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## WEALTH

# Cooking oil, clean fuel, and the work nobody else did

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Within three years, KH Marque had become Southeast Asia's largest used cooking oil collector.

Image: Supplied

The kitchens and food courts that feed Southeast Asia's cities have always produced something beyond the meals they serve, and for years, no one has seriously considered what to do with it.

Shu Fei Zeng spent more than two decades at Vitol and Glencore, two of the largest energy commodity trading companies in the world, watching

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global supply chains function and, more instructively, watching where they broke down.

She understood the mechanics of moving raw materials across continents, the compliance pressures, the documentation failures, and the points at which opacity became expensive.

When she turned her attention to used cooking oil, discarded daily by restaurants, canteens, and street vendors across Southeast Asia, she was not looking at a charitable project. She was looking at a structural problem that the sustainable aviation fuel industry had not yet solved, and she knew precisely how to solve it.

In 2021, she founded KH Marque. Within three years, it had become Southeast Asia's largest used cooking oil collector, operating across 11 countries and supplying traceable, low-carbon feedstock to some of the world's largest aviation and energy companies.

## **Building what the industry had left undone**

The founding logic was deliberate and specific. Collect used cooking oil at the source. Certify every batch with full traceability. Deliver it to buyers who face serious regulatory and reputational consequences if their feedstock supply cannot be verified.

What Zeng identified was not simply a business opportunity but a gap that larger, more established operators had overlooked, partly because fixing it required working at a level of granularity, including individual vendors, small food businesses, and informal sector relationships, that most commodity firms do not consider worth their attention.

She built collection networks one country at a time, formalized relationships with thousands of small businesses, and worked to ensure that vendors who had previously discarded used cooking oil without understanding its value could participate in a commercial supply chain that offered them something in return. The greenhouse gas savings produced by KH Marque's feedstock, 88 to 93 percent compared to fossil-derived alternatives, are not incidental. They are the result of choosing to do the structural work that others had declined to do.

The S&P Global Energy Awards named Zeng Chief Trailblazer of the Year in 2025, acknowledging the commercial results and the regulatory complexity of operating at scale across multiple jurisdictions simultaneously. It was a recognition of difficulty as much as achievement, the kind of difficulty that only becomes visible to observers once the work is already done.

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Global buyers in the sustainable aviation fuel market have one requirement above all others: they need to know exactly what they are buying and where it came from. Zeng built the UCO Tracker, a proprietary software platform that provides real-time traceability and carbon-intensity reporting for every batch of feedstock that moves through KH Marque's network, not as a product feature but as the operational foundation on which every commercial relationship the company holds depends.

The platform was developed in direct response to the European SAF mandate and the due diligence standards of aviation companies working toward Net Zero targets. It works because it was built by people who understood what buyers actually needed, rather than what sellers found convenient to provide.

The TITAN Business Awards recognized Zeng as the Innovator of the Year and Sustainability Leader of the Year at the platinum level. This dual recognition reflected the fact that the technical and commercial dimensions of KH Marque's model are not separate efforts but the same effort, running on the same track.

Her profile has since been featured on Business Insider and Yahoo Finance, where her work has drawn attention from global energy majors seeking feedstock partners who can guarantee the composition of their supply chains. The attention reflects a wider recognition, gradual but now fairly clear, that the future of sustainable fuel depends on the kind of careful, operational groundwork that Zeng began laying in 2021.

## What the work actually produced

Shu Fei Zeng received a 2026 [Global Recognition Award](#) following an evaluation conducted by a panel of independent industry experts. Candidates were assessed using the Rasch model, a psychometric measurement framework that enables structured comparison across applicants excelling in different disciplines. She scored highest across every dimension, including vision and strategy, ethical decision-making, research methodology, international collaboration, and real-world impact.

Alex Sterling, a spokesperson for Global Recognition Awards, said: *"Shu Fei Zeng exemplifies exactly what this award stands for, a leader who identified a systemic gap, built a world-class solution, and delivered measurable impact at a global scale, making her an unambiguous choice for this recognition."*

What Zeng built required not just capital and connections but a willingness to operate at the level of individual vendors in markets where formal supply chains had not previously existed.

Few founders have managed to scale a company across 11 countries in under four years while simultaneously meeting the compliance demands of the world's most rigorous aviation buyers, and fewer still have done so in a sector that was, before they arrived, defined largely by informality.

What Zeng has demonstrated is that closing a structural gap in a global supply chain is possible when the person doing it has spent twenty years learning exactly how those chains work and, more importantly, where they do not, and that the most consequential industry shifts are often built not from disruption, but from a clear-eyed decision to do the work no one else has bothered to finish.

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