



### Dirthead Microgreens, Fargo, ND

Pete Nielson, took a bold mid-career step after working 17 years in the restaurant industry and embarked on a high-risk strategy in urban farming. Satiated with knowledge about the ways and needs of the restaurant supply/demand world, he studied to prepare himself with intense small farm management training and moved back to his home area in Fargo to begin. The first two years, he spent growing and marketing microgreens at a smaller level in the basement of the home he shares with roommates. Savvy with technology, he used this time to build a brand name and social media presence. He also diligently got acquainted with all the local food support entities and organizations in the state, built a working relationship with nearly a dozen restaurants in Fargo, and tested sales of his product through a few local farmer market channels. By year three, he had an idea in place to begin ramping up his production in microgreens and growing more local foods in urban outdoor garden settings. His goal was to produce enough product to become a vendor for Food Services of America, who provides a large share of the restaurants in North Dakota and Minnesota with service industry foods and supplies. He also hoped to be more diversified and sell some of his product through two well attended farmer markets located, one each, in Grand Forks and Fargo.

### Analysis

The third year for Pete did not go quite as planned.

He had hoped to find several lots and other peoples' underutilized lawn areas, to put into use for his outdoor garden production. When the time came to begin preparing the ground, he did not

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have as many spots secured as he had hoped. Ultimately, he was limited to the use of his own back yard.

Pete did due diligence in exploring his options for financing his business and determined, due to the unique nature of his operation, he did not fit most traditional funding channels; therefore, he needed to rely heavily on grants and crowdsource funding, through a Go Fund Me site. When spring arrived and it was time to start preparing for planting, he had not received sufficient funding to go forward with all of his production plans. This, combined with the pressure of volatile spring weather in North Dakota, cost him significant production time which equated to potentially lost sales.



After year three of this venture, Pete has realized that his niche is urban farming and he intends to refocus his efforts on growing greens with a strong emphasis on restaurant sales. He also recognized a need for more infrastructure and is looking into options for expanding both financially and productively to follow through with his growth strategy and take his local food production operation to the next level.

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## Advice

Pete's advice to beginning farmers is, "Research, research, research..."

## 2016 Data

Plant & Harvest Yield and Data								
Arugula	\$ 5.00	per lb	45 lbs	restaurants	\$225	cost to plant	\$1.00	
Tatsoi	\$ 5.00	per lb	20 lbs	restaurants	\$100	cost to plant	\$1.25	
Microgreens	\$ 3.00	per oz						
	\$ 250.00	per market	15 markets	farmers market	\$3,750	cost of market for season	\$180	
<b>Revenue</b>								
Total Sales	\$4,075.00							
<b>Expenses</b>								
Total Operating Expense	\$182.25							
Capital Expenses								
Seeder: Jang	\$ 405.00							
Seeder plates: Jang 6ea	\$ 120.00							
Bed roller	\$ 269.00							
Bed tilther	\$ 495.00							
Basic greens cutter	\$ 249.00							
Irrigation	\$ 350.00							
Market tent	\$ 400.00							
Total Capital Expense	\$2,288.00							
Notes:								
Farmers market was every Saturday, July-October. Farmer attended 15 out of 20 available market dates.								
Arugula seeded into 2.5' X 30' rows: average harvest 15 lbs per row.								
Tatsoi seeded into 2.5' X 30' rows: average harvest 15 lbs per row.								
<b>Market Channels</b>								
Restaurant Sales	8%	of total sales						
Farmers Market	92%	of total sales						

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