



NUTIVA

CASE STUDY



J.E.D.I.
COLLABORATIVE™
justice . equity . diversity . inclusion



COMPANY HISTORY

Nutiva is a pioneer of the organic plant-based food movement. For over 20 years, the company has been on a mission to build a better future through its commitment to supporting regenerative agriculture, organic farming communities, and revolutionizing the way the world eats.

Nutiva's origin story dates back to 1999 when founder John Roulac, driven by his fierce passion for wholesome superfoods, began selling hemp seed bars out of the back of his car. Nutiva has since evolved into a progressive company with international impact, serving the wellness needs of its customers and the economic needs of the farming communities it sources from.

Nutiva continues to champion its mission by both refining and expanding the scope of its impact. For most of its history, Nutiva's corporate giving investments were channeled with a specific focus on sustainable and regenerative agriculture. Now, through the creation of its Bright Future Fund, the company is more deeply integrating its values of justice and equity into its impact initiatives while staying true to its roots in ecological advocacy. As long-time Nutiva leader Steve Naccarato explains, "In order to revolutionize the way the world eats, which has been our goal from the beginning, we have to prioritize the planet and its people."

The aim of Nutiva's Bright Future Fund is to actualize its vision of a bright future for all by driving change along three core pillars: farmer empowerment, climate action, and food education. To bring this vision to life, every Nutiva product purchased helps to actively support organizations, co-ops and groups within and beyond their international supply networks. To date, the company has reinvested over \$5.5 million back into the ecosystems and communities they are connected to locally and globally.

Nutiva has made its commitment to the principles of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion clear as a founding donor of J.E.D.I Collaborative. The company is propelled by its optimistic belief that a bright future for all is possible, but it stays grounded in the pragmatic stance that progress is a process that involves ongoing effort. Nutiva's team brings its core value of tenacity, amongst others, to the JEDI table because they know that much work lays ahead both at the company and industry levels.



CORE BELIEFS

Nutiva's purpose is to revolutionize the way the world eats with foods that nurture people and the planet. From the start, the vision behind the company was to make nutritionally dense superfoods widely accessible to the public.

In the beginning, founder John Roulac specifically sought to explore healthy ingredients that were not being tapped by the overall market. By incorporating hemp, chia seeds, coconut oil, and other superfoods in the products they developed, John and Steve were able to supply consumers with the benefits of natural ingredients while engaging with the environment in a sustainable manner.

As Nutiva has grown and evolved, its dedication to broader education on the nutritional value of hemp, MCT oil, coconut oil, avocado oil, and other organic ingredients has become increasingly important. Nutiva sees its products as a form of community outreach; the more consumers who are aware of the benefits of eating organic, nutrient-dense foods, the more its vision of a bright future for all is realized. And it comes full circle with the farms that Nutiva sources from—the larger Nutiva's customer base is, the greater the economic impact it can have on farming communities and families, contributing to an overall healthier social and economic system.

Prompted with the question of who their target customers are, the Nutiva team simply replied, "Everyone." A fundamental part of their mission is to make organic foods available and accessible to all, regardless of economic status or other demographic factors. Reasonable product pricing is a large facet of this goal, as is Nutiva's practice of regularly donating products to local food banks and hunger relief efforts. Another way the company carries out their value of accessibility is by creating healthy and natural alternatives to common products. Responding to public demand, Nutiva has made versions of several products that replace animal fats with plant-based fats like avocado oil, coconut oil, or a blend of both as with plant-based Ghee. In doing so, not only has the company created a healthy product, but it has opened the door for more people to engage with those types of wellness products.





In addition to delivering customer satisfaction, Nutiva ensures that all the ingredients it utilizes are sourced ethically. The company's goal is to consistently employ sustainable practices to show respect and give back to the communities that grow the ingredients used in its products. This prioritization of ethics in the process of acquiring ingredients has led Nutiva to support small-scale farming communities on an international level.

One of Nutiva's deep-rooted partnerships is with Natural Habitats, a company committed to the sustainable production of organic palm oil with the utmost social responsibility and environmental stewardship. Their partnership aims to flip the script on palm oil, proving that palm grown with regenerative agriculture practices and third-party certifications can preserve the environment and native species where it is grown, create sustainable livelihoods for independent farmers, and support greater social equity for agricultural communities in Ecuador by providing education, healthcare, and technical assistance.

Nutiva's high ethical and environmental standards are also evident in the newest addition to its line of products: organic avocado oil sourced from Ethiopia. Over the last four years, the company supported the development of a new traceable supply network which has grown to include more than 78,000 organically certified smallholder farmers whose livelihoods are bolstered by this economic opportunity.

Nutiva calls its newest product "avo-conscious" on account of three key qualities: it is conflict-free, climate-smart, and community-first. By steering clear of the conflict commodity status associated with many avocados from Mexico, Nutiva's partnership stays focused on social and ecological initiatives that put their values into action. Its projects on the ground include regenerative agriculture education to help promote soil carbon sequestration and biodiversity as well as a nursery training program with the goal of creating economic independence for female farmers. By nurturing such synergistically beneficial relationships, Nutiva is supporting equitable development and simultaneously bringing the highest quality organic products to consumers.



DEDICATION TO JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (JEDI)

As a mission-driven company with a fundamental commitment to community and progress, Nutiva already had the foundation upon which many of the core JEDI principles rest. When One Step Closer launched J.E.D.I Collaborative, its initiative to more deeply embed justice, equity, diversity and inclusion into the natural products industry, Nutiva immediately stepped up to the plate as a key sponsor and dove headfirst into evaluating its own JEDI practices. According to Naccarato, Nutiva's contribution demonstrated how important JEDI values are to the Nutiva community, but more importantly it was an opportunity to acknowledge that "we're not quite there yet and we need to keep learning in order to fully align our impact with our intentions."

The company's JEDI journey began with a self-evaluation of where they stood in terms of representing the values they felt were most important. The Nutiva team found that they, in fact, already had a company that was rich with many significant pillars of JEDI principles. This was evident in company practices such as employee new product tastings which united the whole team while getting everyone involved in the process of product ideation and promotion. Additionally, they were already in the habit of holding weekly team meetings in which members from every department at Nutiva could engage in communal workshops and contribute feedback and ideas for the company. Nutiva's turnover rate was incredibly low, with more than 50% of the members having worked at the company for over four years. Overall, the community within Nutiva was already strong, but the team was determined to go further.

Though their workforce was already diverse, Nutiva committed to hiring an even wider diversity of individuals who represented a value fit over a cultural fit within the company. Nutiva also worked with The Avarna Group to offer unconscious bias training as a means of educating staff on microaggressions in work environments and providing guidance on how to empower colleagues and partners. Nutiva also stepped up their brand activism, including promoting their "For the Greater Good" campaign, "Avo-Conscious" campaign and hosting webinars on racism in the food system. Additionally, Nutiva committed to ensuring their products were accessible to individuals on a broader spectrum, both by making them financially accessible as well as working with institutions such as Walmart to facilitate wider distribution. Nutiva has also committed to supporting organizations and partners all along their supply chain. Not only have they kept up with their Bright Future Fund to give back to their farming partners, but they have also engaged with organizations all over the world by contributing money to various international sustainability projects as well as women and minority-run farming groups.





CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO JEDI

Nutiva has already made great strides in incorporating the values of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, taking a holistic approach and interweaving the practices organically into all aspects of its company mission. “We believe that inclusion is a state of being valued, respected and supported,” says Naccarato, “We’re proud to focus on the needs of every member of our extensive community—from our staff to our farmers and processors—to ensure we don’t disregard or ignore differences, but promote individual awareness for fair practices. We strive to embed these key beliefs at every level of our company.” One of the core ways they have done so is through the formation of an internal JEDI Task Force that meets regularly to coordinate company-wide initiatives to engage their team members with JEDI-oriented programming and education on a regular basis.

This past year, for example, they honored a wider range of multicultural observances as a company than ever before, a practice they look forward to implementing annually moving forward. This included celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a day off at Nutiva and a day on for community service, a community fasting activity for Ramadan, as well as the celebration of Asian-American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Pride Month, Juneteenth, and Indian Independence Day. Nutiva has also taken a strong anti-racist stance by hosting a series of educational webinars on food equity and racial justice in the food system and by donating to the Asian Pacific Environmental Network in effort to help #StopAsianHate.

This is just the beginning of Nutiva’s efforts, however, and they continue to seek opportunities to put their JEDI values into action, such as through their recent invitation to the Muwekma Ohlone Indian Tribe to give a presentation about the indigenous history of their local area. They are especially interested in exploring opportunities to apply their JEDI lens at the source, recognizing the potential of bringing their sourcing partners more deeply into the fold of their JEDI journey.

“There are no easy fixes in a world where systemic inequality is pervasive. We still have a lot to learn and it’s truly a lifelong journey,” recognizes Naccarato. “We know we must continue to examine our blind spots and drill down deeper into our values and beliefs as a community and as a brand. We’re staying grounded in the reality that much more work needs to be done to build the bright future we know is possible.”

With the JEDI-centric mentality Nutiva has adopted, they are determined to continue growing the company without compromising the culture and values so deeply ingrained in their roots. For Nutiva, the JEDI journey is not only about taking action in the present, but also about building a legacy with momentum that lasts throughout the company’s future. Through the various international initiatives that the company has already engaged in, it is clear that Nutiva has begun to extend their JEDI influence beyond the boundaries of the company itself, something they aim to continue doing as they find new ways to give back to the community that supports them.

