

ADQ AgTech Park launches vertical farming project in UAE

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ADQ, an Abu Dhabi-based investment and holding company, announced the operational phase of its cutting-edge AgTech Park ecosystem with the launch of a vertical farming project in partnership with ZERO, a high-impact technology company headquartered in Italy. The ZERO project is the first of several controlled environment agricultural concepts that will be housed in the AgTech Park and will aim to enhance indoor farming locally, as well as explore and push the boundaries of desert-climate farming in the UAE.

The inaugural farming facility is situated in KEZAD (Khalifa Economic Zones Abu Dhabi Group), the UAE's largest operator and developer of fully integrated and specialised economic zones. KEZAD has a well-established ecosystem for food industries across the entire value chain, thereby creating a strong base for growth, both for local producers and the food industry as a whole. Additional sites exploring different technologies will be launched in Al Ain Industrial City within the coming year.

Set to strengthen the local production of crops, fruits and vegetables for multiple applications including fresh food, nutraceuticals and biopharmaceuticals, the first joint project between ADQ and ZERO draws on the benefits of growing crops in vertical layers in a controlled environment, which includes higher yield, shorter growing times and lower water usage, in addition to bringing the production of a wider variety of fresh produce geographically closer to the UAE's consumers.

The ZERO project is retrofitted in a 1,000 sqm warehouse and will achieve an initial production volume of approximately 10 tons per year at the proof-of-concept stage. This pilot phase is expected to conclude in the summer of 2023, following which a 40,000 sqm commercial phase of the vertical farm is envisaged to be launched in Al Ain, alongside other projects featuring controlled-environment technologies. At full scale, the 200-hectare AgTech Park will target production volumes of over 40 kilotons of fresh fruits and vegetables annually, which would account for up to 6 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively, of the UAE's total consumption and import of the produce grown within the park.

Gil Adotevi, Executive Director of Food and Agriculture at ADQ, said: "As our vision of creating a state-of-the-art AgTech Park takes shape with the support of ZERO, one of our trusted partners, we are harnessing technology to create a controlled environment that advances the UAE's ability to grow fresh, nutritious and tastier foods year-round. The breakthrough technology utilized in the park for the first time in the UAE explores new solutions to help tackle the challenge of sustainably farming in arid and desert climates, allowing us to contribute to not only shortening but also "greening" the food value chain, which is top of the agenda for policymakers around the world as we progress on our net zero journeys."

Daniele Modesto, Chief Executive Officer, ZERO, said: "Vertical farms respond to the urgent need to rethink agriculture, making it more environmentally friendly and sustainable in a world prioritizing the responsible use of resources. We are exceptionally proud to partner with ADQ as a forward thinker in the local food and agriculture sector to bring our vertical farming capabilities to the UAE. The collaboration allows us to play a role in building one of the most diversified indoor farming facilities in the region that will contribute to realising the nation's food security strategy."