

News Release

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Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, Invests in Artificial Intelligence Chip Startup SynSense in China

- **First investment of recently established China Seed Fund**
- **Neuromorphic computing considered as key enabler of next-generation artificial intelligence**
- **Third investment of the venture arm of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, in the advanced computing technologies space in less than a year**

Darmstadt, Germany, May 6, 2020– Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, today announced its investment in SynSense (formerly known as aiCTX), a neuromorphic computing startup based in China and Switzerland. The startup's AI (artificial intelligence) processors and sensors provide an unprecedented combination of ultra-low power consumption and low latency for a broad range of edge applications in smart home, smart security, autonomous driving, drones or robots.

"This is a great first investment by our newly established China Seed Fund and will further strengthen our ties with local entrepreneurs and investors," said Isabel de Paoli, Chief Strategy Officer at Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. "Our plan to be an active player in the China innovation landscape is paying off with this exciting step, which nicely complements our activities in our Performance Materials business sector."

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, invested in SynSense via its [China Seed Fund](#), which was established in October 2019 by its corporate strategic investment arm M



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Ventures and the China Innovation Hub of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. The Series A investment round was led by CTC Capital and joined by M Ventures, CAS Star, Ecovacs Robotics, Yunding and Archer Investment.

Neuromorphic computing is generally considered a key enabler of next-generation AI. As a spin-off from the joint Institute of Neuroinformatics at the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich (lab of co-founder Professor Giacomo Indiveri), SynSense is leveraging the vast know-how of one of the leading academic research institutions in this space. Its neuromorphic chip design is inspired by the human brain featuring massive parallelism and asynchronous logic in order to overcome the von Neuman bottleneck that slows down AI on conventional computing systems. The implementation with Spiking Neural Networks (SNN) enables, for example, ultra-low power dynamic vision processing at less than 1 mW (milliwatt).

The current deal marks the third investment of [M Ventures](#) in the advanced computing technologies space in less than a year, following investments in AI chip design company [MemryX](#), Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, and quantum computing startup [SeeQC](#), Elmsford, New York, USA. This underlines the importance of the field for Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. With its broad footprint as a leading science and technology company, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, has a unique exposure to next-generation computing. The involvement of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, spans the entire value chain from being a supplier to the semiconductor industry to an end-user in pharmaceutical and biotech research & development.

About M Ventures

M Ventures is the strategic, corporate venture capital arm of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. Its mandate is to invest in innovative technologies and products with the potential to significantly impact the company's core business areas. From its headquarters in Amsterdam and offices in the US and Israel, M Ventures invests globally in transformational ideas driven by great entrepreneurs. M Ventures takes an active role in its portfolio companies and teams up with entrepreneurs and co-investors to translate innovation towards commercial success. M Ventures has a significant focus on early stage investing and company creation including the creation of spin-offs to leverage the company's science and technology base. For more information, visit www.m-ventures.com.

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About Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany

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Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, operates across healthcare, life science and performance materials. Around 57,000 employees work to make a positive difference to millions of people's lives every day by creating more joyful and sustainable ways to live. From advancing gene editing technologies and discovering unique ways to treat the most challenging diseases to enabling the intelligence of devices – the company is everywhere. In 2019, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, generated sales of € 16.2 billion in 66 countries.

The company holds the global rights to the name and trademark "Merck" internationally. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the business sectors of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany operate as EMD Serono in healthcare, MilliporeSigma in life science, and EMD Performance Materials. Since its founding 1668, scientific exploration and responsible entrepreneurship have been key to the company's technological and scientific advances. To this day, the founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed company.