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A sustainable source of milk cultured from cells and a platform to lower the costs of migrant worker recruitment are two diverse tech-driven ideas bubbling in Singapore's start-up ecosystem.

TurtleTree Labs, a start-up focusing on developing cell-based milk, has been working on optimising a 5-litre production facility and intends to have a pilot plant in Singapore by the middle of next year.

Its chief strategist Max Rye said: "We don't have to be restricted to places (with farms) like New Zealand... we don't have to have cows around. All you need is a biotech environment, and (Singapore) is perfect for it."

TurtleTree was awarded \$1 million in funding by Temasek Foundation last month, after winning this year's edition of The Liveability Challenge, which seeks solutions to some of the biggest problems faced by cities in South-east Asia.

The company, which was formed last year, has more than 20 scientists and engineers and around 30 employees in total.

"Covid-19 has highlighted the need for food security and the fragility of our global logistics, global food supply system," said chief executive Fengru Lin, noting that the firm has also been able to tap government support schemes and grants in its growth, such as the Startup SG Founder programme.

The firm aims to have its first licensing agreements signed by the second quarter of next year, but it would take another 18 months or so of working with partners to deliver a product that can be taken to market, said Mr Rye.

Meanwhile, foreign worker recruitment platform Sama has been matching migrant workers here to new employment, be it within the same sector or a new industry.

"For now, we are focusing on workers who are already (in Singapore), and the majority of these transfers are workers who have been let go by their companies," said co-founder Kirtan Patel, noting that some workers are also seeking new jobs in different sectors.

While its main focus is on workers



Chief executive Fengru Lin and chief strategist Max Rye of TurtleTree Labs, a start-up focusing on developing cell-based milk. It has been working on optimising a 5-litre production facility and intends to have a pilot plant in Singapore by the middle of next year.  
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NG SOR LUAN

in construction, Sama has also been engaging workers and employers in other sectors which are dependent on foreign labour, such as manufacturing and the marine industry.

The platform also has remittance and salary payment features, and allows employers to check on the health status of their workers.

The firm's long-term play is on re-

ruitment and giving workers more employment options, while lowering the costs for them to work overseas.

"Many of these workers never really have much of a choice or visibil-

ity of what job (options there are), but we hope to give them that," said Mr Patel.

Choo Yun Ting

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