

VARIETY

From Waste To Fuel: How Shu Fei Zeng Built A Supply Chain The Industry Couldn't Ignore

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Photo Courtesy of Shu Fei Zeng




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She walked away from one of the most lucrative trading desks in global commodities and into a network of street-side fryers and restaurant back kitchens across Southeast Asia. For Shu Fei Zeng, it was not a detour. It was the whole point.

Zeng, the founder and driving force behind KH Marque, has received a 2026 Global Recognition Award for her work transforming the used cooking oil (UCO) supply chain into one of the most closely tracked and commercially credible feedstock networks in the sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) industry. Within four years, she built a company that now operates across 11 countries and supplies traceable, low-carbon feedstock to some of the world's largest aviation and energy companies. This feat has drawn recognition from S&P Global, the TITAN Business Awards, and the Reuters Global Sustainability Awards.

The recognition puts her in rare company. Fewer founders in the energy sector have managed to achieve revenue growth, structural discipline, and measurable social impact simultaneously, at this scale. 

The Trade That Started It All

Before KH Marque, there was Vitol and then Glencore. Zeng spent more than two decades in senior leadership at two of the world's most powerful commodity trading firms, absorbing the mechanics of large-scale supply chains and developing an instinct for where they break down. When the SAF sector began attracting serious capital and regulatory attention, she identified the problem that no one was solving: it was not a demand gap. It was a documentation gap.

Buyers of SAF feedstock, including airlines, fuel producers, and energy majors with public Net Zero commitments, needed supply chains they could verify. The UCO market was largely informal, with collection handled through uncoordinated networks of small food operators with no framework to certify what they were selling or to whom. The mismatch, in Zeng's reading, was structural. And structural problems, in her experience, are the kind worth building a company around.

She founded KH Marque in 2021 and immediately set about formalizing what the industry had treated as unformalizable. Collection networks were established across Southeast Asia. Relationships were built with thousands of small food businesses. Vendors who had previously discarded UCO as kitchen waste were brought into a commercial system that gave their output a certified value, an auditable origin, and a global buyer at the end of the chain.

The Tech Behind The Trust

The UCO Tracker, KH Marque's proprietary software platform, is the engine of the entire operation. Built in direct response to the European SAF mandate and the sourcing requirements of global aviation buyers, it delivers real-time traceability and carbon-intensity reporting for every batch of feedstock that moves through the network. When a supplier's credibility hinges on a single audit, the platform is not a supplementary feature. It is the product.

The environmental numbers hold up under scrutiny. Buyers of KH Marque's UCO achieve greenhouse gas savings of 88 to 93 percent compared to fossil-derived alternatives, figures rigorous enough to earn the company a finalist position for SME of the Year at the Reuters Global Sustainability Awards. The TITAN Business Awards recognized the underlying work with platinum-level honors, naming Zeng Innovator of the Year and Sustainability Leader of the Year. S&P Global went further, naming her Chief Trailblazer of the Year at its 2025 Energy Awards for her discipline in scaling a sustainability-driven model across multiple regulatory jurisdictions.

Global Recognition Awards evaluated Zeng through a panel of independent industry experts using the Rasch model. This psychometric framework converts evaluator scores into a linear scale for precise comparison across disciplines. She scored at the highest tier across every dimension, including vision and strategy implementation, ethical decision-making, research methodology, international collaboration, and real-world impact, each rated at the maximum level. 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.”*

Bigger Than One Company

What Zeng has built extends well beyond KH Marque’s balance sheet. By formalizing the livelihoods of thousands of small collectors across Southeast Asia, people who were previously outside the commercial supply chain entirely, she has created a model that connects grassroots economic participation directly to global decarbonization targets. That kind of vertical integration, from street-level collection to Fortune 500 supply contracts, is unusual in any sector. In sustainable energy, it is nearly unheard of.

Business Insider and Yahoo Finance have covered her profile, and her standing as a trusted partner among global energy majors is built on something the industry increasingly values above almost everything else: verified supply chains, not just described ones. Where sustainability claims are plentiful and scrutiny is increasing, KH Marque’s documentation trail is the differentiator that closes deals.

The real story behind Zeng’s career shift is not that she made an unlikely move. It is that she brought exactly the right expertise to a problem that had been waiting for someone with precisely her background. The energy sector has spent years debating the future of sustainable fuels; Zeng has been building it, one verified batch of cooking oil at a time, and the industry is only beginning to catch up with what she has already put in place.

