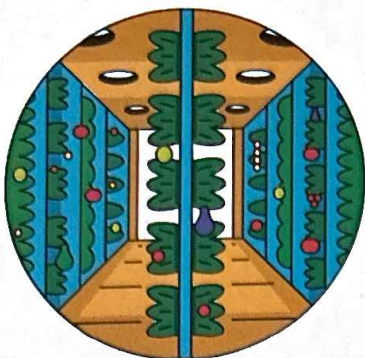




FREIGHT FARMS

THESE CONTAINER FARMS ARE TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURE AROUND THE WORLD.
BY BETSY ANDREWS

FREIGHT FARMS CAN make any person into a salad person. Formed in 2010 in Boston, Freight Farms is the first and largest company to offer farm kits in repurposed shipping containers, using a hydroponic system that grows food, not in soil, but in peat or felt plugs tucked into movable walls. They have 800-plus farms in 41 countries and nearly every U.S. state, run by clients ranging from hospitals and nonprofits to resorts and small urban growers.

Thanks to the quality of its produce, Freight Farms decreases spoilage and, thus, food waste. And in the face of climate change and population growth, the method conserves resources and land. Each 320-square-foot container approximates 3 acres of traditional farming. "Agriculture is the No. 1 user of fresh water," says Freight Farms CEO Brad Griffith. But Freight Farms' containers run on just five gallons a day. Shipping emissions are basically eliminated. And though Freight Farms require electricity, some customers run theirs off-grid.

These \$165,000 container farms also lower the entry barrier to farming, offering a way to start growing food without the investment in land or expertise that a typical farm would require. Clients can control lighting, nutrients, and other inputs from an app on their phones. Freight Farms even offers a training program for new farmers called Farm Camp.

In California's Morgan Hill Unified School District, where the containers have educational fringe benefits—elementary school "green teams" learning about food production, high schoolers using farm data for term papers—director of student nutrition Michael Jochner is striving to revolutionize the school meal program. "I believe that school districts can grow all their own food," he says. "The proof is in the lettuce."