

MOUNTAIN FRESH PRODUCE

Mountain Fresh Produce is a container-based indoor farm in Pinedale, Wyoming, established in 2022 to address the town's limited access to fresh produce and short growing seasons. Operating in conditions analogous to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, it demonstrates the viability of Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) in remote areas with appropriate market demand, modest infrastructure support, and strong community ties.

1. Business Profile

- **Location:** Pinedale, Wyoming
- **Established:** 2022
- **Type of CEA:** Freight Farm (container-based indoor farm)
- **Scale:** 1,000 sq ft grow room
- **Energy Source:** Grid electricity with upgraded transformer
- **Ownership Structure:** Family-owned and operated
- **Workforce:** 3 family members (grower, café manager, administrator)



2. Origin & Opportunity

Mountain Fresh Produce emerged from:

- A recognition of local demand for fresh, longer-lasting produce.
- Owners having some experience with small-scale hydroponics.
- A commitment to self-reliance in food access.

The business began with farmers market sales to test demand before opening a permanent storefront. The Freight Farm model was chosen for its modular design, predictability, and year-round production capabilities; 'plug and play' model and technical support also favoured.

3. Specifications

CROPS GROWN	Lettuce, kale, bok choy, herbs, cucumbers, aubergine, strawberries, peppers, mustard greens, and experimental crops (e.g., dragon fruit, avocado, wasabi greens).
INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site: Town centre, next to a grocery store in a remodelled building.• Zoning and Permits: Minimal regulatory burden—only a shed permit was required, although other states require more regulatory measures.• Utilities: New transformer installation needed to support electrical load.
SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food Miles: Significantly reduced by localised production.• Waste Reduction: Second-grade produce is repurposed into jams and baked goods under food waste regulations.• Community Integration: Actively solicits crop suggestions and builds relationships with local consumers and restaurants.

- **Environmental Controls:** Pest control protocols, lab hygiene, and clean entry systems are enforced to maintain growing conditions.

4. Business Model & Operations

TARGET MARKETS	Direct sales via farm shop, café, farmers markets, and local catering businesses. Clear customer demand determined ahead of establishment. Remote rural location with short natural growing season, plus just one competitor grocery store.
PRICING STRATEGY	Pricing is based on cost-recovery, as well as comparison to local grocery prices and local purchasing power. High-margin crops (e.g., herbs) are prioritised. Prices overall fairly comparable to local grocery store. Customers influence crop selection (e.g., dill during canning season), promoting relevance and loyalty.
FINANCING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial loans followed by SBA loan – spread out payments reduced time pressure. • Investment repayment anticipated at 3 years. • Reinvestment into store operations and diversification ongoing.
SKILLS & LABOUR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational Labour: Fully managed by family; division of roles across production, café, and administration. • Training Needs: Initial training provided by Freight Farms. Emphasis on practical skills (equipment handling, pest control, food hygiene). • Technical Support: Ongoing reliance on manufacturer guidance and informal troubleshooting. • Scalability Concern: Labour capacity may limit expansion; potential for job creation if additional workers hired.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- **Validate Local Demand.** Success depended on proving market need through early-stage direct sales.
- **Build in Redundancy.** Keep critical spare parts (e.g., pumps) on hand. Technical downtime can be expensive and disrupt supply.
- **Ensure Infrastructure Readiness.** Startup was aided by relaxed zoning and adaptable power infrastructure.
- **Limit Public Tours.** While community engagement is vital, unrestricted access can introduce pests or diseases. Controlled visitation policies are advised.
- **Support Financing and Advisory Service.** Accessible public or third-sector support could de-risk start-ups.
- **Labour and Skills Development.** Tailored vocational support will be essential in rural areas with small labour pools.
- **Regulatory Clarity and Flexibility.** Streamlined permitting and support for modular systems would encourage uptake

