

Global Teen Challenge

Micro-Enterprise Project Overview

Project: R702.05

Strawberries and Blueberries

Center Country and City/Town:

Teen Challenge International of Mid-America
Cape Girardeau, MO USA

Briefly describe your fundraising project:

We raise and sell strawberries and blueberries.

When did this project start at this site:

1981

Overview:

We raise between 3.0 to 3.5 acres of strawberries each year and about 1 acres of blueberries. Our strawberry crop will vary between 15,000 quarts picked to 40,000 quarts picked. That translates to about \$25,000 to \$70,000 USD in income. The blueberries will bring in between \$2,000 to \$3,500. Strawberries require work nine months out of the year and about \$10,000 to put in a crop. It is essential that someone work with them all the time they are not dormant.

What is the role of staff:

One staff member works with a crew year round, working with them and supervising them. The other staff work together at harvest time to pick, pack and sell the strawberries. The harvest particularly requires a team effort. For about four weeks strawberries influence everything we do.

What is the role of students:

A group of 10-16 students work for nine months of the year working on the fields, pulling weeds, training the plants' runners, watering, fertilizing, etc. At harvest time it takes 45-65 students to get the job done (sometimes more if we have them available). We work 6 days a week, from 5 to 9 hours a day picking and packing.

How many hours of work per week are required in production/labor?

In the non-harvest time the students work about 20-24 hours per week. During the harvest time it can be 35-45 hours per week. During the harvest all our students pick the berries—about 100 students.

How many hours of work per week are required in sales/distribution?

This is only during the harvest. Two or three staff primarily take care of this, though some students may help out at times. This can be for as much as 9 hours a day.

Description:**How long it took to set up the project:**

It took a year to set the project up because you plant berries one Spring and they produce berries the next year.

How long it took to produce a net profit:

As long as there is a decent crop and the berries are properly taken care of there should be a profit after one year. Like any farming, the amount of money that can come in can vary widely from year to year.

What is the estimated set-up or start-up cost?

If you already have a tractor that can do the job, you are looking at \$22,000 to \$30,000. If you need a tractor, you can add an additional \$10,000 to \$25,000 for a good used tractor.

These costs are greatly influenced by how many strawberry plants you have. These prices are based on 3 acres of strawberries and one acre of blueberries. You could start with a much smaller area of berries than we have. You also need to keep in mind the number of students needed to harvest the berries.

What basic equipment and supplies are needed?

A tractor, strawberry planter, fertilizer spreader, a sprayer for herbicides, fungicides and pesticides, harrow, and disc. You must have quart containers for sale and cardboard flats. How many you need depends on the size of the crop. Buy them from a wholesaler or the cost will be way too expensive. You also must have an irrigation system to protect from frost in the Spring and to provide moisture in the summer and fall. Of course you must purchase strawberry and blueberry plants.

What are the ongoing maintenance requirements?

Obviously the tractor and other equipment must be maintained. If you are in a hilly area like we are you must control the runoff through the fields or you can lose a large part of your field.

Income: _\$25,000 in _\$70,000 (year)

.014% to .038 % of overall budget earned from this project

Testimony:

This project provides the opportunity to develop a good Christian work ethic. Students (and staff) find they must learn how to rely on the Lord in order to make it through the season. The students who work with it year round learn about agriculture and the process of growing crops. One graduate who was in a horrific motorcycle accident said he relied on his experience in the strawberry field as he was going through very painful physical therapy. He remembered a staff member who told him, "This will not be the last strawberry field experience you have in your life."

Why do you believe in this project?

There is a lot to be learned from manual labor. It brings students back to basics in a physical way. The constant kneeling and resulting soreness helps them understand what others go through to provide for our food. More importantly it helps them learn to rely on the Lord when going through a hard time.

What things should other Teen Challenge Directors consider before deciding to do this project?

Test the soil to see if it can grow strawberries. Our soil is very poor for other crops but does great with strawberries. Finding a "Strawberry staff" can be difficult. The brother who is doing it now has been doing it for 20 years. He is self-taught by going to seminars put on by colleges.

If the person does not know what they are doing they can ruin your investment in a hurry.

What are the biggest problems connected to this project?

It does play havoc with our class schedule for about 4 weeks, but that is the only time our classes are interrupted for the year. The lessons the students learn through this experience balance that out. Typically we do not have many students leave during strawberry season, but often have some leave in the weeks after.

If you were starting this project again what would you do differently?

It would be nice to get some better equipment when starting. For example, we have been using a tobacco planter to plant strawberries with for years, but we make it work.

What is the Marketing Strategy for your ministry?

We get permission to set up on a parking lot in town on a busy street and set up our portable stand there. Occasionally when we have an extra large amount of berries in the middle of the season we set up a second stand. They all sell very fast. We also price our berries a little lower than what stores sell them.

Please provide Contact Information for the person at your center who knows most about this project:

Glen Sinclair
Mid-America Teen Challenge
PO 1089
Cape Girardeau, MO 63702-1089 USA
Phone: 1-573-335-6508

Email: gregp@teenchallengemidamerica.com

Global Teen Challenge

Sustainable Funding Solutions

PO Box 511

Columbus, GA 31902 USA

Phone: 1-706-576-6555

Website: www.iTeenChallenge.org

Email: gtc@globaltc.org

A PowerPoint is available which goes along with this document. You can locate it at the website: **www.iTeenChallenge.org**

Go to the “**Resources**” section and select ***R07: Sustainable Funding Solutions*** and then select this project for additional information and free downloads available.