

# These Shipping Containers Have Farms Inside

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Technology

A startup called Local Roots is supplying its TerraFarms to restaurants, SpaceX, and the UN.

By

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From



Baby lettuce grows in a Local Roots TerraFarm.

Source: Local Roots

Los Angeles startup [Local Roots](#) retrofits 40-foot-long shipping containers, turning them into “TerraFarms” that yield as many leafy greens as five acres of farmland—only faster, using as little as 1 percent of the water. The company leases TerraFarms to wholesalers, restaurant chains, and SpaceX. The United Nations is preparing to field-test them, too. Chief Executive Officer Eric Ellestad,

a venture capitalist who's raised about \$11 million for Local Roots, says he'll stand by the taste of the greens grown in the former containers, no salad dressing required. "Chefs we work with," he says, "that's what sells them."

Source: Local Roots

## Irrigation

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Twenty-five gallons of water a day is all each TerraFarm's hydroponics needs. Climate controls and LED grow lights also help nurture crops including butterhead lettuce, baby kale, Italian basil, and arugula with a wasabi-like kick.

To maximize water efficiency and recirculation, hundreds of sensors track such factors as airflow and water temperature and feed the data to TerraFarms staffers for real-time tweaking.

## Yield

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Four thousand heads of lettuce can come from a single TerraFarm every 10 to 12 days. They grow from seed to full maturity in 30 days. Outdoor farming takes at least 60 days.

## Overhead

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Local Roots buys old containers from the Port of Los Angeles for about \$5,000 and retrofits them for more than double that. It owns the farms and contracts with clients for a set period of use.

Source: Local Roots

## Efficiency

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Customers place the container farms at food distribution centers so they can cut out days or even weeks of produce travel time.

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