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Bowery Closes

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Here's a list you don't want to make: The list of high-profile closings in the vertical farm space. Bowery, based in New Jersey, laid off 187 workers and closed its operations in November.

The company, founded in 2015, quickly excited investors, raising \$700 million in venture capital, including from some high-profile investors like Google Ventures, Justin Timberlake, F1 driver Lewis Hamilton, and chefs Jose Andres and Tom Colicchio. The startup was once valued at \$2.3 billion!

So what went wrong? It turned out to be a disease, namely Phytophthora. One farm got it, then all of them, and they couldn't get it under control, according to reporting from Pitch Book. They couldn't sell anything and they couldn't produce new clean produce. The big-name customers like Albertsons and Whole Foods that helped draw investors dropped Bowery as a supplier. And new investors were losing interest in the whole agtech scene, especially with the failures of other fancy startups like AeroFarms and AppHarvest. And when a vertical farm runs out of OPM—other people's money—they quickly fail.

Bowery had farms in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and were planning farms in Atlanta and Dallas-Ft. Worth. Their website says they were both scheduled to open in the first quarter of 2023.