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## Chobani will help R.I. nonprofit feed malnourished children worldwide

The top-selling yogurt company will partner with North Kingstown-based Edesia Nutrition to fight malnutrition

By [Edward Fitzpatrick](#) Globe Staff, Updated September 20, 2021



*Edesia Nutrition factory in North Kingstown, R.I.* EDWARD FITZPATRICK

PROVIDENCE — Chobani, the top-selling yogurt brand in the United States, on Monday announced it will put its name on a peanut spread made in Rhode Island and give 100 percent of the profits to [Edesia Nutrition](#) to help feed malnourished children throughout the world.

Edesia, which has a manufacturing plant in North Kingstown, makes Plumpy'Nut, a fortified peanut paste that treats severe malnutrition in places such as Haiti and Somalia.

Chobani – which makes Greek-style yogurt, oat milk, and creamers in factories in New York and Idaho – will now put the power of its sales and distribution force behind

Edesia-made peanut-butter nutrient spreads. The new product line is called “Chobani Ends Child Hunger.”



*Some of the peanut-butter-flavored spreads that Chobani will distribute as part of a partnership with Edesia Nutrition, based in North Kingstown, Rhode Island.*

“Other corporations give 1 percent. They are giving 100 percent of the profit on these products,” said Navyn Salem, founder and CEO of Edesia. “Their values are quite different than the rest of corporate America. They should be a model to many others.”

Salem said she heard about Chobani while watching a [60 Minutes segment](#) on Hamdi Ulukaya, a Turkish immigrant of Kurdish descent who founded Chobani in 2005, and she applied to the company’s incubator program.

“Edesia was the first nonprofit participant in our incubator program in 2019, and we knew we had to work together because our missions are very aligned,” Ulukaya said. “Childhood hunger in the U.S. and malnutrition globally are dual crises, and we have the opportunity and the responsibility to take additional action through this beautiful partnership.”

Chobani’s president and chief operating officer, Peter McGuinness, noted Edesia had produced the “MeWe” line of peanut butter snacks to meet the nutritional needs of babies, kids and adults. But now Chobani will put its name on those products and given them

much wider distribution, at places such as Stop & Shop, Wegmans, Fresh Direct, and Target.

McGuinness said Edesia shares Chobani's goal of "making good food for all."

"We didn't want someone making \$40 smoothies in Brooklyn," he said. "We had a conversation and said why don't we take the consumer piece of the business and help you get in more doors and stores to fuel Edesia and do more good in the world."

Salem said the world is seeing an unprecedented level of hunger because of the confluence of violent conflicts, COVID-19 disruptions to the economy and supply chains, rising food prices, natural disasters, and climate change.

"There have never been this many factors contributing to increasing numbers of emergency and crisis levels of food insecurity," she said.



*Navyn Salem, Photo by Heidi Reed*

Salem said Edesia has provided a larger container of the peanut-butter flavored spreads to Haiti, which was rocked by a [powerful earthquake](#) in August, and it is working with a factory in Haiti to produce the food there.

Also, Edesia has recently shipped containers of the nutritious food to Somalia, Chad, and Uganda, Salem said. And it is watching developments in Afghanistan, aiming to provide food assistance there when the situation is stable, she said.

"We are looking at what is going on in the world to see where we can make the biggest impact," Salem said.

Each container holds 1,700 boxes of Plumpy'Nut, and each box can feed one child. When children eat that food three times a day, they can rebound from severe malnutrition, where they can't hold up their heads, in seven weeks, she said.

Since being formed in 2009, Edesia has shipped its ready-to-eat foods to 60 countries, reaching 14.5 million children.

Edesia also is hoping its products can help address peanut allergies in the United States, Salem said.

Introducing peanuts as early as 4 to 6 months of age may help reduce peanut allergies by 80 percent among at-risk children, such as those with mild, moderate to severe eczema and/or egg allergy, who should consume peanut-containing foods under medical supervision, the company said. The spread is made to reduce the choking hazard associated with the early introduction of peanuts, the company said.

Named after the Roman goddess of food, Edesia last year announced it had [invested \\$500,000](#) in a new production line that let it produce another 324,000 packets per day of Plumpy'Nut.

On Monday, Salem said the company has invested another \$500,000 on top of that to expand its production for food banks and school lunch programs in the United States. And now that it is teaming up with Chobani, Edesia will look at opening a new factory in Rhode Island that would add to the capacity of the existing facility in the Quonset Business Park, she said.

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