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Fresca Group announces strategic move by Thanet Earth into Leafy Salads

Fresca Group Limited, one of the UK's largest fresh produce businesses, has announced the move by Thanet Earth into the production of leafy salads. The deal revealed today sees the acquisition of Leythorne Nurseries formerly operated by leafy salad growers Madestein (UK) Ltd, through specialist advisory firm, FRP, for an undisclosed sum.

The acquisition of the 8.25-acre site, which is located to the south of Chichester, comprises 27,000 sq. metres of glasshouses. Chichester is well known for its strong light levels which over the years has provided the base for a number of the UK's leading horticultural businesses.

Speaking of the acquisition, Fresca CEO and Thanet Growers Chairman, Martyn Fletcher said "This is an important move by Thanet Earth to explore the opportunity to move into a new category to complement its current catalogue which comprises speciality tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers. This new venture, trading as Thanet Earth Lettuce, is set up to produce lettuce under glass for 12 months of the year in a deep flow, hydroponic system. This compliments the recent investment in our Smart Farm at DGM Growers in which we are growing leafy vegetables in a vertical system within a greenhouse. It further emphasises Fresca's commitment to exploring high tec growing systems which are less capital and energy intensive than the current wave of fully enclosed vertical farms. It aligns seamlessly with our vision to grow more protected crops and underscores our commitment to delivering unparalleled value to our customers, through broadening our salad offering."

Fletcher continued "It is of the utmost importance that we continue to grow our own produce here in the UK. Losing a local grower could mean having to import more produce from abroad, which is not only bad news for the environment, but it also reduces our own food security credentials. That's why we feel this is a significant opportunity – to keep producing our own food locally and feeding our nation.

Thanet Earth Directors Pleun van Malkenhorst and Arjan de Gier, are supporting the on-site operational team based at the site in Chichester, in the set-up of the new business. "Our new business, Thanet Earth Lettuce Ltd, is a strategic expansion into lettuce and an obvious addition to our current portfolio of premium quality, sustainably UK grown tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers." said Van Malkenhorst. He continued "This is an extremely exciting opportunity which further strengthens our position as industry leaders in greenhouse production in the UK."