SUCCESS TIPS FOR SMALL VEGETABLE FARMS
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ABSTRACT
❖ There are always business opportunities in winter fresh vegetable production in Miami-Dade County or south Florida because of a favorable weather and large market demands. However, it is often a headache to start a new and/or small business due to a lot of concerns and uncertainties, governmental regulations, and technical problems involved. To assist new vegetable growers to succeed, general tips have been developed, which may help them for their budget planning, marketing strategy, food safety guidelines, Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), Best Management Practices (BMPs), Integrated Pest Management (IPM), and risk prevention. For instance, as fresh produce, marketing, packing, handling, and transportation are top priorities because in order to be kept fresh, growers have to put their produce on the market as soon as possible. Food safety is of great importance because any outbreak of foodborne diseases can force the growers out of business due to huge costs and litigation procedures.

BUDGET PLAN
❖ Budget sources: personal accumulation, investment income, received donation, or loan.
❖ Budget allowances: the amount readily available and that will be available on time.
❖ Budget distributions: costs in land leasing or purchasing, equipment, labor, seeds, agrochemicals, consumables, advertisement, and transportation.

MARKETING STRATEGY
❖ Plan ahead and continue: sale before sow.
❖ Diversify the products and markets: do not put all your eggs in the same basket.
❖ Grow and market for quality: keep the customers coming back.
❖ Know what the customers need: expand and adjust the business.
❖ Do not compete with everyone else: specific and unique to attract customers.
❖ Value-added: processed products.
❖ Alternative markets: local (U-pick, roadside stands, farmers markets, and retail outlets), regional, national and international markets.

FOOD SAFETY
❖ Implement GAPs and GHPs (Good Handling Practices): traceback system.
❖ Prevent contamination: biological, chemical, and physical agents.
❖ Minimize waste contacts: human or animal feces.
❖ Ensure water supply: quantity and quality.
❖ Apply manure and municipal biosolids: use safely and appropriately.
❖ Guarantee worker health and hygiene: no illness, sufficient facilities for hand washing, toilets and commodities.
❖ Follow laws and regulations: no exception.
❖ Be accountable and traceable: monitor and document.

BMPS FOR SOIL AND WATER
❖ Monitor soil moisture: schedule irrigation schemes accordingly.
❖ Protect open irrigation wells: wellhead protection.
❖ Grow summer cover crops: ground cover for soil and water conservation.
❖ Improve water use efficiency: drip and parallel irrigation rather than big guns.
❖ Apply fertilizers based on soil and crop: soil testing and calibration.
❖ Implement 4Rs for fertilizer: right type, right rate, right time, and for right crop.

IPM FOR PEST CONTROL
❖ Identify pests correctly: effective control based on correct identification.
❖ Scout the field: estimate the costs and benefits.
❖ Implement efficient measures: IPM
❖ Host resistance: variety selection.
❖ Biological control: predators and natural enemies.
❖ Cultural control: crop rotation, trap crops.
❖ Mechanical control: traps and sanitation.
❖ Chemical control: mode of action and alternative selection of pesticides to avoid resistance.

FREEZE PROTECTION
❖ Estimate costs and benefits: decision based on feasibility.
❖ Set up pump and overhead: preparation for cold front occurrence.
❖ Calibrate the pumping system: accurate delivery of water.
❖ Monitor weather change: dew temperature and wind speed.

ORGANIC PRACTICE
❖ Understand the organic system: the way it works.
❖ Follow USDA guidelines: record keeping, material selection, and on-site inspection for practice.

HYDROPONICS
❖ Evaluate the feasibility: balance of costs and benefits.
❖ Space availability: open field or protected system.
❖ Simply trough floating with aeration or with pressure flushing (aeroponic) system: more efficient for the latter but costs more.
❖ Automatic or manual operation system: nutrient supply and pH control.

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Snap bean
Sweet corn
Tomato