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Fukushima Farmers To Grow Rice First Time Since Nuke Accident

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Farmers in a town in Japan's north-eastern Fukushima prefecture are preparing to plant their first rice since the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant two years ago.

An agricultural company in Hirono town started planting rice early this week, and seeds planted on Monday have grown into two centimeter shoots, Japanese media reported on Friday.

Local farmers were not allowed to grow rice in the past two years because of concerns about radioactive contamination. The town planted rice on an experimental basis last year and confirmed that its radiation levels were below the government limit.

Rice planting is scheduled for early month in about half of the town's 210 hectares of paddy fields. The head of the agricultural company, Yoshiyuki Haga, said finally growing rice again meant getting their hometown back.

About 5,200 residents of the town were evacuated after the tsunami-triggered nuclear disaster of March 11, 2011. Only around ten percent of them have returned so far.

Agriculture used to be the town's key industry, and local officials hope that resuming rice farming will help speed up post-disaster reconstruction.

by RTT Staff Writer

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