



Vertical farming strawberry plants at Oishii Farm. Photo: courtesy of Oishii Farm

TECHNOLOGY

# Sustainability Through Vertical Farming

With the costs of farming rising and concerns about environmental impact, Oishii Farm pursues vertical farming as an alternative to conventional agriculture.

Vertical farming optimizes growing conditions by using stacked layers of trays in a controlled environment to grow fresh crops year-round, regardless of climate or location. Because vertical farms do not require agricultural land, they can be constructed in locations where you would not normally expect farming to be possible.

Oishii Farm's closed-loop system also allows for efficient water recycling and energy conservation, eliminating the need for pesticides. Their farms operate independently of external environmental conditions, enabling farmers to grow fresh fruits and vegetables all year, anywhere in the world.



Chief of Staff Maehara joined Oishii Farm in 2024.

## Taste Comes First: Starting with Strawberries

After founding Oishii Farm in 2016, CEO Koga Hiroki quickly realized that the potential of vertical farming technology would mean nothing without a marketable product to attract consumers. Drawing on memories of his childhood in Tokyo, he decided that the answer lay in strawberries.

Not only are they considered a treat, but in terms of marketing, consumers tend to prefer certain brands of strawberries based on taste and appearance. As a new company, becoming known for particularly delicious strawberries was a great way to establish brand recognition within a competitive market.

At first, Oishii Farm focused on the luxury sector, growing their berries at a vertical farm in New Jersey and selling them primarily to Michelin-starred restaurants and celebrities. In 2022, they expanded their sales to prime grocery locations and soon gained attention in the United States, even making an appearance on television.

While this initial focus on high-end strawberries was crucial to increase brand awareness, Oishii Farm has since endeavored to make its fruit more affordable to the average consumer. Proving that vertical farming can provide delicious but affordable food is their main goal, and demonstrating that this business model can work is the key to encouraging the expansion of sustainable agriculture.

## Promoting Japanese Agriculture and Technology to the World

In addition to its business in the United States, Oishii Farm has registered its Japanese subsidiary in Tokyo. Japan's capital is not only a global leader in sustainable agricultural research and development but also a hotbed of innovation in many other fields important to vertical farming, such as robotics, automation, water recycling, and monitoring systems.

One major hurdle facing closed-loop farming systems has long been the need for pollination. While pollinating flowers with brush-wielding humans or robots is possible, it is inefficient and expensive. Oishii Farm became the first company to achieve large-scale, stable, and natural pollination using bees within a closed-loop farming system.

At a deeper level, the company takes an active role in promoting Japanese agriculture and technology around the world. The CEO gave a TED Talk and was a session speaker at the SusHi Tech Tokyo 2024 Global Startup Program, a global startup and innovation conference hosted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. The company also attended SusHi Tech Global in Abu Dhabi, UAE, where they experienced positive feedback about Japan, its food, and Japanese farming.

Through sharing their food, as well as the technology that makes food more sustainable and accessible for all, they believe it is possible to forge deeper connections that cross national boundaries.



An example of how Oishii Farm integrates innovative technology, such as robotics, into farming. Photo: courtesy of Oishii Farm

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SusHi Tech Tokyo, short for Sustainable High City Tech Tokyo, is a Tokyo-based concept that leverages high technology to help create a sustainable city, delivering messages at home and abroad showcasing Tokyo's comprehensive attractiveness, and the challenges of resolving urban issues.



Oishii Farm's signature Koyo Berry, grown in vertical farms.