



December 4, 2015

Re. InnovateHER San Diego winner

Dear InnovateHER team,

Hera Labs is pleased to support the winner of our local InnovateHER 2016: Innovating for Women Business Challenge, **Once Upon a Farm®**, for consideration for the national competition in Washington DC in March 2016, Women's History Month.

Once Upon a Farm® clearly met all of the key criteria for the InnovateHER competition: commercialization potential, marketplace need, and having a measurable impact on the lives of women and families. The **innovation of using High Pressure Processing (HPP) is a game changer** in an industry devoid of this healthy process of conserving the nutrients, taste, consistency, and color of food. The baby food industry is ripe for this method of bringing the healthiest solution to market, thus making the **lives of mothers easier, less stressful, and more enjoyable**. Mothers who juggle multiple schedules, busy work-life integration, but want a healthy solution to their baby and toddler's feeding needs will be the prime customers of the nutritious baby food products developed by Once Upon a Farm®. This nutritional added value for babies and toddlers will create a new generation of healthy children who will grow to be more health-conscious adults, leading fuller and healthier lives.

Once Upon a Farm® co-founder & COO, Cassandra Curtis, scored the highest of all presenters by all 5 judges. Her **mastery of the baby food market** was clearly articulated; her presentation skills were outstanding in pitching a clear business model/plan & demonstrating **an innovative product already to market**; and her passion for **making every mom's life and families healthier** is exemplified not only in her drive to create an innovative healthy solution, but in herself as a mother of a baby and a toddler.

There were 6 components of Once Upon a Farm® that made them stand out within the judging rubric:

1. Strong startup team. The co-founders of Once Upon a Farm®, Cassandra Curtis and Ari Raz, were both startup entrepreneurs with regional home delivery baby food companies before they ever met. They have been lean in hiring a sales director & have an **extensive and knowledgeable advisory board** that will root them with their experience & challenge them to scale efficiently. Of particular interest is the involvement of Jeff Church, co-founder & CEO of Suja Juice, who did for the beverage industry what Once Upon a Farm® is doing for the baby food industry.

2. Outstanding retail traction. There are 2 aspects to this component: (1) reach of retail placement and (2) speed of retail successes. The product is **highly commercializable** and ripe for the large and growing organic baby food industry. The co-founders of Once Upon A Farm® have already been able to succeed at placing their product in many prominent retail stores in Southern California: Jimbo's Naturally, Sprouts Farmers Market, Windmill Farms, Boney's, Naturally to Your Door, & Bristol Farms. In January 2016 they are approved & scheduled to be in 33 Whole Foods in the northeast. The bi-coastal reach of this startup is impressive within only one year of launching their business.

3. Funding milestone successfully obtained. Once Upon A Farm® was able to successfully raise an angel seed round of \$575,000 in convertible debt notes. The startup has also kept to lean financial spending, positioning them to be **efficient users of capital** for the amount of traction accomplished.

4. Solid business plan. All aspects of the Once Upon A Farm® business plan were well thought out, evaluated flawlessly, and executed meticulously: market evaluation, competitive analysis, target market definition, unique selling proposition, marketing plan, sales projections, and financials.

Customer validation was apparent and profound knowledge of market drivers allowed for early adoption of end customers through online sales & penetration of retail stores.

5. Believable & passionate presenter. Cassandra Curtis, COO and co-founder of Once Upon A Farm® is a mother of 2 and spoke about the pain in the market from a **place of deep understanding and empathy**. When a good story is coupled with flawlessly presenting deep market analysis, strong financials, incredible traction in a short timeframe & robust sales projections; the mission & vision of a mom helping women raise healthier babies, children & families was heartfelt, believable, yet highly professional.

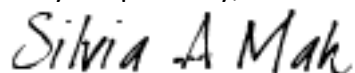
6. High impact for busy women to feed healthy families. Women play an important role in the workforce now more than ever, making up half (57% in 2013) of our nation's labor force¹. They also continue to play a vital nurturing role as mothers, daughters and wives in the US home. Our nation's economic & cultural prosperity lies in the delicate hands of women who are juggling it all. Nutrition and health are at the forefront of many of these women's "worry" paint points & Once Upon A Farm® is **uniquely building a solution to alleviate and solve busy women's need** to feed healthy meals to their babies, toddlers and children. Healthy children become healthy adults.

Here is what 2 of the 5 judges said about the outstanding business presentation by Once Upon a Farm®:

- *"Once Upon a Farm® truly addresses the need to introduce quality nutritious food to our children early on to establish healthy taste preferences for a healthy future! The business plan and the presentation were exceptionally organized, well thought out and passionately presented."* – Larry Destro, mentor & advisor at SCORE San Diego & former president intl, PepsiCo & Interim President/CEO, Taco Del Mar Franchising Corp.
- *"Once Upon a Farm® had a strong connection to impacting the lives of women/families with her product, potential for commercialization & meeting a need in the marketplace. She has already proven traction in the market, with a presence in major retailers, and growing. She had a strong business case, with a clearly articulated customer need, financials that made sense and an understanding of the market. She has a good team around her with the right business skills. Finally, she was a believable founder with the passion and drive that we believe will make her successful ... and her products tasted great!"* – Vidya Dinamani, VP of innovation & design at Mitchell International & co-founder of Purpose Driven Product;

Once Upon a Farm® is positioned through an innovative product, strong startup team, star-studded advisory counsel, and exceptional proven traction to have the greatest potential for success in the baby food industry. It takes a village to raise a child but it also take a village to provide as many children as possible with healthy food.

Very Respectfully,



Silvia Mah, PhD, MBA – CEO | Hera Labs – Founding partner & Angel Investor | Hera Fund

¹ <http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/recentfacts.htm>