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Harvest London invests in state-of-the-art vertical farm



Basil will be the farm's first crop

New facility in Leyton is vertical producer's second site in north London and the latest construction project by booming tech firm CambridgeHOK

Harvest London has invested in its second vertical farm in the capital, transforming an empty industrial unit in Leyton into a state-of-the-art indoor farm.

The site in north London, which boasts 152 m2 of growing area, will produce herbs and certain vegetables hydroponically for local restaurants 12 months of the year.

The business currently operates from a smaller vertical farm in Walthamstow, growing leafy greens, herbs, flowering plants and root vegetables for London restaurants.

The main benefits for chefs, according to Harvest London, will be the quality, locality and freshness of its produce.

Matt Chlebek, chief agronomist at Harvest London, said: "This is a really exciting development for us and a huge step up

we established on the back of our own research and development two years ago in Walthamstow.

"We started the business having spoken to local chefs about providing freshly grown herbs just a few miles from their kitchens, thereby reducing the distance and time from production to consumption. This was something they were excited about.

"We have worked with a number of restaurants in London over the past two years who have become excellent customers and as a result of that success we wanted to improve further and become more sophisticated in what we are doing."

He added: "We can certainly look to increase the number of restaurants we supply now, and ask chefs what herbs they want us to grow, and when.

"The plan is to demonstrate the

increasing demand at this facility and secure further investment to create more, larger vertical farms across London in the coming years."

The new farm's 'grow room', which uses energy-saving LED lighting, is controlled by automated climate and irrigation systems to aid production and maximise growth.

Harvest London will be able to control the climate remotely via their mobile phones and analyse data on yield and growing capacity.

As well as the grow room, CambridgeHOK constructed a harvesting room and production management area, where crops will be processed and made ready for collection and delivery.

First produce off the racks at the north London farm will be basil, of which the

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from our initial facility, which

year. The first crop is now almost ready to be harvested just four weeks after being planted.

This is the latest project to be completed by East Yorkshire-based horticultural engineering firm CambridgeHOK, which is currently also working on a multi-million pound strawberry glasshouse for Beeswax Dyson in Lincolnshire as well as around 30 other projects.

The tech firm is on course for its best ever financial year amid booming investments in glasshouse and vertical production in the UK.

Chlebek and Harvest London's chief executive Chris Davies praised CambridgeHOK for their specialist knowledge and handling of their farm's construction.

"As a client it is reassuring to know you are working with a company which handles every aspect of planning, design and building a vertical farm," said Chlebek.

"You simply wouldn't get the same knowledge and understanding by using a number of different

unit can produce around seven tonnes a

companies for each element of the project, as we had to do when establishing our first facility.

"The great advantage CambridgeHOK bring is that they are experienced growers. They have explained why the specific approach was being taken with regards to each element of creating the ideal environment."