

# Fresh From the Yukon Inc.

Whitehorse (rural)

Started: December 1996

Contact: Werner and Maria Walcher

Fresh from the Yukon is an organic sprout growing business. The two owners and one part time employee harvest sprouts twice a week and sell the eight different types of sprouts to restaurants and grocery stores in Whitehorse.

**Getting started:** Growing sprouts as a business was first considered by the Walchers in 1986 when they were visiting the Yukon. Using their experience and their own financing, they started by building an indoor growing area with a controlled environment on their Carcross Road property. A lot of time was also spent approaching store personnel to develop trust in the product and the quality of service.

**Key to success:** The slow and steady growth of the business has allowed the owners to ensure a high quality and fresh product is delivered on time, all the time. Consistent quality has been critical to building interest in the product. Success is also a result of growing a year round product which helps pay off infrastructure and overhead and allows prices to be kept stable. As the owners have financed everything themselves, they have had full independence in establishing the pace and approach of the business.



**Lessons learned:** As one large grocery store buys all its produce from one southern supplier, the local grocery store market was limited from the start. Ensuring the sprouts were consistently fresh was very important to building a market through other stores and restaurants. To help encourage prompt shelving, Fresh from the Yukon produced packaging labels which included the date the sprouts were harvested and worked with store personnel to raise awareness of importance of freshness to continued sales.

**Future of business:** Fresh from the Yukon hopes to expand its market to communities outside of Whitehorse, including Skagway. The owners also feel there is a broader market in southern Canada which is one reason they ensured "Yukon" was in the name.