

Produce

Alaska-Based Vertical Harvest Hydroponics Commissions First Generation IV Containerized Growing System

by Vertical Harvest Hydroponics

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ANCHORAGE, Alaska – Alaska-based Vertical Harvest Hydroponics (VHH) recently commissioned its very first Generation IV Containerized Growing System (CGS) in Dillingham, Alaska, marking a new chapter of scalable farming practices in harsh climates.

CGS is a hydroponic fresh vegetable production system housed inside a customized 40 foot insulated shipping container. Measuring only 320 square feet in size, each CGS can supply more than 23,000 pieces of produce annually, which typically requires one full acre of land when grown conventionally. Furthermore, growing in a controlled CGS unit provides the perfect environment to produce safe, clean, pesticide free, non-GMO food. Vegetable options currently include over 150 varieties of nutrient rich, high fiber leafy greens. The CGS also ensures that produce is affordable, as growing food at the source of where it is consumed virtually eliminates transportation and packaging associated with conventional produce distribution.

After an extensive search, VHH selected **CXT Inc.**, based in Spokane, Washington as its manufacturing partner. As a leader in modular building systems throughout the country, CXT brings a wealth of experience in manufacturing to VHH. “CXT is absolutely committed to the highest standards of construction. We are extremely excited to partner with them to make our dream of food security a reality”, says Dan Perpich VHH co-founder and CEO.

“When approached by Dan and his team in November of last year, we were quickly intrigued not only by their business model, but their social mission to provide safe, affordable foods to consumers in hard-to-grow areas around the world. We are excited to be a part of their vision and look to support them for many years to come” stated Darren Stuck, Plant Manager for CXT Spokane.

Demand for local food has been rapidly increasing in the U.S. According to the USDA, the number of farmers markets has more than quadrupled over the past two decades. A 2014 Hartman Group study finds that local may even surpass organic as a principle of transparency and trust (know your farmer). The U.S. is seeing fundamental behavior changes away from big packaged mass-produced foods to locally grown, artisanal and highly nutritious options.

In spite of growing demand and the success of the “Alaska Grown” program, food security due to lack of locally grown food in

Alaska is a huge problem and has been a topic of conversation among many state leaders. This is evident, as only 1 percent of Alaska's GDP is agriculture, which results in a dependence on the majority of its food needs on imported products.

Kyle Belleque, the owner of Belleque Family Farm, a Dillingham resident who purchased the system from VHH with the help of Bristol Bay Development Fund, is excited to add year round growing options to his farm. "This project has been a long time in the making. We are eager to install the unit at our place and begin providing fresh year-round produce to our family and friends around the region."

As technology improves, the next step in an agricultural revolution is growing high quality food locally and sustainably on a commercial scale. According to an NPR piece on farm to school program in Washington, D.C., an interviewee said "We're not buying just from one vendor. Managing delivery schedules and matching growing seasons with menus takes a lot of planning and coordination". This may be alleviated with a hydroponic farm such as Vertical Harvest Hydroponics' CGS. No more summer versus winter produce variation and price volatility! No dependence on the supply chain or the price of oil! It is always sunny in the CGS - no need to worry about weather fluctuations either. A farmer can grow produce in consistent quantities for schools, year round.

Alaska is one of the states that can benefit the most from a reliable internal food source (i.e. food security); thus we must be on the forefront of the "growing local" movement.

About Vertical Harvest Hydroponics:

Vertical Harvest Hydroponics (VHH) is a veteran-owned business, located in Anchorage, Alaska, that designs and builds Containerized Growing Systems (CGS), which allow produce to be grown on-site hydroponically and year round, virtually eliminating the expensive and lengthy supply chain.

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