

Mercado Receives Series A Investment to Connect and Automate the First Mile to Final Mile of the Global Supply Chain.

Customers who sell their products online, can now buy and move them online as well.

DALLAS, TX [December 2021] -- [Mercado Labs](#), an online platform that automates the first mile of the import supply chain, announced today it has closed a Series A investment led by [SJF Ventures](#). Existing investors, [LiveOak Venture Partners](#), [Ironspring Ventures](#), and [Supply Chain Ventures](#) also participated in the round. The Series A funding will be used to accelerate Mercado's efforts to rapidly digitize and automate the ordering and transport of goods throughout the international supply chain.

Now more than ever, importers are looking to bring their procurement and logistics supply chain teams online. Creating operational excellence and solving vexing strategic challenges such as how to increase sales are twin missions of Mercado Labs. Importers have margin erosion due to rapid inflation, the need for resilience after several years of supply chain shocks, and Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) requirements. Mercado Labs was purpose built for times like these.

"We are excited to partner with SJF," said Rob Garrison, Mercado CEO and founder. "We share their vision for ESG and believe the first mile of the global supply chain is the perfect place to significantly move the needle. As most products are made globally, we share a passion for increasing visibility and transparency into how products are planned, bought, and moved globally. Our mission is to shine bright lights into dark corners."

The problem with the supply chain and how to solve it

The international supply chain is facing unprecedented challenges and obstacles –

with trade wars, tariffs, political considerations, sourcing shifts a pandemic, supply chain disruptions, and spiraling costs.

The pressures importers are currently facing to competitively get their products to market are enormous.

Mercado believes the timing is perfect to build a first to final mile digital bridge. Using the order as a lens into every critical aspect of the process. Mercado's next generation supply chain technology automates and connects the first mile of the supply chain, making it easier for importers to plan, buy, and ship the products they sell. The last 10 years have seen massive gains in the final mile. By connecting the first mile to the final importers can expect to see huge improvement in sales, operating efficiency, and corporate imperatives such as ESG and Resiliency.

Using modern technology, customers can now deliver products to their customers with unprecedented ease. However, when they purchase these products themselves it's entirely offline with significant friction and massive human intervention.

Two specific areas of focus for Mercado are helping clients improve their sales and ESG practices. Products are connected to demand to ensure optimal sales. Mercado automates and simplifies the process of vetting and maintaining compliance standards for importers by helping them understand how their entire network operates—from Tier 1, 2, and 3 suppliers to logistics providers.

This aspect pulled at SJF's mission, which is "to catalyze the development of highly successful businesses driving lasting, positive changes" by investing in high-growth companies that are working to create a healthier, smarter, and cleaner future.

"We look at businesses where the impact is embedded into the business model, so as the business grows and does well, the impact also scales," SJF Principal Jackie Lipkin said.

Lipkin said one specific thing that struck them about Mercado was that in order to

improve ESG practices in the supply chain, the plumbing of the transparency must be there first. Without detailed visibility into a company's supply chain there's no way to reduce waste or improve practices on the human labor side.

"We liked the idea that as Mercado creates increased visibility the impact scales, as well," Lipkin said.

Beyond the positive impact Mercado has on ESG standards, SJF also likes to work with companies in categories where there are large incumbents that are too expensive or cumbersome for a majority of their target market. Giving smaller companies the ability to change the way they're doing things with a new player coming into the game to disrupt it with technology. Since a majority of the supply chain is still running on email and Excel, SJF was excited about the opportunity to automate and create change in the industry.

With the investment, Mercado plans to rapidly accelerate both operational excellence and next-level solutions by bringing the import process entirely online.

For too long, this business has been a spreadsheet, email, and "I gotta guy" type-business. Mercado has the opportunity to use modern technology to shine bright lights in dark corners by rapidly scaling the transformation from an 80s-era approach to a modern and sophisticated supply chain that focuses on transparency and ease of doing business.

Mercado is looking forward to leveraging SJF Ventures in addition to their existing team of investors to further optimize and advance the platform. SJF Managing Director David Griest will join the Mercado Board of Directors alongside current board members — Garrison, LiveOak Principal Mike Marcantonio, Ironspring Managing Partner Ty Findley, and industry veteran and GT Nexus founder John Urban.

"It's an amazing time to be in the supply chain space," Garrison said. "The convergence of modern technology, industry knowledge, and venture capital make the formerly impossible possible. We believe the industry is about to undergo the

biggest evolution since the advent of the container. Containerization had a massive impact on the speed, efficiency, and standardization of the logistics which made global trade possible. Modern technology will be the next great evolution in bringing the world closer together with full transparency and visibility. Thanks to SJF, our clients, and current investors, we look forward to enabling Global Trade 2.0.”

About Mercado

Mercado — founded in 2018 — transforms the way products are planned, bought, and sold throughout the international supply chain. Mercado’s vision is to provide customers with the same type of modern and frictionless buying experience that they provide to their own customers through leveraging the platform’s 70+ procurement, ordering, and shipping features. By helping businesses digitally track, change, and manage their orders from the moment a Purchase Order is placed, Mercado is perfectly placed to bring the world of international trade into the digital age. For more information, visit www.mercadolabs.com.

About SJF Ventures

Founded in 1999, SJF Ventures invests in high-growth companies creating a healthier, smarter and cleaner future. SJF’s mission is to catalyze the development of highly successful businesses that drive lasting, positive changes. For more information, visit www.sjfventures.com.

For more information, spokespeople, pictures and interviews relating to this press release, please contact Mercado: Kayleigh Hansen, Marketing Specialist / kayleighbansen@mercadolabs.com