

Edinburgh start up will definitely grow!

An Edinburgh based start up company Shockingly Fresh plans dozens of indoor vertical farms all across the country. The arrangement allows up to five times the amount of greens to be grown each year.

The company is developing five sites introducing low cost farms with natural light, and the special hydroponic towers will be used to grow several cycles of crops such as salads and herbs.



Saturn Bioponics' CEO Alex Fisher at a farm near Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, 31st August 2017.

The expected yields will help British farmers boost crop production and will reduce reliance on off season crops from elsewhere, including the EU. These can cost a lot more than the indoor grown crops which use less pesticides and are generally cleaner.



The company has one site in Scotland and four in England which extend in all to 50 hectares. One site in Worcestershire is awaiting full planning consent.

Now the company has begun an investor seed round to allow expansion to over 40 sites in the next five years. This technology is tried and tested with Ocado and Marks and Spencer already invested in this type of farming.

Shockingly Fresh is working with Saturn Bioponics and ValeFresco in developing the plans. They have grown vertical crops of pak choi, lettuce and herbs for customers in the last three years.

[Saturn Bioponics](#) founder and CEO Alex Fisher said :
“With pak choi we saw a three to four-fold increase in yields per crop cycle, with 30% more cycles per year, giving an overall five-fold increase in annual yield.

“The crops are cleaner, the season is longer, there is less disease and pest risk and they are easy to harvest.

“Consumers are well-accustomed to strawberries grown under cover and this is a natural next step.”



Garth Bryans

Garth Bryans, COO at [Shockingly Fresh](#) said : “We selected Saturn’s technology because their set-up requires far less up-front capital than a fully-enclosed vertical farm, yet delivers most of the benefits which are already driving the high demand for hydroponically-produced crops.

“This makes it much easier to get projects off the ground.

“A fully enclosed farm can achieve a higher annual yield, but when you add in additional lighting and heating costs as well as the high capex, their typical costs per kg are higher than a naturally lit set up can achieve,” Bryans continues.

“We have identified a significant market – particularly around the early and late season ‘shoulder months’ – which is currently filled by imported crops from Europe. We believe our sites will enable British growers to compete on a level playing field.”

As well as several sites in the UK the company is already advancing with a major project in Oman.

Bryans continued : “Our funding round will enable us to secure and develop more than 40 sites in the UK – and we are keen to speak to brownfield site owners as well as traditional agricultural land holders.

“The hydroponics market is set for significant expansion in the years ahead, so there is plenty of room for a number of players to grow.

“With our system we can significantly extend the shoulder months and offset the need for early and late season imports – plus we can bring in heating to extend the season further if the market is there.”



Saturn Bioponics' CEO Alex Fisher and Head of Research, Development and Technical Support Arnoud Witteveen at a farm near Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, 31st August 2017.