

The Gulf Cooperation Council's first vertical farm launches in Dubai

The Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) first commercial vertical indoor farm, Badia Farms, has launched in Dubai with ambitious plans to pioneer the future of the region's agriculture industry. Using the latest hydroponic technology and vertical farming techniques, the farm produces nutritious and pesticide-free leafy greens without the need for sunlight, soil or chemicals.

Badia Farms has been established by Saudi Arabian entrepreneur Omar Al Jundi and British agricultural expert Grahame Dunling, with a vision to develop sustainable and innovative solutions to growing food. By 2030, global food demand is predicted to increase by 50%, putting pressure on governments to find a solution that provides food security. The region's hostile growing environment remains a major barrier to the agriculture industry, resulting in heavy reliance on food imports, with the UAE currently importing more than 80% of its food requirements.

Omar Al Jundi, founder and Chief Executive Officer at Badia Farms, said: "Our mission is to provide fresh, nutritious and chemical free produce that is bursting with flavour and grown right here in Dubai. The UAE is one of the most popular places in the world for fine dining and hospitality, yet most of our food is imported, travelling thousands of miles before it reaches our plate. Through vertical indoor farming methods we can dramatically reduce the carbon footprint and grow leafy greens that are fresher, tastier and delivered from farm to table within hours."

Leading the new wave of farming, Badia Farms uses high-tech indoor farming techniques that allow crops to grow throughout the year. Co-founder Grahame Dunling, a fourth-generation grower with more than 40 years' agricultural experience, plays a fundamental role in the farm's operation. The highly controlled environment, with technology and systems refined by Dunling, uses the most advanced hydroponic technology, chemical free nutrient-rich base and bespoke LED lighting system, to create the optimal quality and yield. The sustainable eco-system created at Badia Farms uses 90% less water than in open field farming.

Al Jundi added: "As a region that has struggled to grow crops due to largely hostile desert landscapes, our farm offers a viable solution to farming that produces harvests 365 days of the year. Importantly, we are able to do this sustainably, using minimal water that is recycled, maximizing space, and with no chemicals or pesticides. Our first crops are leafy greens, but we are already in advanced stages of growing crops of other fresh produce through different farming models. This is the future of farming."

For the first time, customers in the UAE can access the freshest greens, delivered from the farm to fork on the same day, providing a solution to the carbon footprint of imported food that travels an average of 3,000 miles to reach restaurants in Dubai.

The farm produces an extensive range of micro-greens and baby leaf herb varieties which adds complex flavours to salads, main dishes, sandwiches and soups. The micro-greens, including arugula, kale, radish, red cabbage, basils, and mustard, are packed with antioxidants and rich in nutrients.

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