

U.K.-based online grocer Ocado has reached a deal with Japanese retailer Aeon to build its robot warehouses in the Asian country.

The partnership will support the development of Aeon's online grocery business in Japan using the Ocado Smart Platform (OSP).

Aeon is one of Japan's longest-established retailers and also one of Asia's largest retailers. It operates over 21,000 stores across various businesses, with operations in 14 countries.

The company will launch a new online business with OSP, harnessing Ocado's unique, proprietary customer fulfillment centers (CFCs) and end-to-end software applications.

The agreement plans for the development of a national fulfillment network to serve the whole of the Japanese market.

Initial CFCs will serve the Kanto region - which includes the Greater Tokyo Area - with the first planned to go live in 2023, to be followed by further CFC capacity over the following two years.

Ocado will also provide Aeon with its end-to-end software platform as well as a comprehensive suite of engineering and support services to ensure smooth launch and ongoing development of its e-commerce operations.

"We see Ocado as a state-of-the-art, exciting and transformative partner aligned with our strategy of accelerating Aeon's Digital Shift to serve Japan's consumers," said Motoya Okada, CEO of Aeon.

He added: "We will actively partner with Ocado to create a smooth, seamless digital experience thereby speeding up our efforts to reform the online customer experience."

"I am delighted to welcome another extraordinary retailer, and the first from Asia, to the unique international club of grocers powering their ecommerce operations with Ocado," Tim Steiner, CEO of Ocado Group said:

"This partnership marks a major milestone for the food retail landscape in Japan, and I am excited that Ocado will play a key role in bringing ever greater levels of convenience and choice to Aeon's customers."

Luke Jensen, CEO of Ocado Solutions, highlighted that Japan is "one of the most high-tech economies in the world".

"It is also a unique and exciting market for grocery ecommerce, with sales primed for huge growth in the coming years," he said.

"Aeon is a giant of Japanese retail with a long-standing commitment to delivering outstanding grocery experiences to its customers. I am delighted that they have chosen the Ocado Smart Platform to build on this commitment, bringing cutting-edge innovation and the learnings from a global network of world-class retailers to their ecommerce operations."

*Below is a video of one of Ocado's U.K. CFCs*