



SavFood; turning potato peels into breadcrumbs

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Erasmus Centre for Entrepreneurship is a recognized [RVO* startup facilitator](#) for international innovative startup entrepreneurs. We provide these entrepreneurs with support and mentorship to develop their businesses within the Dutch ecosystem. COVID-19 has a worldwide impact and the founders of [SavFood](#), one of our Startup Visa participants, gladly shared with us how they are coping with the current situation.

[Ahmer Ashraf](#) and [Sarah Ashraf](#) founded SavFood because they are concerned about the way food is wasted at all levels. In an attempt to make the world a better place, their central idea is to reduce the amount of food that is wasted by coming up with new and innovative products from excess produce, potential waste and residual flows from the food processing industry. 'We have prior experience of working with dehydration techniques to formulate food products such as vegetable powders, enhanced drink formulations as well as nutrient rich supplement from fresh produce,' said Ahmer Ashraf.



They have already reached one milestone in their combat against the waste of food by introducing their first product 'Prumbs', an entirely circular alternative to breadcrumbs made from rescued potato peels. 'We are talking to various funding agencies for subsidies and grants as we would like to focus on coming up with new formulations that can be disruptive as well as solve the problem of excessive amounts of food waste. One of our main goals would be to create partnerships and reach visibility as a circular economy business. We can do this by learning from other successful startups in the same area,' said Ahmer Ashraf.

Choosing the Netherlands as the location to start up their business therefore might not come as a surprise anymore. According to Ahmer, the country as a whole is a hub for innovation and Rotterdam in particular is the food capital of the world. 'Furthermore, there is a great focus from the policymakers on supporting a circular economy. In our opinion it is imperative that a lot of support is given to startups that are trying to solve social problems, so they continue to research and come up with innovative solutions, and thankfully we have found that here in the Netherlands.'

'Erasmus Centre for Entrepreneurship is strategically placed to support new startups but most of all, it has provided us with people who fully understand what we need. We have learned more about entrepreneurship while getting help starting up our business.' Startup Visa participants can partake in three of our programmes in order to enrich their knowledge: Erasmus [Startup](#) Programme, Erasmus [Business](#) Programme and [Business Membership Programme](#).

While the Corona pandemic has slowed down development a bit, the founders of SavFood remain positive nonetheless. 'It has limited some opportunities and set us back at least a few months, but we have taken most of our work online and are constantly making changes to our development plans. We refuse to let it completely stop all of our plans and try to turn the challenges into opportunities for us,' said Ahmer.

Ahmer advises other foreign entrepreneurs to do a thorough scan of the local milieu and to accustom yourself to how things work in the local context. 'Understand both the local opportunities as well as challenges. If you've done your homework and are well-prepared, it will help you get a kickstart. The most important lesson I have learned under the guidance of Erasmus Centre for Entrepreneurship is that it is never too late to start all over again and you should never be discouraged when not

everything goes exactly how you have planned.'

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