



By Mike Knowles

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Fruitbox 56 - Daniel Kats, InFarm

The urban farming startup's head of sales tells Fruitnet about the next stage of its impressive expansion

Despite its name, InFarm's roots are very much in the market. In February 2021, the Berlin-based urban farming startup announced the creation of new growing centres to supply fresh produce to the likes of Edeka, Lidl and Kaufland.

Starting in Germany and extending very soon to the UK, Netherlands, France, Switzerland, US and Canada, the move represents a step change in its operations, scaling up a business model that until now has focused on smaller, plug-and-grow units within retail stores themselves.

Now, as demand for locally grown produce continues to rise, the company is preparing to go beyond the 1,500 in-store farms already installed and ramp up production wherever the market demands it.

And with total venture capital funding of more than US\$400m to date, it's certainly shaping up to be one of the world's most hotly tipped vertical growing startups.

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"We are not building farms," explains InFarm's vice-president of corporate sales Daniel Kats, speaking on the latest episode of Fruitbox. "We're taking facilities and deploying models inside. Those automated towers can then grow by demand. If the retailer has more demand, we just add one or two or ten more towers."

Why now? "The population is growing, the demand keeps growing, and a lot of food production is needed in many large cities," says Kats. "Therefore we are pushing the button now and starting to grow."

Now operating in ten countries, and set to launch in Japan this year, the company is also venturing into new products. As a result, it's ready to become a major supplier in its own right, rather than simply enabling retailers to grow a limited number of items in stores.

"We are growing much more variety and

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assortment," Kats adds. "We started with a lot of leafy greens, herbs, lettuces, mixed salads, microgreens, and now we're doing the first steps into tomatoes, mushrooms, chillies, strawberries in the future, which require naturally much bigger spaces to grow centrally and distribute to the supermarkets."

Hosted by Chris White in London, Fruitbox now attracts a big audience across the global fruit and vegetable business that tunes in every week to hear exclusive interviews and expert analysis. Produced by Fruitnet Media International, the show is essential listening for everyone in the fresh produce industry.

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