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## Mars launches *Seeds of Change* accelerator to fast-track food industry innovation

Mars Food Australia has today launched its new SEEDS OF CHANGE™ Accelerator to support the next generation of food businesses transforming the way we eat.

The Seeds of Change Accelerator, in partnership with Food Innovation Australia Limited (FIAL), will select six Australian participants to join the program.

The accelerator has been designed to help early stage Australian food-focused companies fast-track growth and build a healthier and more sustainable future.

In addition to a grant of up to \$40,000 (AUD), each start-up will undertake a tailored four-month program to help tackle their biggest individual challenges to growth, whether that's branding, product development, market intelligence, sales or supply chain. The program will include face-to-face workshops and access to a panel of expert mentors and advisers.

Applications are now open to Australian-based, food-focussed start-ups with innovative differentiated offerings, new business models and emerging technology in one or more of eight focus areas:

- Sharing World Flavours
- Easy-Meal Solutions
- Responsible Food
- Creating with Care
- Food Manufacturing and Value Chain Transformation
- Better for You
- Plant-Based Eating
- Accessing Asia

Peter Crane, Research and Development Director at Mars Food Australia and Program Mentor for the Seeds of Change Accelerator, said the Seeds of Change program is one of the many ways Mars works to bring its purpose – *Better Food Today. A Better World Tomorrow* – to life.

“Mars Food is committed to nurturing the next generation of food innovators and dedicated to creating and delivering healthier, easier and tastier food for more people,” Mr Crane said.

“Both the Mars family owned business and the Seeds of Change brand, after which the accelerator is named, started small and grew strong. This accelerator is a first for Mars, but we hope we can share some of the lessons we have learnt along the way and, in turn, would be delighted to learn ourselves from the start-ups we are lucky enough to work with,” he said.

FIAL, a not-for-profit organisation established under the federal government's Industry Growth Centres Initiative, has partnered with Mars Food on this accelerator initiative. FIAL and Mars are working together on the final touches to bring this program to life and drive its success together.

FIAL's Chairman, Peter Schutz, said FIAL plays an important role in championing innovation in the food and agribusiness sector and bringing industry players together to seize market opportunities.

"One of our goals is to help businesses build their skills to develop innovative products and access new markets, so FIAL is delighted to be partnering with Mars on the new Seeds of Change Accelerator," Mr Schutz said.

"Any agri-food businesses wanting to contribute to a more healthy and sustainable future for Australia should express their interest to take part in this program – it's an opportunity not to be missed," he said.

Peter Crane said each start-up is unique and has very different needs, depending on factors such as the type of product, maturity and target markets. "We are told our program is different to others out there because our approach is a highly tailored experience that gives participants access to an incredible network of internal and external experts, not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach," Mr Crane said.

"We have an amazing pool of talent available including the likes of Hamish Thomson, GM of Mars Food Australia; Bronwyn Powell, Mars Food Marketing Director; Dr Angeline Achariya, CEO of the Monash Food Innovation Centre; Cameron Turner, Entrepreneur in Residence and Lecturer at the University of Queensland; and Dr Martin Cole, Deputy Director of Food and Agriculture at CSIRO," he said.

The Australian Seeds of Change Accelerator is part of a joint US-Australia initiative selecting 12 start-ups to take part in the program: six in the US and six in Australia. The two programs share many fundamentals, but they will be run independently to ensure the unique needs of local start-ups in each region are best served. The Seeds of Change Accelerator is named after the Mars Food organic seed and food brand which has been sold in the US for 30 years and launched in Australia in February 2019.

Applications can be submitted via the Seeds of Change Accelerator website ([www.socaccelerator.com/australia](http://www.socaccelerator.com/australia)) between Tuesday 28 May and close on Friday 19 July.

#### **How to apply for the Seeds of Change Accelerator**

Visit the Seeds of Change Accelerator website from 28 March to 19 July and fill in the web form to apply to be part of the first Australian cohort. Any questions about the program or application process can be sent to [info.au@socaccelerator.com](mailto:info.au@socaccelerator.com). [Seeds of Change Accelerator website](http://www.socaccelerator.com/australia)

**About Mars Food Australia:** Mars Food Australia has been creating healthy, easy, affordable and tasty meal solutions for Australians since 1967. Based on the NSW Central Coast at Wyong, Mars Food Australia manufactures more than 500 products ranging from mustards to flavoured sauce, marinades, ready to heat rice, recipe bases herbs and spices, relishes and pasta across its brands of MASTERFOODS®, UNCLE BEN'S®, DOLMIO®, KAN TONG®, SEEDS OF CHANGE® and PROMITE®. These brands can be found in 9 out of 10 Australian cupboards and are exported to the Asia Pacific Region, as well as being available to commercial kitchens, caterers and quick service restaurants. [Mars Website](http://www.marsfood.com.au)

**About FIAL:** Food Innovation Australia Limited (FIAL) is an industry-led, not-for-profit focused on growing the share of Australian food in the global marketplace. FIAL works with the food and agribusiness industry to share knowledge, build capability and create connections. Established in 2013, FIAL is a part of the federal government's [Industry Growth Centres](http://www.industry.gov.au) initiative which aims to drive innovation and growth in Australia. [FIAL website](http://www.fial.com.au)

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