

朗讀文章 2

When you purchase fresh-cut flowers, do you think about where they came from? You might assume they were grown somewhere nearby. The reality, though, is that the cut flower trade is increasingly international. Today, thanks to airplanes and high-tech cooling systems, even the most delicate flower can be exported and sold in a florist thousands of kilometers from where it was grown.

The Cut Flower Leader

The Netherlands has dominated the world cut flower trade since the 1970s. It handles about 50 percent of the world's cut flowers. And its auction houses are very large indeed—Aalsmeer, near Amsterdam, is an auction house in the sense that Tokyo is a city. About 120 soccer fields would fill its main building. Twenty million flowers are sold here on an average day, including roses, lilies, and—of course—tulips.

The Netherlands is also a world leader in developing new flower varieties. Dutch companies and the government invest a considerable amount of money in flower research. Their scientists look for ways to lengthen a flower's vase life, to strengthen flowers to prevent them from being damaged while traveling, and also to strengthen the flowers' natural fragrance.