

A Dutch technology that could allow farmers to grow lettuce efficiently anywhere in the world has captured imaginations at Fruit Logistica in Berlin, winning the event's innovation award ahead of a dried apple slice product and a Brussels sprout-kale hybrid. 

Staay Food Group's City-Farming solution was voted number one by attendees at the Berlin fair, for what award presenter and *Fruchthandel Magazin's* Robert Broadfoot described as "a very forward looking idea, maybe even controversial for some people".

"I would like to say that we are ever so proud that we have gained this year's nomination of the Fruit Logistica innovation award," said Staay's Hans de Groot.

De Groot said the protected horticulture product used different colors of LED lighting to fast-track production, with a floating system fed by a reservoir.

"We think that City Farming will have the future because with the growing of the population in the world it means that there will be more production of horticultural products, and by this production type you can grow lettuce but other articles as well; even in cities, on the top of rooves of a huge skyscraper you can grow lettuce," he said.

"This will mean that the production of fresh vegetables will be completely different. You can grow lettuce wherever you like - in the deserts, in the north pole, it doesn't matter.

"If you do the seed in the plants by a propagator, it takes about 100 days from a seed to a plant this time of year because of the lack of light. But by means of LED lighting, you can produce from a seed to plant within 25 days. That's year round, so you have an enormous advantage in terms of time, energy and of course labor."

The company has a plant with the technology in the Netherlands while the executive told www.freshfruitportal.com there were hopefully others in the pipeline.

"There are already talks about putting up a new plant in Spain but we will move onto central Europe as well.

"We already have connections with companies in Brazil who are interested in this project. It will be now a step by step challenge to move forward."

The runner-up was Germany's Elbe-Obst Vertriebs GmbH with its Apfel-Schiffchen product, and the second runner-up was Flower Spout from the U.K.'s Tozer Seeds Ltd.

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