InnovateFood. Right from the beginning where we had to describe what is the actual challenge for us to put forward to the students. It is a good process for us as a company to be clear on that. Also, to feel the vibe around the whole thing has been inspiring, and meeting the students, and actually see what sort of student profiles exist or are available in this interest or topic that we work with.”*

The solution

After three days of hard work the students presented their solution to the KMC Challenge on stage at Aarhus University. The solution was based on adding the potato fibers to other types of food products. The team also created a business plan for KMC so that KMC in the future can implement the fibers into many other products, and be the leading supplier of fibers for the food industry.

“Our aim was to assess whether the client should expand its potato fiber production and if yes, quantify the opportunity at hand. Following a well-structured process of working on the business case, interaction with our client, co-operation with industry experts and a fantastic team from Foodjob Nordic, as well as enjoyable and supportive in-team dynamics we concluded that the identified opportunity is real and KMC should look further into it”, says Mateusz, who is currently back in Poland attending 27th Economic Forum in Krynica-Zdroj.

Gitte Graverholt from KMC is also very content about the concept of the case competition and conference; *“I think InnovateFood puts focus on the whole industry, and also higher the level of the way that we work with food innovation. I think it has been a good idea to combine the competition for the students with the*

experts – they could give the students a broader perspective and also some in-depth knowledge on the topics. So, I think the combination has been good, and it shows it attracts a lot of people from all over the world.”

Also, the students have gained a lot of new experiences; *“I am grateful for KMC, InnovateFood, the Danish Food Cluster, Foodjob Nordic and my PoWerTato team for this critical experience on my path to a career in global agricultural sector and I am looking forward seeing the effects of KMC's further work on our recommendations”*, explains Mateusz.