

EXCLUSIVE

## Universal Beauty Group Raises 6M Euros

- The French natural cosmetics company is known for its Végétolement Provence brand for hair salons and beauty professionals.

BY JENNIFER WEIL

**PARIS** – French natural cosmetics company Universal Beauty Group, known for its Végétolement Provence brand for hair salons and beauty professionals, has raised 6 million euros from a group of investors led by Connect Pro.

Connect Pro, a Marseille, France-based investment fund, was accompanied in the round, signed early Thursday afternoon, by private equity funds BNP Paribas Développement, Étoile Capital and the Région Sud Investissement fund.

The new capital will help Universal Beauty Group accelerate its development in the burgeoning natural beauty sector, which is forecast to register annual growth of 6 percent to 9 percent between 2021 and 2027.

“With the support of its teams, training academy and logistics base, [Universal Beauty Group] is ready to become a major player in alternative cosmetics and beauty,” the group said in a statement.

Part of the company’s strategy is to expand its product range and open a new concept store in Paris in spring 2022. A large investment is to be made into the group’s digital development and e-commerce, and

another focus will be on consolidating its international expansion.

Following the transaction, Universal Beauty Group’s founders Vincent Faraco and Jean-Marc Delabre will remain its largest shareholders and continue leading the company.

Universal Beauty Group raised 1.5 million euros of capital from private equity firm Audacia in 2017. That investment allowed Végétolement Provence to double its number of stock keeping units while launching into new categories, such as skin care, with lines like Hair Spa and Skin Spa. The brand introduced a collection for ethnic hair, called TSA, and the professional plant-based, powder hair-color range Cataplasme.

Since 2017, Universal Beauty Group also opened three own-brand concept salons alongside about 20 independent concept salons that are branded Végétolement Provence. The latest indie salon debuted in Lyon, France, in October.

Végétolement Provence products have garnered praise from hairstylists such as Charlie Le Mindu, Ben Mignot and Henry Olivier.

Delabre, a long-standing hairdressing professional, and Faraco, a marketing executive, created Universal Beauty in 2008. At the start, it produced and distributed hair care products for other companies. They then launched in 2011 their own natural hair care products under the Végétolement Provence label, to be kinder to the environment



Végétolement Provence products.

while keeping in mind clients’ and hairdressers’ health.

Universal Beauty Group has in its portfolio more than 275 skus. Végétolement Provence’s professional range includes more than 130 coloring references, including products using oxidation and others based on plants.

One hundred and forty skus are in hair and skin care for the general public. The group said its product resale rate greatly exceeds 20 percent, versus the usual resale rate of 5 percent in professional salons in France. That demonstrates the brand is rapidly expanding from a business-to-business model to include business-to-consumer reach, as well.

Universal Beauty Group, which is based in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France, has about 20 employees. It sold 170,000 products through more than

500 sales points and its e-shop in 2020.

Seventy percent of the group’s sales are rung up in mainland France; 15 percent on Reunion, the French island, and 15 percent abroad.

In 2021, the company expects to generate sales of 4 million euros and to have an earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization margin of about 20 percent.

Universal Beauty Group began searching for a new investor in May, which it said was met by strong interest at home and abroad, from hair care and beauty companies, as well as by private equity and family offices.

Richard Morgan Advisory acted as the financial adviser to Universal Beauty Group and led the capital-raising process. Law firm Volt Associés advised the group. Nova Partners advised the investors, and Deloitte Finance carried out the financial audit.