NUFFOODS Spectrum
perspectives on food technologies & business
ASIA

The future of chocolate is cultivated: Pluriâ??s Vision with Kokomodo

13 June 2025 | News

Yaky Yanay, CEO and President of Pluri

Yaky Yanay, CEO and President of Pluri

As climate change, deforestation regulations, and fluctuating commodity prices pose threats to the global cacao supply, biotechnology is emerging with transformative solutions. In a significant move to promote sustainable food technologies, Pluri, a global leader in 3D cell-based platforms, has acquired a majority stake in Kokomodo, an innovative startup that utilises cellular agriculture to produce cultivated cacao.

This strategic acquisition combines Kokomodoâ??s advanced cacao cell cultivation technology with Pluriâ??s scalable biomanufacturing capabilities to tackle the challenges faced by traditional cacao production. In an exclusive interview with NUFFOODS Spectrum, Yaky Yanay, CEO and President of Pluri, shares insights into the rationale behind the acquisition, the synergies that will spur innovation, and the shared vision of commercialising cultivated cacao as a sustainable and climate-resilient alternative for the global food industry.

What strategic factors underpinned Pluriâ??s decision to acquire a majority stake in Kokomodo, and what was the rationale for the timing of this acquisition?

Pluri acquired a majority stake in Kokomodo to capitalise on its innovative use of cellular agriculture to produce climate-resilient, high-quality cacao directly from plant cells. This aligns with Pluriâ??s mission to advance sustainable, cell-based solutions that tackle global challenges like food security and environmental impact. The timing reflects rising global cacao prices and declining traditional production due to climate change, creating a clear need for scalable, sustainable alternatives. With this acquisition, Pluri strengthens its position in the AgFoodTech sector while supporting Kokomodoâ??s growth and global reach.

In what ways will Kokomodo experience operational and technological advantages as part of the Pluri group, particularly concerning the scaling of cultivated cacao production?

As part of the Pluri group, Kokomodo will benefit from advanced operational and technological support that will accelerate the scaling of its cultivated cacao production. Pluriâ??s patented 3D cell expansion technology is scalable, cost-effective, and delivers consistent, high-quality output ideal for mass production. Kokomodo will also gain access to Pluriâ??s GMP-certified manufacturing facility, as well as its experienced R&D and Quality Control departments, all of which will directly support product development and production. Additionally, Pluri brings two decades of biotech expertise, a strong IP portfolio of over 250 patents, and a global network of strategic partners, giving Kokomodo the tools and infrastructure needed to grow efficiently and expand worldwide.

Will Kokomodoâ??s research and development direction or product roadmap be adjusted following this acquisition?

Kokomodo will continue to operate independently under the leadership of its Co-Founder and CEO, Tal Govrin, maintaining its original mission and R&D direction. While their core focus remains unchanged, Pluri will support Kokomodo in scaling its operations and accelerating development. Kokomodo has already built a diverse collection of cacao cell lines, enabling the creation of tailored cacao ingredients for the chocolate industry, as well as functional and wellness products. With Pluriâ??s support, Kokomodo will be able to advance this roadmap more efficiently and bring its innovations to market on a larger scale.

How do you anticipate cultivated cacao will be positioned within the wider alternative protein and sustainable food market in the next 3â??5 years?

Over the next 3â??5 years, cultivated cacao is expected to emerge as a key player within the sustainable food and alternative protein markets. Soaring traditional cacao pricesâ??reaching a 45-year high and jumping from $2,500 in January 2023 to over $10,000 in April 2024, combined with a 20 per cent yield drop in the 2023 season, highlight the fragility of the current supply chain. Regulatory pressure is also increasing, with the EU banning cacao goods linked to deforestation, further tightening supply.

In contrast, cultivated cacao offers a controlled, ethical, and climate-resilient alternative. As consumers and food manufacturers seek sustainable and traceable ingredients, cellular agriculture is gaining ground. The broader alternative protein market is projected to grow significantly, with cultivated ingredients like cacao poised to play a growing role in this shift.

What challenges do you anticipate in the global commercialisation of cultivated cacao, and how does this partnership aim to mitigate these challenges?

Global commercialisation of cultivated cacao faces challenges like high production costs, scalability, regulatory approval, and consumer acceptance. The partnership between Kokomodo and Pluri directly addresses these issues. Kokomodo contributes cutting-edge cacao cell cultivation technology, while Pluri offers a scalable, cost-effective 3D cell expansion platform, a GMP-certified facility, experienced R&D and QC teams, and a strong IP and partner network. Together, they can accelerate production, reduce costs, and bring cultivated cacao to market more efficiently.

Could you elaborate on the synergies between Pluriâ??s cell-based platform and Kokomodoâ??s cacao cultivation technology?

The synergy between Pluriâ??s cell-based platform and Kokomodoâ??s cacao cultivation technology is a powerful combination that accelerates the commercialisation of cultivated cacao. Kokomodo has already achieved significant milestones, such as developing 14 stable and scalable cacao cell lines, producing cacao with health-promoting antioxidants and high nutritional value, and creating distinctive flavour and aroma profiles. Kokomodo has also successfully scaled its technology from lab-scale to semi-industrial production, demonstrating proof of concept.

Pluriâ??s advanced, patented 3D cell expansion platform complements these achievements by enabling the rapid, cost-effective, and consistent growth of plant cells on a large scale. Pluriâ??s platform can expand a single cell into billions of distinct cells, and its bioreactor system and PluriMatrix technology provide a controlled, 3D environment to ensure fast, reliable, and scalable cell production. With a fully automated, GMP-certified manufacturing facility, Pluri's technology ensures batch-to-batch consistency, essential for scaling production and maintaining product quality.

The combination of Kokomodoâ??s innovative cacao cell lines and Pluriâ??s scalable, cost-effective platform can help overcome the technical barriers to large-scale cultivated cacao production, improving both the quantity and consistency of the product.

Shraddha Warde

shraddha.warde@mmactiv.com