

# First commercial vertical farm opens in Singapore — Channel NewsAsia



SINGAPORE: Singapore now has its first commercial vertical farm, which means more local options for vegetables.

The technique uses aluminium towers that are as tall as nine metres, and vegetables are grown in troughs at multiple levels.

The technique utilises space better — an advantage for land-scarce Singapore.

Sky Greens farm first started working on the prototype in 2009, and has opened a 3.65-hectare farm in Lim Chu Kang.

It produces three types of vegetables which are currently available only at FairPrice Finest supermarkets.

They cost 10 to 20 cents more than vegetables from other sources.

Despite the higher prices, the greens have been flying off supermarket shelves.

Ms Ivy Lim, a customer, said: “(The price) is not a very big difference, it’s just marginal... I think as compared to organic (produce), the price is very attractive.”

“The response has been very good. Even before the official launch, the vegetables were sold out in the last few days,” said Mr Tng Ah Yiam, managing director of group purchasing, merchandising and international trading at FairPrice.

“Actually, the store manager called me and said we need more vegetables. So I think it’s a good sign that the consumer supports local vegetables.”

But prices may drop as the farm ramps up supply.

The farm currently has 120 vertical towers, and hopes to increase the number to

300 by next year.

This will increase its current daily supply of vegetables from 0.5 tonnes to two tonnes by 2013.

“The challenge will be to get investors interested. This type of farm needs (relatively) higher capital,” said Dr Ngiam Tong Tau, the chairman of Sky Greens. “This is a new system, so people need to be trained (and) we need to attract people to come here to work.”

The farm’s expansion is expected to cost some S\$27 million.

Currently, about seven per cent of Singapore’s vegetables are grown locally.

It is hoped with more innovative farming methods, it will help meet the target of 10 per cent in the future.

“We are always looking at ways to increase our sources of food supply and if we can produce some in Singapore, then that can go some way to meet local demand,” said Mr Lee Yi Shyan, Senior Minister of State for National Development and Trade and Industry.

- CNA/xq

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