Leaps by Bayer leads investment round in AgTech pioneer NuCicer to bring unique and cost-effective plant-protein ingredients to market by 2023

- California-based NuCicer has developed chickpeas with 75 percent more protein than conventional varieties, unlocking the potential of chickpea protein to become a scalable, affordable foundation for a sustainable plant-based future
- NuCicer’s technology harnesses the extensive natural biodiversity from wild chickpeas using a cutting-edge, genomic breeding platform to create value throughout the food system
- Funding from Leaps by Bayer, the impact investment arm of Bayer, leading global agriculture company, will help NuCicer bring high-protein chickpea ingredients to market in 2023 and expand its technology platform to develop products with greater climate resilience
yet high-cost protein source, to reduce production costs and fulfill consumer demand. The technology is rooted in decades-long scientific research led by Professor Douglas Cook at UC Davis, the world’s preeminent expert on chickpea genetics and NuCicer’s co-founder and Chief Scientific Officer. With 40x more genetic diversity than commercial varieties, the Company’s vast germplasm library integrates wild chickpea genetics with elite cultivars through cross breeding, creating desirable traits that support major opportunities at every stage of the food system.

Long-term, the stability of the global food system relies on improving the climate resilience of crops. Chickpeas naturally possess several climate resilient traits, including high water-use efficiency and nitrogen fixation capabilities that contribute to soil regeneration. NuCicer’s genomic-guided breeding platform enables the discovery of genetic controls for key traits that further enhance climate resilience such as tolerance to heat, drought, acidic soils, and disease.

“Expanding affordable, scalable plant protein beyond currently available soy ingredients is a critical and urgent need for our food system. Today’s investment round is a significant moment for both NuCicer and the wider plant protein market,” said Kathryn Cook, CEO and Co-Founder, NuCicer. “With Leaps by Bayer’s support, we look forward to taking the next step in our journey: driving natural ingredient technologies to the next level and bringing improved plant-based products to market.”

The work to develop innovative protein solutions aligns with both companies’ strategic focus on providing next generation healthy crops and developing sustainable protein supplies globally, two of Leaps by Bayer’s ten investment aims. Protein is critical to a healthy human diet, but existing animal proteins have a sizeable environmental footprint. Access to low-cost, climate resilient plant-based alternatives is important to decarbonize the food supply chain and achieve global emissions reduction targets.

“Leaps by Bayer was founded on the principle of driving real change to the world we live in via our investments, and NuCicer is an ideal example of how we’re working collaboratively to make a positive difference,” commented Dr. Jürgen Eckhardt, Head of Leaps by Bayer. “NuCicer is a fascinating business that we believe will assist the development of climate resilient, natural, and plant-based protein alternatives that will help decarbonize our food supply chains.”
NuCicer represents Leaps by Bayer’s fourth investment in the alternative protein supply sector. Alongside investing in cutting-edge technology firms such as NuCicer, Bayer also works to support farmers to increase production with fewer inputs whilst supporting their decarbonization efforts, as part of Bayer’s wider aim to reduce the environmental impact of agriculture by 30 percent.

About Bayer
Bayer is a global enterprise with core competencies in the life science fields of health care and nutrition. Its products and services are designed to help people and the planet thrive by supporting efforts to master the major challenges presented by a growing and aging global population. Bayer is committed to driving sustainable development and generating a positive impact with its businesses. At the same time, the Group aims to increase its earning power and create value through innovation and growth. The Bayer brand stands for trust, reliability and quality throughout the world. In fiscal 2021, the Group employed around 100,000 people and had sales of 44.1 billion euros. R&D expenses before special items amounted to 5.3 billion euros. For more information, go to www.bayer.com.

About Leaps by Bayer
Leaps by Bayer, a unit of Bayer AG, leads impact investments into solutions to some of today’s biggest challenges in health and agriculture. The investment portfolio includes more than 50 companies. They are all working on potentially breakthrough technologies to overcome some specific challenges such as, e.g. develop sustainable protein supply, reducing the environmental impact of agriculture, preventing or curing cancer, and others. For more information, go to leaps.bayer.com.

About NuCicer
NuCicer is an agri-food technology company pioneering ultra-high protein chickpea varieties that enable scalable, sustainable ingredients spanning whole beans, gluten-free flours, and protein ingredients. It partners with growers who are attracted to chickpea’s capacity for nitrogen fixation and interested in NuCicer’s potential to increase the crop’s environmental resilience. NuCicer also partners with top ingredient manufacturers and food and beverage companies who recognize the potential of chickpea as a sustainable, functional ingredient. NuCicer combines an industry-leading chickpea germplasm library with cutting-edge genomics-guided speed breeding technologies to create its all-natural, non-GM chickpea varieties. For more information, please visit www.nucicer.com/
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Forward-Looking Statements
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