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FemTech, AgriTech, and FoodTech: Israel's intellectual property beckons investors

Joshua M. Peck, in discussion with Lilach Luzzatto Shukrun, Head of Engineering and Medical Devices at The Luzzatto Group, reports on the growth in three technology areas that are revolutionizing innovation in Israel.

Could the Israeli tech sector be any hotter? It's hard to imagine it could. With freshly patented ideas leading the way, a recent international survey once again found that the country leads the world in the ratio of tech investment to the total size of its economy. And that investment is paying off in startling innovation, seizing the imagination of IP-savvy investors worldwide.

At 75 years of age this spring, Israel is still one young country. Its technological know-how continues to astound the world, drawing capital and trading partners from places as far-flung as



Lilach Luzzatto Shukrun

Photo credit: Yoram Reshef

China, Japan, Russia, and of course, Israel's favorite trading partner, the United States. A disproportionate number of those foreign investors and entrepreneurs engaging with the Israeli tech sector are represented by one Israeli entity – The Luzzatto Group¹, an Israeli IP law firm and consultancy. The Group, with thousands of tech patents in Israel and abroad under its belt, is leading in the development and spread of talent and innovation in "Silicon Wadi," – the nickname for the Israeli Silicon Valley.

¹ <https://www.theluzzattogroup.com/en/>

Résumé

Lilach Luzzatto Shukrun is the Head of Engineering and Medical Devices with The Luzzatto Group, an Israel-based, internationally active IP group. A fifth-generation member of The Group, which combines legal advice and business counseling for Israeli and international clients, Lilach handles cases involving FoodTech, FemTech, medical devices, defense industry, energy engineering, automotive, robotics, agriculture, cannabis, software, industrial production, and more.

Lilach also works with design applications and IP strategy, helping start-ups and global corporations with complex interrelated patent cases, and providing commercially focused and proactive advice.

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The Luzzatto Group is a proud five generations and 154 years old, with pre-Israeli-roots in the Jewish community of Milan, Italy. The Group provides full service for inventors, entrepreneurs, and investors seeking IP protections or IP investments, as well as legal support. We'll come back to one of the fifth-generation partners who make up the modern leading edge of the Luzzatto legacy.

In this article, we'll look at three of the many tech subsectors driving the excitement around IP developed by Israeli entrepreneurs, to the benefit of investors worldwide.

The birth and growth of FemTech

Whether you are a woman, a man, or neither: Have you ever considered just how little regard technology seems to have for women and girls? Almost every medical device, pharmaceutical, and even consumer product is attuned primarily to the physiology and psychology of the human male. This may not be news to you, but it's an enduring issue that hasn't yet been adequately addressed. And it's not just medicine. You've probably noticed how an average-sized woman in an average-sized car wears a seatbelt - yet it's as if the designer didn't know that more than half of human adults have...breasts.

How about the apps on your phone? Many of them are geared to the singly focused male attention span and male sensibilities. Don't believe us? Look at the list of women's favorites², which departs significantly from men's.

Israeli entrepreneurs are stepping up and focusing on the gender gap in technology and across all industries, and making use of intellectual property protections to safeguard their inventions. More and more inventors and entrepreneurs are pouring time and energy into the FemTech sector, a name coined by an American entrepreneur just seven years ago. Publicly disclosed FemTech deals hit the \$2.5 billion mark in value worldwide in 2021, spread over some 300 transactions, according to a McKinsey survey. With some half the world's population identified as female, one need not be a prophet to see the profits coming —and Israeli tech is seriously in on the FemTech mix.

"The Israeli economy is leading the way on FemTech, among many other sectors," says Lilach Luzzatto Shukrun³, one of the current generation of The Luzzatto Group, and the head of the Engineering and Medical Devices division in the Luzzatto patent law firm. "Women's needs have often been ignored by the tech world, and, over the last few years, the Israel entrepreneurs I work with are starting to change that."

Woman-specific medical tech on the way

"10% of all women suffer from endometriosis, which falls under the definition of a 'transparent

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Publicly disclosed FemTech deals hit the \$2.5 billion mark in value worldwide in 2021.
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disease," Luzzatto says, "but little effort is invested in studying the condition and researching solutions. I wonder what would happen if 10% of all men suffered from a similar condition? At last, our Israeli FemTech community is beginning to study it in depth and even attack it."

The medical profession may still lead the way, with a recognition that, for example, cardiac problems and physical pain plays out differently in women than in men, and may call for different approaches, for example, in anesthetic intervention. "We have to look at every product and service with fresh eyes, and not only in the medical industry. The way everything is engineered must be re-gear'd to make it work for women," Luzzatto adds. "Our clients from our tech sector are doing that, with great success. Those who see the value of this technology and its patented innovations should get in on the act."

"As a group with 80% women in management, our mission is to develop the FemTech industry worldwide", Luzzatto says. "That is why our team members are key players in live conferences and social media groups that are looking at the many paths to making technology woman-friendly. Up until recently, it was solely about fertility, gynecological issues, and sexual health, but they now understand that women's concerns and perceptions are relevant to everything."

One Luzzatto client and financial partner is Pulsenmore⁴, which has pioneered the development of home ultrasound scanning during pregnancy. The patient scans her own uterus with a specialized instrument the company delivers to her, and her smartphone then communicates with her obstetrician so both can observe her growing baby. This technology has begun to spread around the world, and recently has seen utility in Ukraine, where women within the war zone have had difficulty getting to medical offices or hospitals for care.

Luzzatto fully expects more promising innovation in FemTech to follow in the years to come.

The seeds of AgriTech

To highlight another of Israel's rapidly-growing sectors, we will go to the ground — specifically AgriTech — which in many cases goes hand in hand with Food Technology ("FoodTech"). Both demand multi-disciplinary knowledge.

The Luzzatto Group, also with a northern Israeli office in Qiryat Shemona — the heart of the Galilee region's agricultural land of plenty — has deep roots in the innovation of the agricultural sector, working with companies that manage such technologies as drip irrigation; developing and perfecting fertilizers and pesticides; working with start-ups focused on yield and harvest management; and the growing field of cannabis technology and processing for medical use.



"A simple example of AgriTech innovation is that now Israeli farmers can treat each plant as an individual and provide customized care," Luzzatto says. "A camera, a drone, or a sensor-based system will reveal that one plant in a field is struggling with a lack of water, another needs more light, and a third is trying to fight off a weird species of beetle. The farmers can use the abundance of data gathered from the field to give each avocado, orange, and date palm exactly the attention and treatment it needs. That used to be prohibitively expensive, but technology has made it viable. The recent significant leaps come on the heels of the latest programming technology, including AI and machine learning; capturing the detailed data in real-time makes ideal solutions possible."

What's on the FoodTech menu?

Another related tech sector is FoodTech. The new science of food includes elements of chemistry and biology, and engineering across the board — chemical, biological, and mechanical engineers all have crucial roles in this sector. The patent challenges for FoodTech companies

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Cardiac problems and physical pain plays out differently in women than in men, and may call for different approaches.
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are particularly steep; they want to obtain IP protection for their innovation without giving away trade secrets that could aid competitors. Innovation is found not only in the food products themselves, but also in trademarks, copyrights, and in how the industry is supported and financed. A top-flight legal and consulting team must serve from that far-ranging menu.

Luzzatto mentions that one of the newer initiatives she works on is the search for food that reminds consumers of meat, but isn't. "I can't tell you the formula," Luzzatto — a pescatarian herself — says with a smile, "but our clients are moving the world to a much less meaty future, with organic food cleverly developed in a laboratory, healthy and clean, that never walked the Earth. I've had the mock hamburger, and it's great. We're still working on 'steak.'" Another excellent example is from a client from the gluten-free flour field, "he is leading a real revolution for celiac patients and succeeds in bringing to their table equally delicious food that does not endanger them, at a comfortable cost. This is another example of how this field changes people's daily quality of life and health."

In both AgriTech and FoodTech, thousands of Israeli-bred patents have been granted to these companies, providing patent protection both domestically and abroad.

The way forward, partnering with Israel

And just why is an IP group so visible on the high-tech front? That's easy: there would be no incentive for inventors or investors to dive into new technology ventures in Israel if what they discover and develop can easily be pilfered by a rival. That's where intellectual property protection comes in and turns innovation into an asset. The Luzzatto Group works in Israel and globally, collaborating with its clients throughout the process until they obtain IP protection everywhere it's needed. The Group also represents many foreign companies, some of them internationally known brands, seeking IP protection in Israel. In fact, The Luzzatto Group represents all five of the most active foreign companies working with Israeli high-tech companies.

Luzzatto notes that the desire for growth in Silicon Wadi is so great that last summer, the Israel Innovation Authority committed about \$4.5 million to attract skilled workers from abroad and train workers already living in Israel. "This diversification

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The Luzzatto Group represents all five of the most active foreign companies working with Israeli high-tech companies.
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of manpower in the local ecosystem will help maintain local high-tech's position as a global leader," Dror Bin, CEO of the Authority, told JNS, the Jewish News Syndicate.

The call to join Israeli high-tech is almost irresistible, according to the government itself. The Israeli Innovation Authority, in just one recent invitation to foreign collaborators, cited interest from China, Thailand, Canada, Italy, and Spain, to name just a few. A disproportionate number of those foreign assets are Luzzatto clients, of course. For the technology industry of Israel and those in the US who would reap its benefits through partnership and collaboration, the future is bright. "Some of our best friends are American investors in our clients' intellectual property," Luzzatto concludes. She invites even more to join in and get a piece of the IP action.

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