

Extension Education
1/30/2019

Small Acreage Farming

By Beth Crandall

We have seen a large growth in the population of Utah, especially along the Wasatch Front. This growth is slowly moving into Juab County and in the coming years, we are going to see increased growth in our community. This causes an increase in land costs and the fragmentations of farm land. Agricultural enterprises can still exist on these small-acreage land parcels. Many individuals are hobby farming or producing high value crops. Here are some considerations before determining what agricultural operation would be most beneficial. This information comes from smallfarms.usu.edu.

- **Climate:** Think about the climate in which you live and what will grow most readily in that area. Some things to consider are temperature, length of growing season. Knowing this will help you to decide what will grow best in your area.
- **Site:** If your farm is situated in an area where the climate varies from surrounding areas, your crops can be affected. Microclimates, bodies of water, trees, slopes, and proximately to canyons will affect the growth of crops. How many acres you have available will also affect what you have the ability to produce.
- **Soil:** Knowing the soil type where you will be planting crops is very important, as it will influence the growth and success of your crop. It will determine if you need to add fertilizer and how often you need to irrigate.
- **Water:** Water is vital for growth of any crop, but knowing how much water is available will help determine what type of crop you should plant. Some crops require minimal amounts of water, while others need an abundance. How much water is used and where it comes from is an important consideration before planting.
- **Labor Availability:** Small farms can require a wide variety of skill sets. Some are more labor intensive than others. Owners should decide how much time they have to devote to the operation and if they need to hire additional employees.
- **Economic Considerations:** Consider the market of the product that you are wanting to produce. If there is not a market for your product, the other factors listed above won't matter. The way that your products are sold should also be considered. Does someone need to go to farmers market or road-side-stand, or can your product be marketed wholesale? A producer should also be aware of how much investment is required to get their business running.

There are a wide variety of options when deciding what small farming enterprise to start. It all depends on the resources and experience that you have available. You can raise anything from high value crops, to specialty livestock and backyard farms. A realistic business plan should be developed with all of these factors. This should be done before the business is started to decrease loss.