

EKFC and partners open hydroponic farm



The Bustanica farm at Dubai World Central

The Bustanica hydroponic farm has opened in Dubai backed by an investment of US\$40 million. The facility is the first vertical farm for Emirates Crop One, the joint venture between [Emirates Flight Catering \(EKFC\)](#) and [Crop One](#) a developer of technology-driven indoor vertical farming.

Located near Al Maktoum International Airport at Dubai World Central, the 330,000 square foot facility is geared to produce more than one million kilograms of high-quality leafy greens annually, while requiring 95 percent less water than conventional agriculture. At any point in time, the facility grows more than one million cultivars (plants), which will provide an output of 3,000 kilograms per day.



Bustanica is 333,000 square feet devoted to the production of greens

Bustanica is driven by machine learning, artificial intelligence and advanced methods and an in-house team that includes agronomy experts, engineers, horticulturists and plant scientists. A continuous production cycle ensures the produce is super fresh and clean, and grown without pesticides,

herbicides, or chemicals.

Passengers on Emirates and other airlines will be served the leafy greens grown at Bustanica including lettuces, arugula, mixed salad greens, and spinach, onboard their flights from July. UAE consumers will soon be able to add these greens to their shopping carts at the nearest supermarkets. Bustanica also plans to expand into the production and sale of fruits and vegetables.

"Long-term food security and self-sufficiency are vital to the economic growth of any country, and the UAE is no exception," said HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman and Chief Executive, Emirates Airline and Group. "We've specific challenges in our region, given the limitations around arable land and climate. Bustanica ushers in a new era of innovation and investments, which are important steps for sustainable growth and align with our country's well-defined food and water security strategies.



Bustanica's closed loop system saves water, by maximizing usage

"Emirates Flight Catering constantly invests in the latest technologies to delight customers, optimize operations, and minimize our environmental footprint. Bustanica helps secure our supply chain, and ensures our customers can enjoy locally sourced, nutritious produce. By bringing production closer to consumption, we're reducing the food journey from farm to fork. Congratulations to the Bustanica team for their remarkable achievements so far and for setting global standards and benchmarks in agronomy."

Craig Ratajczyk, Chief Executive Officer, Crop One added: "After significant planning and construction, and navigating the unforeseen challenges of the pandemic, we're thrilled to celebrate this tremendous milestone alongside our joint venture partner, Emirates Flight Catering. It's our mission to cultivate a sustainable future to meet global demand for fresh, local food, and this first large format farm is the manifestation of that commitment. This new facility serves as a model for what's possible around the globe."

The farm's closed-loop system is designed to circulate water through the plants to maximize water usage and efficiency. When the water vaporizes, it is recovered and recycled into the system, saving 250 million liters of water every year compared to traditional outdoor farming for the same output.

Bustanica has a vastly reduced reliance on water and year-round harvests unhampered by weather conditions and pests. Consumers buying Bustanica's greens from supermarkets can eat it straight

from the bag - even washing can damage the leaves and introduce contaminants.