Eat Well, Live Well.

PRESS RELEASE

Ajinomoto Co., Inc.
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Ajinomoto Co. Invests in NEXT NEW WORLD Inc., a Silk-Protein-Based Pet Healthcare Products Startup

Supporting Efforts to Meet the Health and Wellness Needs of the Pets as "Part of the Family"

TOKYO, June 22, 2026 – Ajinomoto Co., Inc. ("Ajinomoto Co.") has invested in NEXT NEW WORLD Inc., ("NNW"), a startup company engaged in the research and development of silk-derived functional materials and the commercialization of related products, as well as their applications in pet healthcare business. This investment was made through Ajinomoto Group Ventures*, Ajinomoto Co.'s corporate venture capital arm, as part of its startup investment activities. Through this investment, Ajinomoto Co. will explore opportunities to expand its functional materials business based on its AminoScience capabilities and to extend it into new application areas.

* Ajinomoto Group Ventures is the branded name of Ajinomoto Co.'s corporate venture capital (CVC) initiative launched in 2020.

In recent years, as wellness-oriented lifestyles have gained momentum both in Japan and abroad, interest in the value of health for all lifestyles is growing, including for pets. In the pet sector specifically, Japan's domestic pet market reached JPY 1.57 trillion (approx. USD 9.85 billion) in 2023, spanning live-pet sales, veterinary pharmaceuticals, and other pet-related services. Within this total, the pet food market is large and fast-growing at roughly JPY 464.7 billion (approx. USD 2.92 billion) and on track to reach 107.6% of its 2023 level by 2026, while the pet supplement market continues to expand at roughly JPY 10.6 billion (approx. USD 66.5 million) and 114.0% of its 2023 level by 2026 (compiled and adapted from Fuji Keizai's 2024 Pet-Related Market Marketing Overview). As pets age, the need for everyday care to manage chronic conditions such as kidney disease is also becoming more apparent. The challenge, however, is that conventional pet foods and ordinary supplements have struggled to combine functionality with palatability.

NW harnesses silk-derived functional proteins to develop and commercialize materials with adsorptive properties, focusing on everyday care that improves quality of life and eases the burden both for pets and their owners. Ajinomoto Co. decided to make this investment in light of NNW's distinctive ability to develop markets through veterinary clinics and specialized channels, its goal of contributing to longer healthy lifespans through food and nutrition in the preventive and complementary areas that veterinary treatment alone cannot cover, and the material technology and business development capabilities the company possesses.

NNW's manufacturing method liquefies silk protein while preserving its higher-order structure, which the company has utilized to produce "Karada (body) Silk®", a functional material that retains a nanoscale porous architecture (Figure 1). NNW's characteristic lies in its capability to provide a stable supply of this material. Whereas common hydrolyzed silk loses its adsorptive function as its molecular structure is broken down, this method keeps the pores intact, giving the material the ability to adsorb ammonia and cholesterol.

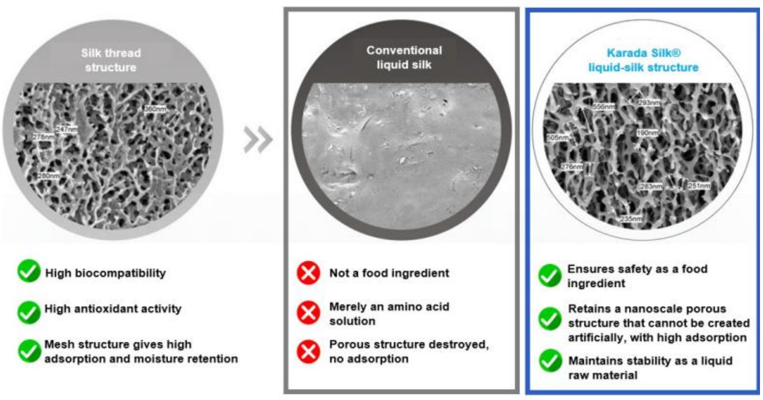

Figure 1. Comparison of molecular structures during silk protein liquefaction

Ajinomoto Co. has been committed to value creation through developing and providing functional materials in the food and healthcare business areas based on AminoScience. While its functional materials development has so far centered on amino acids, this investment opens the way to explore a new materials business area that leverages physical functions derived from protein structures. Going forward, through collaboration with NNW, Ajinomoto Co. will explore the potential for business partnership, work to maximize synergies with NNW's operations, and connect this to the creation of sustainable growth opportunities.

Guided by its purpose of "contributing to the well-being of all human beings, our society and our planet with AminoScience", the Ajinomoto Group will drive value creation centered on functional materials on a global scale. In doing so, it will contribute to achieving the roadmap it has set toward 2030 and to the sustainable creation of social and economic value.

Note: 1 USD = 159.39 yen (rate as of May 31, 2026)

Reference

Overview of NEXT NEW WORLD

(1) Company name: NEXT NEW WORLD Inc.
(2) Location: 6-2 Honcho, Kiryu, Gunma Prefecture (Head Office)
(3) Established: June 15, 2021
(4) Representative: Kotaro Takashima
(5) Business activities: Research and development of silk proteins; wholesale of silk raw materials for food and cosmetics; operation of SILKFULL, a healthcare brand for dogs and cats; operation of SILKFULL PRO, an exclusive brand for veterinary clinics; and operation of ZINZO, a healthcare brand for humans
(6) Number of employees: 13 (as of May 2026)

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