

# Start-Up Builds First Fully Autonomous Farm

By Jasmina Dolce

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After years of research and development, Iron Ox, ([www.ironox.com](http://www.ironox.com)) a California-based technology startup, has announced it is launching the world's first autonomous farm in San Carlos and will start selling its produce soon.

The hydroponic indoor farm relies on two robots to plant, care for and harvest produce. One of the robots, nicknamed Angus, weighs 1,000 pounds and is about the size of a car. The robots also use machine learning and artificial intelligence to detect pests and diseases. They can remove infected plants before the problem spreads.

Iron Ox co-founders, Brandon Alexander and Jon Binney — alumni of robotics company Willow Garage — realized they wanted to do more with the technology they were developing and saw an opportunity in the agriculture industry.

According to Alexander, Iron Ox is able to do the equivalent of 30 acres of outdoor farming in just a single acre on its robotic farm. The plan is to start selling the produce from the first farm and then expand to additional locations over time.

“Right now fresh produce really isn't all that fresh. It's traveling on average 2,000 miles from farm to grocery store, which means a lot of people are eating week-old lettuce or strawberries,” Alexander explained.

Initially, Iron Ox will only grow leafy greens and herbs, but it plans to expand into other crops, like tomatoes, in coming years. The company plans to begin selling its produce later this year.

Stay tuned as this exciting new venture develops.

## *Another example of state-of-the-art Horticulture Production Facilities*

### **Vertical Farm Coming to Virginia**

([www.skyscraper.farm](http://www.skyscraper.farm))

Founded by Nick Starling, an Iraq invasion war veteran, Skyscraper Farms has a vision to bring sustainable, cost-effective agricultural products to city centers and remote sites in the U.S. by combining cutting-edge vertical farming with high-end, mixed-use real estate. The Virginia-based company specializes in the construction of urban, mixed-use buildings that feature an indoor vertical farm. Skyscraper Farms plans to strategically roll out its first two buildings in northern Virginia. The company is partnering with nearby institutions to offer state-of-the-art laboratory space in each building for development programs.

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