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JETRO, THRIVE build global growth pipeline for Japanese agri-tech startups

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New initiative will connect Japanese agri-tech companies with international customers, investors and corporate partners across North America, Europe and Australia

JETRO and SVG Ventures | THRIVE have launched J-StarX Global Growth for Agri-Tech, a new programme aimed at helping Japanese agri-tech startups expand into international markets and build relationships with global customers, investors, corporations and innovation ecosystems.

The initiative comes as agriculture and food systems face mounting pressure from climate change, labour shortages, resource constraints and supply-chain disruptions. Japan's strengths in robotics, precision engineering, advanced manufacturing, sustainability and deep technology are creating opportunities for its emerging agri-tech companies to take technology developed domestically to global markets.

The programme will leverage SVG Ventures | THRIVE's global innovation platform and its community of more than 15,000 startups, alongside an international network of corporations, investors, universities and ecosystem partners. The objective extends beyond individual startup expansion, with JETRO and THRIVE seeking to build longer-term connections among entrepreneurs, industry, investors, research institutions and government.

“Japan is home to exceptional innovation across agriculture, food, robotics, climate and deep technology,” said Nanami Suzuki, JETRO Startup. “Through the J-StarX Global Growth for Agri-Tech, we are pleased to help Japanese startups access the global networks, market knowledge and strategic relationships they need to expand internationally.”

SVG Ventures | THRIVE has expanded its engagement with Japan in recent years through partnerships with startups, corporations, investors and other stakeholders across the agri-food value chain. Its activities include the launch of the $50 million Sunrise Agri Fund with Kagome, focused on sustainability and productivity in food and agriculture, as well as investment in Japanese startup EF Polymer.

The new programme builds on that engagement, with participating startups set to receive market-readiness support, mentoring and tailored international ecosystem engagement across the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia.

The programme will begin with an in-person bootcamp in Tokyo and will target startups working across smart agriculture, precision farming, robotics and automation, soil and crop data platforms, sustainable inputs, food supply-chain optimisation, traceability, regenerative agriculture and climate-resilient production systems.

Rather than following a uniform expansion strategy, the programme will help startups identify markets, customers and strategic partners aligned with their technologies and long-term growth plans.

“Japan has a deep history of innovation, and we believe its next generation of agri-tech startups can play a meaningful role in solving some of the world’s most urgent food and agriculture challenges,” said John Hartnett, Founder and CEO, SVG Ventures | THRIVE. “Through the J-StarX Global Growth for Agri-Tech, we are proud to support Japanese founders as they build globally competitive companies and bring world-class innovation to international markets.”

The programme builds on Harvest Horizons – Agri/Foodtech to North America, the 2024 JETRO|THRIVE acceleration programme for Japanese agri-tech startups.

“Harvest Horizons – Agri/Foodtech to North America, our 2024 JETRO|THRIVE acceleration programme for Japanese agri-tech startups, showed the strength of Japanese founders and the value of providing them structured access to global markets,” said Danny O’Brien, Managing Director, SVG Ventures | THRIVE. “This new programme builds on that work and takes it further. Our goal is to help companies understand where they can win internationally, build the right strategic relationships, and create a practical pathway for long-term global growth.”

The J-StarX Global Growth for Agri-Tech programme is positioned as a platform for Japanese startups to move beyond domestic market opportunities and establish commercial, investment and technology partnerships internationally.