

World's first 'robot run' farm to open in Japan

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A worker checks lettuces at the indoor farm of Spread company in its Kameoka factory in Kameoka city, Kyoto prefecture June 14, 2012

A Japanese firm said Monday it would open the world's first fully automated farm with robots handling almost every step of the process, from watering seedlings to harvesting crops.

Kyoto-based Spread said the indoor grow house will start operating by

the middle of 2017 and produce 30,000 heads of lettuce a day.

It hopes to boost that figure to half a million lettuce heads daily within five years.

The farm, measuring about 4,400 square metres (47,300 square feet), will have floor-to-ceiling shelves where the produce is grown.

"Seed planting will still be done by people, but the rest of the process, including harvesting, will be done (by [industrial robots](#))," company official Koji Morisada told AFP.

The move to robot labour would chop personnel costs by about half and knock energy expenses down by nearly one third, Morisada added.

The pesticide-free lettuce will also have more beta carotene than other farm-grown [lettuce](#), the company said.

Robot-obsessed Japan has repeatedly turned to automated workers to fill labour shortages that are projected to get worse as the country rapidly ages.

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