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→ **ANDREI GRACHEV** is the
Managing Partner of
DWF Labs, a UAE-
headquartered market
maker and investment
firm in the cryptocurrency
and Web3 markets.

PAVING THE WAY

Andrei
Grachev





↑ **AMREEN IQBAL** is the founder of Piece of You, a UAE-based luxury jewelry brand.

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MIDDLE EAST

CEO Wissam Younane
wissam@bncpublishing.net

MANAGING DIRECTOR Rabiha Najm
rabiha@bncpublishing.net

ART DIRECTOR Simona El Khoury

MANAGING EDITOR Tamara Pucic
tamara@bncpublishing.net

FEATURES EDITOR Aalia Mehreen Ahmed
aalia@bncpublishing.net

REGIONAL DIRECTOR
Mahdi Hashemi mahdi@bncpublishing.net

DIRECTOR OF INNOVATION
Sarah Saddouk sarah@bncpublishing.net

GROUP SALES DIRECTOR – B2B GROUP
Joaquim D'Costa jo@bncpublishing.net

HEAD OF PARTNERSHIPS
Samir Glor samir@bncpublishing.net

COMMERCIAL LEAD
Anna Chipala anna@bncpublishing.net

COLUMNIST Tamara Clarke

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Fida Chaaban, Nathalie Khouri,
and Sarah Saddouk.

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PO BOX 502511 DUBAI, UAE
P +971 4 4200 506

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IN FOCUS

A roundup of the up-and-coming startups in the Dubai-based **Mohammed Bin Rashid Innovation Fund accelerator program** that you *should* be keeping an eye on

by AALIA MEHREEN AHMED



Beyond Farming / beyondfarming.com



→ The Beyond Farming team (clockwise; starting top left): **Chris Bolton** (founder Chairman, and CEO), **Pedro Silva** (CFO); **Ricardo Ferrer** (Interim Chief Operating Officer; and **Shawn Kelly** (Chief Revenue Officer)

urban indoor vertical farm solution, was born in the Emirates in November 2024. “At Beyond Farming, we focus on revolutionizing urban agriculture through advanced agricultural technologies such as fogponics to address the challenges of food security, sustainability, and profitability of urban indoor vertical farming agriculture,” explains Chris Bolton, the startup’s founder, Chairman and CEO. “The main problem we’re addressing is enhancing food security and sustainability in urban areas by providing a repeatable, economic, practical, sustainable, scalable, safe and secure urban indoor Farm as a Solution (FaaS) facility. We are driven by the urgent need to provide cities with reliable access to fresh, sustainably grown local produce.”

At the intersection of the UAE’s rapid food security initiatives and the country’s ability to provide a thriving launchpad for startups, there has been a welcome increase in the number of startups offering alternative farming and food production facilities. It is within such a landscape that Beyond Farming, a turn-key


Created by Bolton along with Pedro Silva (CFO), Ricardo Ferrer (Interim COO), and Shawn Kelly (Chief Revenue Officer), Beyond Farming thus enables the production of nine categories of crops—including fruits, vegetables, and mushrooms—within fully configurable controlled environments and without the use of contaminants. Designed with a “Farm-to-Fork” approach (i.e. straight from an urban farm to consumers), Beyond Farming operates on a dual business model, offering two choices of FaaS: “We Own” and “You Own”. “The two options help accommodate

revenue streams through direct product sales, technology licensing, sale of greenhouse gas avoidance credits, and consultancy services related to urban indoor farming setups.”

Although the startup was launched in the UAE only a month ago, it has already demonstrated its ability to produce over 35 different crops across the globe and is currently in an expansion phase. As such, the Beyond Farming team is very upbeat about the potential ripple effect it can create within this new market. “Our offices have been established in

non-special purpose buildings effectively, making our solutions ideal for cities aiming to enhance local food production sustainably. Our artificial intelligence (AI) controlled environments are optimized to further reduce crop production cycle time, power consumption, and labor requirements, while increasing crop yield, and crop quality.”

In introducing Beyond Farming’s solutions wider range of stakeholders in the UAE, the MBRIF Innovation Accelerator Program has certainly played an important role.

and the very users who are ultimately meant to benefit from such solutions. “As we advance our technologies and expand our business model, staying at the forefront of the agritech industry requires constant innovation,” Bolton adds. “We have led our industry by partnering with universities around the world to provide urban indoor vertical classrooms, provide centers of excellence for research and development, and in turn offer long term positions with our expanding organization through urban indoor farming practicum and mentorship programs. But despite our technological focus, maintaining a human connection with our customer base is paramount. We engage with local communities through educational programs and workshops, providing training and support that empowers them to participate in and benefit from urban agriculture. Additionally, our customer service teams are trained to provide personalized support, ensuring that our clients receive the guidance they need to successfully implement and benefit from our systems. These efforts ensure that while our technology may be advanced, the human element remains at the core of our operations.” As the UAE continues to race towards its food security targets, it will certainly be worth keeping an eye out for what Beyond Farming brings to the table! 

“

THE MAIN PROBLEM WE’RE ADDRESSING IS ENHANCING FOOD SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN URBAN AREAS BY PROVIDING A REPEATABLE, ECONOMIC, PRACTICAL, SUSTAINABLE, SCALABLE, SAFE AND SECURE URBAN INDOOR FARM AS A SOLUTION (FAAS) FACILITY.”

different investment and operational preferences,” explains Silva. “In the “We Own” model, we retain ownership and manage the farming operations, generating revenue through the sale of fresh produce, leasing of facilities, and offering managed services. In the “You Own” model, we sell or lease our farming systems to clients who operate them independently, providing us with a steady revenue stream from sales of equipment, technology licenses, and ongoing support services. Our revenue model is thus designed to create multiple

Australia, Canada, Panama, the United States, and now the UAE, and we are moving towards profitability with substantial growth projected from increasing global demand for sustainable agriculture,” Ferrer notes. “Our unique selling proposition lies in our innovative, water-neutral fogponics [a type of aeroponics where plants are grown with their roots suspended in air and exposed to a nutrient-rich mist or fog] technology within modular urban farming systems that are adaptable to various urban environments. We are crop-agnostic and utilize

“The MBRIF program was especially chosen to facilitate introductions to local grocery stores and restaurants, access government officials, and explore financing options for our UAE projects, driven by recommendations from the Dubai Chamber of Commerce,” Kelly reveals.

As Beyond Farming now hopes to catalyze its initial efforts, founder Bolton remains mindful that his startup will have to maintain a healthy balance between the incessant technological shifts that define the agritech sector