

Danish chief tries factory greens

Kyodo News

Visiting Danish Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen on March 8 sampled leaf greens grown in an indoor "vegetable factory" in Tokyo's Shiodome district.

Rasmussen praised the facility for "quite a unique and visionary production method" and said the taste of the greens was "excellent." The experimental plant, set up in the Caretta Shiodome commercial complex last November, allows for the cultivation of produce such as lettuce and arugula using only artificial lighting.

Rasmussen said the concept is appealing for agriculture in Denmark, where "the development of sustainable and organic production is becoming increasingly important." The facility enables stable year-round vegetable production with no or minimal use of pesticide.

A maximum of 60 vegetable samples from the Shiodome plant have been distributed daily free of charge to restaurants in the complex as the project has been subsidized by the state, according to Dentsu Facility Management Inc., which operates the factory.

But it will be necessary to curtail the running costs of the artificial plant for it to be widely adopted. The initial cost of installing the facility amounted to ¥7 million and annual expenses to cover electricity, water and nutrient solution will reach ¥700,000, the operator said.

Officials of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which is promoting the factory, told the Danish prime minister that advanced renewable energy technologies in the European country such as solar and wind power as well as biomass could help to cut the running costs of the facility.

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