



## SPIN-Farming Lexicon

*SPIN stands for S-small P-plot IN-tensive. Its organic-based techniques make it possible to generate \$50,000+ in gross sales from a half-acre of land growing common vegetables such as carrots, spinach, lettuce salad mixes, beets, chard, cucumbers, tomatoes, beans, radish, scallion, fresh herbs, summer squash and garlic.*

*SPIN has its own unique processes and techniques, and they are very different from conventional farming methods, or from home gardening. Here's a translation of the important terms you'll hear if you find yourself in a room full of SPIN farmers.*

**Sub-acre land base** - SPIN transfers commercial farming techniques to sub-acre (less than an acre) land masses. Farmers do not need to own much, or any land, to start their operations, and their operations can be single or multi-sited.

**Structured work flow practices** - SPIN outlines a deliberate and disciplined day-by-day work routine so that the wide variety of farm tasks can be easily managed without any one task becoming overwhelming.

**High-road/Low-road** - SPIN distinguishes between different harvesting techniques. High-road utilizes commercial refrigeration equipment. Low-road harvesting does not.

**High-value crops** - SPIN devotes most of its land base to the production of high value crops, defined as one that generates at least \$100 per crop/per bed.

**Relay cropping** - SPIN calls for the sequential growing of crops in a single bed.

**Intensive relays** - 3-4 crops per bed/per season are grown.

**Bi-relays** - 2 crops per bed per season are grown.

**Single relay** - 1 crop per bed per season are grown.

**1-2-3 bed layout** - Refers to the 3 different areas of a SPIN farm devoted to the different levels of production intensity.

**75/25 land allocation** - Dictates how much land is assigned to the different levels of production on a SPIN farm. The aim is to balance production between high-value and low-value crops to produce a steady revenue stream and to target revenue based on farm size.

**Farm layout** - SPIN provides guidelines for segmenting a land base into a series of beds, separated by access alleys, which are small 2 feet strips, just wide enough for a rototiller. An acre accommodates approximately 400 standard size beds, including the necessary paths and access alleys. SPIN can also incorporate more traditional approaches to land allocation.

**Standard size beds** - SPIN utilizes beds measuring 2 feet wide by 25 feet long.

**Revenue targeting formula** – By growing high-value crops worth \$100 per harvest/per bed, and by practicing intensive relay cropping which produces at least 3 crops per bed/per season, SPIN targets \$300 in gross sales per bed per season. With approximately 480 beds per acre, the maximum revenue potential is 480 beds x \$300 per bed per season = \$144,000 gross sales per acre. When farming is approached in terms of beds instead of acres, the result is a very precise idea of how much growing space can be utilized, and how that space can be managed to generate predictable and steady income.

**Organic-based** - SPIN relies on all-organic farming practices. There are minimal off-farm inputs and very little waste.

**Crop Diversity** - A SPIN product line contains a much wider diversity of crops, with some SPIN farms producing over 100 different varieties and 50 different types of crops per season. However, SPIN also provides models that specialize in a particular crop.

**Season extension is optional** - SPIN does not rely on season extension to expand production; however season extension can be utilized to push SPIN yields and income significantly higher.

**Direct marketing** - SPIN bases crop selection on what local markets want. Being close to markets allows for constant product feedback and ensures a loyal and dependable customer base. Grow what you sell, don't sell what you grow, is the SPIN farmer's mantra.

**Mix-and-match multiple unit pricing** - SPIN's marketing approach is to pre-bag produce items and sell them at certain price tiers for example, \$3.00/unit or any 2 for \$5.00.

**Commercial refrigeration capacity** - SPIN calls for commercial refrigeration capacity because cooling crops immediately after they are harvested retains their quality which supports premium pricing. It also provides control over the harvest schedule and allows for a manageable work flow.

**Minimal mechanization and infrastructure** - SPIN's most important and costly equipment is a rototiller and a walk-in cooler or upright produce cooler. All other SPIN implements and infrastructure can be sourced at local garden supply or hardware stores.

**“Home-based” work crew** - Supplemental labor requirements for a SPIN farm are minimal and can be readily obtained within the network of family, friends, or within the local community.

**Utilization of existing water sources** - SPIN relies on local water service or wells for all of its irrigation needs.

**Low capital intensive** - Minimal infrastructure and minimal overhead keeps SPIN farm's start-up and operating expenses manageable. The bottom line is little or no debt.

The intricacies of the SPIN system go far beyond what is outlined above, but this gives an idea of how SPIN can produce significant revenue from sub-acre land bases. Though the land base and overhead of a sub-acre farm is a fraction of that of a large multi-acre farm, their bottom lines are similar. A sub-acre farm can produce the same, or even greater, income than a large-scale operation with a lot less stress and overhead, and with a lot more certainty of success from year to year. SPIN is helping a growing corps of citizen-farmers to establish their farmsteads in the middle of urban jungles and on the suburban fringe. Their collective actions are re-defining farming for the 21st century: sub-acre, close to markets, environmentally friendly, low-capital intensive, entrepreneurially-driven. You can keep up with SPIN-Farming at [www.spinfarming.com](http://www.spinfarming.com).