

# West Central MN Sustainable Ag Webinar Series

## Questions & Answers | 3/4/25 Year-Round Production

### Ryan Pesch of Lida Farms | Pelican Rapids, MN

<b>Q: Ryan:</b> What was the approximate cost to start up your winter green house?	<b>A:</b> \$16k for 16x32 greenhouse back in 2014...Same structure would certainly cost more in 2025.
<b>Q: Ryan:</b> What is the link to UMN Extension resources for deep winter greenhouses?	<b>A:</b> <a href="https://extension.umn.edu/growing-systems/deep-winter-greenhouses">https://extension.umn.edu/growing-systems/deep-winter-greenhouses</a>
<b>Q: Ryan:</b> Are we getting away from peat moss in soil mixes?	<b>A:</b> Not yet for me - certainly know all the concerns and challenges with peat moss, but peat mixes are just too easy.
<b>Q: Ryan:</b> Have you applied for and/or supplemented farm costs with grants? And have you supplemented your income with off-farm work?	<b>A:</b> Yes, I have a dayjob, but, no, I have not received a grant for the winter greenhouse. We had received EQIP high tunnel grant, but that's about it. We funded the winter greenhouse in part with a kickstarter.
<b>Q: Ryan:</b> do you have issues with rodents in your hightunnel during the winter or how do you control	<b>A:</b> YES rodent issue in winter greenhouse, NO not in high tunnel.
<b>Q: Ryan:</b> Did you have farming experience prior to starting your own endeavor? Any recommended updated resources for beginners?	<b>A:</b> Yes, I was a farm apprentice at Foxtail Farm near Osceola in 2000 and 2001. That is THE way I learned the craft of vegetable production and the best way to learn in my opinion. WOOF it, find a workshare, internship, or PT on commercial operation will move your skills through practice.
<b>Q: Ryan:</b> Are wool pellets viable replacement for peat moss?	<b>A:</b> Yes - I've heard of these - please post a link - I'd guess most attendees would like to know.  <b>Seeking producers to try using WOOL PELLETS as replacement for peat moss (Re-Ewe'able) produced on a farm in Underwood, MN.</b> <b><a href="http://www.reeweable.com">www.reeweable.com</a> - can reach out thru the "contact us" or email <a href="mailto:woolpellets@gmail.com">woolpellets@gmail.com</a></b>
<b>Q: Ryan:</b> Do you know anywhere in MN utilizing or have option to sell into prescription Rx veggie programs?	<b>A:</b> I know of two hospital systems doing veggie Rx - one near Aitkin and another down towards little falls (at least they were.)
<b>Q: Ryan:</b> In your hightunnel, do you use vent fans or role up sides for temperature control? Is the temp. volatility an issue this time of year and how do you manage that?	<b>A:</b> We have roll down sides (Zimmerman High Tunnel) and a vent fan on a thermostat. Yes, heat is high season is very much an issue. I basically have both sides down all season once we get into June with the exception of storms when we roll it up.
<b>Q:</b> Land access Q for anyone - how did you find land via family , zillow ? little unease w current state of federal funding ( fsa loans) ..	<b>A:</b> I sold 2 bedroom starter home on the West Side of St. Paul for farm listed by realtor - crazy...basically paid same for 2 acre farm with outbuildings in Otter Tail as we sold 2 bedroom house for.

### Brad Yost of Bald Eagle Farm | Starbuck, MN

<b>Q: Brad:</b> Have you looked into adding a fish product to your system?	<b>A:</b> No. We haven't. Seems like systems that do this, fish is more of the focus than greens. Our focus has been the greens, so it would be a substantial step up to incorporate.
<b>Q: Brad:</b> For heating and cooling do you know anyone who is using geothermal heating in their systems?	<b>A:</b> There are some using boiler systems using biomass such as turkey litter, coal, and woodchips. I am not aware of anyone using geothermal.
<b>Q: Brad:</b> @Bald Eagle Farm- any website?	<b>A:</b> We don't have a website yet. I need to work on that.

### Paul Gamhof of Simply Shrimp | Blomkest, MN

<b>Q: Paul:</b> What kind of shrimp are these?	<b>A:</b> They are Pacific White Shrimp
<b>Q: Paul:</b> Where does the waste go? Do you know if there is any fertilizer applications?	<b>A:</b> We run a bio-flok system. Putting good bacteria in the system that breaks down the ammonia nitrite. We keep a perfect balancing system. We discharge a small percentage of water.
<b>Q: Paul:</b> Where does 90% of the shrimp market come from?	<b>A:</b> Overseas markets
<b>Q: Paul:</b> What kind of biosecurity do you need at your facility? And are you able to bring in youth like FFA to learn about this new type of enterprise?	<b>A:</b> Biosecurity is very critical. There are only 3 people allowed access- wash and boot up in and out. Babies are being sold to other facilities in other states. Also have a full-time vet that does regular health checks. Would love to give tours in the future.
<b>Q: Paul:</b> To help improve your water quality have you thought of adding in oysters to clean your salt water?	<b>A:</b> Yes! Tests were done in Indiana. Given this is a bio-flok, this is not compatible.
<b>Q: Paul:</b> Did you have consultants for planning? How did you learn all of the needs and even know where to start with aquaculture?	<b>A:</b> Turn to the internet! Read up as much as you can. Everyone's water source is different. This is an ever-evolving system and continues to change based on specific needs and protocols. Kentucky State University has videos!
<b>Q: Paul:</b> What are your plans for expansion of the shrimp facility?	<b>A:</b> This summer's building will be 20,000sq feet. New technology will be coming on as well. This system will hopefully be replicable.
<b>Q: Paul:</b> Can you get revenue insurance for your facility?	<b>A:</b> Not yet. USDA is working on this with a pilot program.
<b>Q: Paul:</b> What happens with your spent salt?	<b>A:</b> We have zero water discharge, but the small percentage we have, we want to work with AURI to work with value-added by-product development.