

Marketing Your Aquaponic Products



Aquaponic Farming Business

- A hobby system and backyard aquaponics are very different than aquaponic farming
- Selling your food means you need to maintain professional industry standards for food safety
- A business requires interactions with banks, insurance, customers and the government
- Don't believe everything on the internet!

The Ps of Marketing



Products and Services

What are you going to sell?

- Produce – Greens, herbs, microgreens, vegetables, fruits, root crops
- Fish – tilapia, bass, catfish, koi, fingerlings, others...
- Components – system kits, parts, supplies
- Edutainment – Tours and trainings
- Sustainability – selling the idea of local food, green jobs, skills training, self-reliance, nutrition, food access
- Events – farm to table dinners, farmer for a day
- Byproducts – system water, fish fertilizer, fish leather





Aquaponics Ambassador Program

- Dropship or commission based sales opportunities
- Training partnership and revenue share









Fantastic Fish Products?

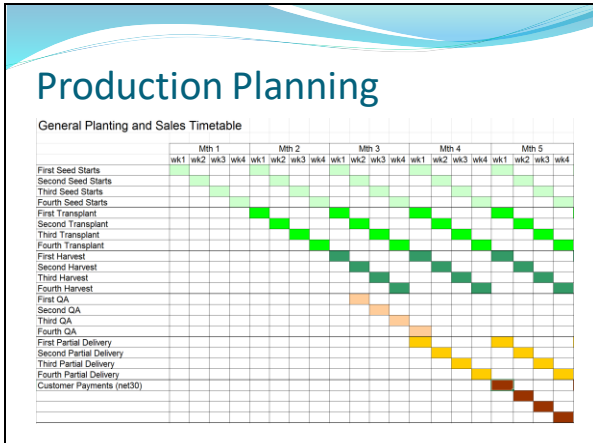
Tilapia skin being tested for treating bum victims

Production

What can you produce with volume and quality?

- You can't sell what you can't grow
- You can't always sell what you did grow
- Grow for the chefs and specialty markets, but don't bank on it
- Production factors –light, temps, season
- Grow to fit your goals
- Create and revise your production plan







Planting for Profit – Not Production

30 rafts per week harvested in 5 week turns



- 24ct head lettuce at \$1.75/ea = \$1260/wk, **\$65,000/yr**
- 18ct head lettuce is \$945/wk, **\$50,000/yr**

50 rafts per week harvested in 3 week turns

- Arugula, mache, mixed salad greens, mizuna
- 1 lb per raft, at \$5lb = \$250/wk or **\$13,000/yr**

Planting for Profit – Not Production

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| <p>Pea tendrils and baby peas</p> <p>Very temp. sensitive, 4'x8' space \$150/4 months, \$300/yr</p>  | <p>Pea shoot microgreens</p> <p>16 flats in 4'x8' space 2 weeks from seed to delivery \$144/wk, \$7488/yr</p>  |
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Price

What is the “market” willing to pay?

- Create a scale of pricing based on customer and placement
- Packaging will make a difference in “value”
- Customer expectations and acceptance
- Consider the time/price trade off
- Know that prices will vary with the market

Pricing examples

- 24 ct case of lettuce - \$36 - \$42
- Loose leaf by the pound - \$3 - \$9/lb
- Individual heads - \$1 - \$4
- Bunches - \$1 - \$4
- Microgreens - \$10 - \$25 per flat
- Flowers - \$.10 - \$1.50
- Tomatoes, peppers, squash, cucumbers – each or by the pound
- Tilapia and catfish - \$5 - \$7 live, bass \$10 - \$12, koi - \$40+



Promotion

How will you connect to your customer?

- In person – farmers markets, personal delivery
- Tours – customers visit the farm, speaking, teaching
- Memberships – CSA shares, salad subscription
- Social media – facebook, Instagram, twitter, blogs
- Website – products, contact, posts, ordering
- Offers – coupons, recipes, ads





People

Who will want to buy your product?

- Community
- Chefs
- Parents
- Market goers
- Teachers, Students
- Distributors
- Industry leaders
- People that care about their food









Proposition (USP)

What is your unique selling proposition?

- What is your “story”?
- Why does it matter to people?
- Why should people buy your product?
- How is it different, better?
- What are the benefits?





Placement

Where will people find your product?

- Farmers Markets
- Restaurants, private clubs, resorts
- CSA box pick up points
- Grocery stores, markets
- Schools, hospitals, institutions
- Events, catering companies
- Local food purchasing website, delivery
- Zoos, aquariums, other farms









Packaging

How will you package your product?

- Different people need/want different packaging
- How will you maintain “quality”
- How will you project “value”
- How will you tell your story
- How will it be food safe







Profit

What keeps your farm running?

- How can you keep costs low and production high
- You don't make money growing a crop, only selling a crop
- Have a polyculture of profit opportunities
- Plant for profit not production
- There are other "profits" to reap from aquaponics

Hydroponics vs Aquaponics Comparison

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|--|---|
| <p>Using Espartan as nutrients (organic hydroponics)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About \$380/20L • Use 20L/2wks • Total cost for nutrients \$760/m or \$9100/yr • No added income • <i>All other system components being equal</i> | <p>Using fish and fish feed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4lbs feed/day, \$1/lb \$120/m, \$1460/yr • 300 fingerling every 3 months \$1/ea, \$1200 fish/yr • Total cost of fish and feed \$1460 + \$1200 = \$2660/yr • Added income \$8000 (1600 fish x \$5/each) • Profit \$8000 - \$2400 = \$5600 |
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Polyculture of Revenue

- Plant production
- Farm food boxes
- Fish production
- Tours, field trips
- Training classes
- System, supplies & component sales
- Grants, donations
- Local installations and support
- Agrotourism
- Paid internships
- Events and space rentals
- Farm to table meals
- Compost
- Fish fertilizer
- Other business opportunities

Work on profit from the start

- Pick a few specific crops that will work in your climate and focus on them (easier to grow, market, package, etc)
- Focus on crops that you have an established demand for
- Maximize growing space, crop rotation is critical
- Only keep plants and fish that can pay for themselves
- Consider where to delegate work efforts
- Check the "costs" of different products & price points etc.
- R&D is wonderful, but it is hard to make it pay
- Don't quit your "day" job, consider hiring a farm assistant
- Have a "growth" plan, don't try to do everything at once

Profit = Revenue - Expenses

You can make more money by increasing revenue.

You can also make more money by lowering expenses.

How will you keep expenses low?

- Work with suppliers, buy in bulk
- Manage utility costs, don't over consume anything
- If using lights consider a light mover and correct coverage
- Consider renting space instead of building a greenhouse
- Interns can help offset labor costs *(but you also get what you pay for)*
- Consider renting a delivery van instead of buying one