

Prefer secures \$4.2M to accelerate beanless coffee expansion with global partnerships

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The company, founded in 2022 by Jake Berber and Ding Jie Tan, will collaborate with Japanese food and beverage leader Ajinomoto's Thailand arm to co-develop sustainable coffee drink innovations for the Thai market. In Australia, Prefer has licensed its proprietary fermentation technology to FMCG player The Coffee Firm, enabling local manufacturing and distribution of Prefer products.

The funding will be used to scale production to 500 tonnes of coffee annually through third-party manufacturers in the Asia-Pacific region, expand cocoa production from its Singapore pilot facility, and deepen R&D into cocoa flavour development. Prefer also plans to broaden its footprint via toll manufacturing and additional partnerships, with a continued focus on Asia.

Prefer's beanless coffee and cocoa are made from upcycled food byproducts like rice and soy are designed to replicate the taste and functionality of conventional products while offering up to 85 per cent lower carbon emissions and 50 per cent lower costs than traditional Arabica coffee, according to the company's life cycle analysis.

The announcement follows the launch of two new ingredient formats – soluble coffee and cocoa powders – now available for sampling with food and beverage partners across the Asia-Pacific. Current customers in Singapore include Melvados, which incorporates Prefer coffee into its ice cream products, and regional retailers stocking the company's ready-to-drink iced latte.

Berber said the company is “pushing to get to market as soon as possible” with its new partnerships, noting that both are structured for the long term. A follow-on funding round is planned in 18 to 24 months to support further expansion.