



Fondsmanager van
ION+



Press Release

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SAIA Agrobotics raises investment to automate greenhouse horticulture

SAIA Agrobotics, a tech spin-off from Wageningen University & Research, will further develop its technology for greenhouse robotics with investments from the Technology Transfer funds of Innovation Industries, SHIFT Invest and the ION+ fund managed by Oost NL. SAIA Agrobotics develops robots that can take over human actions in greenhouses.

For growers with greenhouses, it is becoming increasingly problematic to find employees. This trend is not entirely unexpected, because the work in a greenhouse is physically demanding and monotonous. The global demand for automation in this sector is therefore high.

"Growers cannot wait when we talk to them. With this investment we hope to be able to provide a solution as soon as possible", says Ruud Barth, CEO of SAIA Agrobotics. "Over the past 20 years, Wageningen University & Research has gained a lot of experience in greenhouse horticulture with robots. We see that the technology is now ready for commercial use."

SAIA's focus is on robotizing human actions in the greenhouse: "For example, cutting the leaves or harvesting, which is currently all manual work, but something that can also be done by a robot. For a regular sized greenhouse, we are already talking about tens of millions of leaves and fruits that have to be cut or picked each year", explains Dr. Barth. "We see that robots can now gradually take over this manual work; technology has improved rapidly in recent times". In doing so, SAIA looks further than just applying robotics: "We are developing an integrated system solution, which also includes adjustments to the cultivation system and crop optimization".

Investment from Thematic Technology Transfer fund (TTT)

Innovation Industries and SHIFT Invest both finance from the Thematic Technology Transfer fund (TTT), which is built around a partnership with the four Dutch technical universities, TNO and RVO. Valuing and applying scientific research of promising start-ups from spin-offs is central to this.

"SAIA Agrobotics fits nicely with the purpose of this technology transfer fund, bringing technology of the University of Wageningen to the market", says Sander Verbrugge of Innovation Industries. "The technology of SAIA is a great crossover between technology and botany that strives for the next innovative step in mechanization of agriculture."

SHIFT Invest is also enthusiastic about the potential impact of SAIA, as Bart Budde points out: "Not only the automation of manual work is central at SAIA, but also making a significant efficiency boost to produce smarter and more efficiently in regards to energy, CO₂, water and land use."

Investment from ION+

Carl Heijne, investment manager Food at Oost NL explains why Oost NL is investing in the company: "SAIA creates social returns with its technology by producing sustainable and healthy food within the greenhouse horticulture sector. The need for efficiently produced food is enormous with the strong growth of the world population. With ION+ and the contribution from the Thematic Technology Transfer, we can support SAIA in this phase from technology to the market."

The fund is aimed at raising the level of the technology. It is precisely with this aim that ION+ was created for entrepreneurs in the province of Gelderland. With the investment, SAIA can further test the underlying business plan with growers, realize and protect the underlying technology in order to ultimately be able to enter the market faster.

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