



Rise and Grind
Fergus Moore, Revive Eco
Scotland

Fergus Moore had long dreamed of becoming an entrepreneur. His grandfather, a successful small business owner and venture capitalist, had instilled in him a desire to build something out of nothing. He saw from an early age that being a businessperson has its perks: like the ability to set your own hours and your own priorities. But it also gave him the ability to create things and see them take shape. He always knew that he wanted to make something that would have an impact – whether that be on environmental, social, or economic issues.

He didn't know it at the time, but his neighbor Scott Kennedy shared the same dream.

Fergus and Scott grew up in the same neighborhood in Glasgow, Scotland – a ten-minute walk from one another. They attended the same high school, though they didn't know each other too well at the time. It wasn't until they both attended the University of Strathclyde that they discovered how much they had in common.

When the two young men were placed on the same team for a class project as part of their entrepreneurship program, it turned out to be a fortunate pairing.

In addition to their passion for entrepreneurship, the two shared a few other things. Both young men were working in coffee shops to pay for school. After making thousands of coffees – and throwing out filter after filter of spent grounds at the end of their shifts – they had both started to realize something. It wasn't just one "aha! moment," in particular, but many smaller ones over time. They realized that coffee grounds, like cups and straws, represented a major source of waste that the industry hadn't really taken into consideration. Each year, in the tiny country of Scotland alone, between 40,000 and 50,000 tons of coffee grounds are thrown away. Across the UK, it's half a million. Worldwide, that number is exponentially higher.

Most of the coffee grounds in the world end up in massive, smelly landfills, where they emit methane – a major greenhouse gas that is contributing to nearly half of global warming. By 2050, as many as 3.4 billion tons of food waste will enter the global waste stream – and coffee grounds are a small, but nonetheless important, part of this.

Fergus and Scott knew it didn't have to be that way. "We were seeing firsthand the amount of food waste in general that was going out in the trash at the end of every single shift, and it was something that didn't feel right to us," Fergus says. "It felt like there was definitely more value there. It seemed to be something that people could use."

And so, at the age of 23, they teamed up to try to develop a solution to all that coffee-ground waste. Overwhelmed with the scale of the issue, they began with some online research. They discovered many ways that used coffee grounds could be reused and recycled: as fertilizer or compost, as a natural face scrub, even as insect repellent. Someone just needed to figure out an effective and business-savvy way to turn this waste product into something useful. As thrifty Scotsmen, the idea was compelling. As enterprising entrepreneurs, they decided to give it a shot.

What started as a class project has now turned into a full-scale company called Revive Eco. After three years of work in the lab, Fergus and Scott are testing out their creation. They weren't the only people who believed in the project. A grant of a quarter of a million euros from Zero Waste Scotland helped them develop the technology and test it in a lab before taking it to the real world. And they're still just 26.

In Scotland, coffee shops play an important cultural role. They're hubs for intellectual and philosophical discussion. They pulse with a unique energy, and provide a cozy space where people can take shelter from the country's harsh elements: wind, rain, and fog. Young people especially flock to them – in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Inverness, and elsewhere too.

There are more than 20 coffee-roasting companies in Scotland, and each year Glasgow hosts a renowned international coffee festival. The coffee culture is thriving, but that comes with an unfortunate byproduct: massive amounts of waste. “The initial shock was just the volume of waste,” Fergus says. “When you go into Starbucks and get your cappuccino, you don't see the waste. Even if you do see it, it just seems like such a small, little puck of waste, you don't really think about how much that all adds up when you take the millions and billions of people drinking coffee every single day.”

“You hear about carbon emissions, but once you actually start looking into the numbers, it's difficult to comprehend: the number of hectares of forest being chopped, the number of tons of coffee waste, the number of tons of palm oil, the number of carbon emissions. It's really hard to even fathom,” Fergus says.

Fergus and Scott are leading the way to a better world, and so is their country. Scotland was the first country in the world to set a goal of running 100 percent on renewable energy by 2020 – and they have actually reached it. Offshore wind farms like the Beatrice Offshore Wind Farm and the Seagreen Wind Farm provide clean energy to hundreds of thousands of Scottish homes.

Now the country is bringing its waste goals in line with its renewable energy ones. By 2025, the Scottish government has pledged to send less than 5 percent of all waste to landfills, while ensuring it recycles 70 percent of the rest. The government plans to remove all plastic packaging from products by 2030, and to reduce food waste by one-third in the coming years. For Fergus, the most important thing was to tackle food waste in a reasonable and down to earth way. To take things one step at a time. “For us, what we are doing just makes sense,” he says. “We're driven by logic.”

Despite being a small startup, they're already speaking with some of the biggest players in the coffee industry. What if these companies got on board? What could they accomplish then?

In February 2020, they completed the prototype of an invention they been testing –an industrial sized machine that can convert coffee grounds into environmentally-friendly products. If they can get the next round of investments, they will find a way to scale the project even further--and that could change the world.

Just as two young entrepreneurs in Scotland can play a role in tackling food waste, so too must an entire generation. And they won't just need help from the titans of the coffee industry, but from also from other change makers, and – perhaps most importantly – from consumers.

“Our generation seems to be far more interested in sustainability and leading a more impactful life, rather than simply making as much money as possible,” Fergus says. “I think change does have to come from a shift in mindset, and I would hope that our generation can be the one that can push them more toward that direction.”

What humans do over the next 50 years will determine the fate of all life on the planet.

David Attenborough

Call to Action: Turn waste into something useful. Use your imagination to create innovative, positive action. Follow Fergus https://twitter.com/revive_eco?lang=en and learn about ReviveEco <https://revive-eco.com/>

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