

It's full speed ahead for the Biomimicry Global Design Challenge Accelerator teams

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Photo: Biomimicry Global Design Challenge finalist Ratchaphak Tantisanghirun describes his team's nature-inspired innovation at a finalist showcase event.

It's been a busy six months for the 2015 Biomimicry Global Design Challenge finalists. Last October, eight teams from around the world were chosen to be part of the first-ever biomimicry food systems accelerator. After pitching and getting feedback on their design concepts in-person during SXSW Eco in Austin, TX, these intrepid innovators began working furiously to test and prototype their nature-inspired design concepts.

Their designs range from new methods for keeping nutrients in the soil, to less costly and more accessible aquaponic growing systems and solar stills, to edible insect-catching devices, to more sustainable ways of growing plants indoors or on balconies and more. The common factor? All of these concepts are trying to solve pervasive problems in our food system by mimicking living organisms. While the finalists were in Austin, we worked with Villagehouse Films to create this short video introducing each of the teams and their innovations.



In October 2016, one of the finalist teams will win the \$100,000 Ray C. Anderson Foundation "Ray of Hope" Prize to bring their design closer to fruition and commercialization. The winner will be announced onstage at the National Bioneers Conference in the San Francisco Bay Area in California. **(You can join us in person! Registration for Bioneers opens on April 22.).**

We want to help ALL of these designs make it to market, so we've matched the teams with experts in business, agriculture, and biomimicry who can help mentor them. All the team members are currently

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attending online training and mentoring sessions with technology and business advisors at the von Liebig Center at the University of California, San Diego. Late last year, the finalists also took a “Money Matters” course through Portland State University’s School of Business Administration, Impact Entrepreneurs program.

Here is a sample of what some of the teams have been up to:



Team Planet, **creators of the Mangrove Still**, has been invited to curate and present a three-hour biomimicry workshop as part of a food and tech conference in Milan, Italy, in May called Seeds & Chips International Exhibit and Conference.

They also recently presented their innovation at a biomimicry pop-up event held in conjunction with Milan Design Week and organized by **Biomimicry Argentina**.



Team Penthouse Protozoa, who created the **Living Filtration System**, has formed an LLC and spent the past few months reaching out to business experts and agricultural mentors to get feedback on both the legal/business and innovation aspects of their design. Their next steps include working on a basic lab test of their design.



Team Oasis, who created the **Oasis Aquaponic Food Production System**, is hard at work on their prototype, having settled on the materials they want to use and tested the concept using a ¼ scale model. They hope to complete the prototype soon and begin testing on the ground in Central America.



Team BioX, who designed the **Jube edible insect-catching device**, has created its first prototype in Southern Thailand and is working to test the device within a community there. They have also created an edible insects cookbook and

developed a partnership with Prince of Songkla University International College to form two organizations (Biomimicry Thailand and The Future Institute Thailand) that focus on biomimicry and educational outreach. Team BioX’s design was covered in National Geographic Hungary and a number of Thai media outlets, including “**Deep Fried Culture**,” a Thai public broadcasting show.



Team Hexagro, creators of the **Hexagro Urban Cropping System**, has been working on improving their initial design, including making improvements to the structure and lighting. The team has been invited to present at **Re.Work Future of Food** during the London Technology Week in June 2016. Hexagro also presented twice during Milan Design Week – once at the biomimicry pop-up organized by **Biomimicry Argentina** and again as part of a contest called **Next Design Innovation**, organized by the Department of Design at Milan Polytechnic and the Lombardy region. The team was also profiled in **Circulate**, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation blog.

We’ll be following along from now through October as these teams do the hard work needed to take their innovations from concept to commercial-ready products. Stay tuned!

