



Pierre Buffet

Domobios Bringing a disruptive solution to an invisible problem



Millions of people suffer from dust mite allergies. Years of research in Belgium has identified a new way to combat these microscopic pests. We spoke to entrepreneur Pierre Buffet, who's leading the commercialisation of a ground-breaking approach to allergy control.

DOMOBIOS®

"This is not a niche market," explained Pierre, referencing the fact that up to one in five Europeans suffer respiratory allergies linked to dust mites. "The potential market for Acar'Up, the first product from Domobios, is huge." It was the company's approach to this opportunity that singled it out as the 2015 Fast 50 Rising Star.

Domobios is firmly rooted in pure research. "Dr. Anne-Catherine Mailleux began her work into dust mites in 2005," said Pierre. "After four years, she discovered the pheromones they use to communicate." This led to thoughts of developing a product to exploit the discovery. Three more years of R&D followed before the partnership with Pierre was established. Domobios was founded in 2013 and Acar'Up launched in 2013. It is a spin-off company of the Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve and the Université Libre de Bruxelles.

A unique solution to a global problem

"Ours is a disruptive product. It doesn't kill dust mites; it attracts them to better eliminate them. It's much more efficient," said Pierre. "It does the opposite from many competitors' products, which are insecticides. Others are vaccinations, which fight the symptom not the cause. Doctors and analysts like our product because it gets to the root of the problem."

Acar'Up is a solution that's sprayed onto a mat, causing mites to cluster on the mat, which can then be washed to eliminate them. It's effective biomimicry, fooling mites into behaving in a way that allows them to be easily removed.

Today, Domobios has 16 employees, many involved in developing new initiatives. Due for release in 2016 is a test to identify the presence of dust mites and a product addressing mite allergy in dogs. "So far the strategy has been to achieve local success in Belgium," said Pierre. "Of course we have growth plans, both within and beyond Europe." The company is looking to do deals with major pharmaceutical companies, initially in France and aiming at the non-prescription market.

The benefits that come with Fast 50 recognition

"There are lots of small pharmaceutical firms out there, many with short lives. Being a Fast 50 winner improves our credibility and visibility," commented Pierre when asked about the value of being picked as the Rising Star for 2015. "It gives us wider recognition in the industry and has generated much more interest in what we're doing."

"Winning also brings recognition for the people inside our company. It's exciting being part of a fast-moving and innovative business, which changes every six months."

Domobios faces challenges around growth, such as refining its business model and choosing the best distribution partners for expanding beyond Belgium. Finding the right way forward is imperative for the company's future success. Pierre neatly summed up the forward-looking strategy for the business: "We need to grow as fast as possible."