

# ALTERNATIVE INCOME FOR FARMS

## HYDROPONICS

### INTRODUCTION

Hydroponics is a growing method which uses water and nutrients instead of soil, in a polytunnel or greenhouse. Crops are usually grown on benches, and supported in growing blocks that are made from materials such as rockwool or wood chips. The plants' roots are kept in water that includes specialised nutrients for them to feed from.

### HYDROPONICS ADVANTAGES INCLUDE:

1. Better management of growing conditions
2. No weeds and reduced pest problems
3. Faster and more frequent cropping
4. More efficient use of water
5. Comfortable working conditions and a cleaner environment



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### ● *What is essential to start a hydroponic system?*

- **1. MARKET** - Growing contracts are rare in Wales. Consider selling to distributors, restaurants and shops, or form a partnership. Another option is to co-supply with an established grower.
- **2. PLASTIC POLYTUNNEL OR GREENHOUSE** - Contact your local Planning Authority for their policy on erecting these.
- **3. GROWING EQUIPMENT** - Growing benches, growing channels, pumps, water transport pipes and nutrient concentrates measurement equipment will be needed.
- **4. INFORMATION AND SUPPORT** - Visit other hydroponic systems and discuss with experienced growers.
- **5. PASSION FOR GROWING** - Successful growers enjoy growing.

### CROPS SUITABLE TO BE GROWN IN A HYDROPONIC SYSTEM

A variety of salad leaves, tomatoes, eastern vegetables, kale, herbs, strawberries, peppers, spinach, watercress.



## ESTABLISHING COSTS

Establishing costs to set up a hydroponic system tends to be higher than the costs of growing in a field. Below is an estimated cost of establishing a basic growing system that could create a part-time income to an individual on a farm:

Plastic polytunnel	£4,000 – 5,000
Benches and growing equipment	£3,000 – 4,000
A supply of growing blocks, growing equipment, seeds and nutrients	£1,000 – 1,500

It should be possible to establish a basic unit for a cost around **£8,000-£10,000**. The above costs do not include artificial lighting and heating equipment – it is possible to grow a number of crops successfully within a polytunnel or greenhouse for 9-10 months of the year without them. The costs depend on many factors including the grower's ability to save through innovation and the aspiration to use advanced technology.

*\*information correct at time of publishing 02/2018.*

### Top growing tips for growers

- ✓ Grow what the market wants
- ✓ Aim for quality
- ✓ Multi-crop
- ✓ Establish a growing system that provides regular and consistent supply
- ✓ Specialise by growing unusual crops
- ✓ Consider crops that you can add value to



## Next Steps

- Discuss and learn from others within the sector.
- Develop/identify a market.
- For further information and to move forward with your idea contact your local Development Officer or contact us on the details below.

### Contact us on:

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