

In Our Customers' Words

A Reliable Partner for Start-Ups

inaho Inc.

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Co-Founder & CEO



Founding the Start-Up

When you think of Kamakura, what images come to mind? You may picture temples or the seaside, but this fertile region surrounded by mountains and the sea is actually where the famous Kamakura vegetables are grown. I am from this area, so I interact regularly with a number of farmers I know. I helped out with a harvest one time, and it was much more difficult work than I imagined. Wanting to lighten the burden of farm work, I established our AI start-up on January 17, 2017 (a date referred to in Japanese as “Good Ear of Rice (Inaho) Day” as a play on words). We started expanding our RaaS¹ business in Japan in 2019, and we now have 20 employees divided among four offices in Japan (Kamakura, Saga, Niigata, and Kagawa) and one overseas (Netherlands).

Developing the Harvesting Robot

Currently, we have developed robots that harvest asparagus and tomatoes, and they are being used on local farms. The AI sensors and cameras built into the robot detect the growth conditions of these crops, harvesting only asparagus that has grown to a certain height or tomatoes that match a certain red hue. THK's ball bearings are used in the rotating parts of the asparagus robots.

THK was well-known among our engineers as a reliable machine component manufacturer, so we have incorporated their products from the very first robot we developed in 2019. Agricultural work takes place in harsh service environments, including the scaffolding the robots move on, so we needed components that would last even in a bad environment. We ran millions of durability test cycles before releasing our product, and no issues occurred. Naturally, we have not heard of a single problem occurring with the rotating parts of the robots we have delivered. We used the standard products at first, but after several meetings with their sales team, we decided the optimal THK product for us to adopt was the Ball Bearing BB.

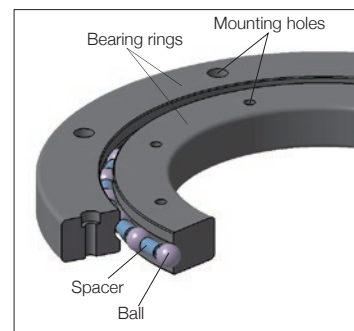
I heard about the EntSherpa Project that was launched for start-ups in April this year, but during the development of our robot, THK provided technical support to help bring our ideas

to life, so I feel that the inaugural spirit of this initiative was already there in 2019.

Future Robot Development Plans

The agricultural industry is facing a labor shortage, particularly with a decreasing number of young people employed in the field. That is why we are now developing robots that can harvest crops other than asparagus and tomatoes in order to reduce the burden on farmers. Therefore, we hope THK will propose good products for our robots and discuss technical topics and exchange ideas with us. On the other hand, as a robot developer, perhaps our robot technology may prove useful for THK someday. That is another reason why I hope to increase the opportunities we have to communicate with each other.

¹ RaaS stands for “Retail as a Service.” It is a new type of arrangement in which retailers with revolutionary systems partner with IT companies to provide services to other retailers.



Internal structure of the BB



Asparagus-harvesting robot