

THE WORLD'S LARGEST OUTDOOR CANNABIS FARM

Los Sueños Farms is changing the town of Pueblo and setting the bar for cultivators across the country

by Benjamin M. Adams

An emerald oasis sits quietly in rural Pueblo County, Colorado. Methodical, well-groomed and visually-satisfying rows of cannabis stalks grace the expanding acreage. Four enormous farms in Avondale, Colorado in Pueblo County make up the compound that is Los Sueños Farms (LSF). They are busy this time of year, preparing for the spring greenhouse harvest and preparing to plant their massive outdoor harvest early this summer. Some believe Los Sueños Farms could help save the local economy from decades of recession.

Los Sueños Farms is reportedly the world's largest outdoor cannabis farm. Since the '80s, Pueblo County has been struggling to recover from a collapsed steel industry. Since Amendment 64 allows for local areas to regulate cannabis cultivation on their own, Pueblo has welcomed cannabis cultivation with open arms. Coloradans have renamed Pueblo from "The Pittsburgh of the West" to "The Silicon Valley of Marijuana." Pueblo also pioneered cross-pollination rules, setting an example for other cities curious about cannabis cultivation.

The complex is ecologically accountable, adhering to a positive alliance with Mother Earth. By using natural predators native to the area, Los Sueños Farms allows larger, beneficial insects to feed on pests. More importantly, by using the sun's natural rays, they leave a much smaller carbon footprint. "We grow outside—the way nature intended," Michael "Caddy" Cadwell told *CULTURE*. "Farmers don't grow other fruits and vegetables in warehouses—it's not natural. Only the sun creates true photosynthesis. Trying to recreate nature indoors is very difficult, it weighs down the grid and it is a breeding ground for insects and disease. We want to provide consumers the option of natural sun grown pesticide-free cannabis from a farm that uses organic farming practices."

Growing cannabis in warehouses can yield five-figure power bills, among other things. Most other counties in Colorado, including Denver County, do not permit outdoor growing. Ironically, Colorado's high elevation is ideal for cannabis—the ultraviolet rays have the ability to kick



"The sky is the limit as long as the public keeps demanding sun grown, natural pesticide-free cannabis."

the plants into producing more resin. It's evident in Los Sueños Farms' eight-foot high cannabis plants.

The outdoor compound amounts to a combined total 36 acres of cannabis stalks. Caddy says the compound boasts a total of 170 developed acres as well as 60,000 square feet of greenhouse growing. "Los Sueños Farms was recently awarded the ability to grow 24,000 plants. "Because we sold 100 percent of our first harvest, we can apply to increase our plant count for our licenses,"

explained Caddy. "The next level would be the equivalent of 6,000 plants per license, which totals 24,000 plants on the farm."

Boasting an enormous and diverse palette of flavor, LSF provides variety for the connoisseur. Sativas include strains like "Casey Jones" or "Chocolope." Hybrids include rarities like "Bordello," and indicas include "Critical Mass White Widow."

Pueblo voters approved a five percent increase, raising excise tax from 15 percent to 20 percent—and nobody in the cannabis industry opposed it. The five percent excise tax on cannabis sales will apply to up to 20 tons of harvest generated by Los Sueños Farms. The tax is projected to hit \$3.5 million per year by 2020. Where does that money go? Well, a large fraction of the revenue is expected to generate \$1.7 million in college scholarships. It's expected to generate an additional \$1.7 million in revenue which will go towards the nation's 88



other licensed cultivators and other various projects.

"We tend to be one of the poorer counties in the state with a lower per-capita income and a higher unemployment rate," Pueblo County Commissioner Sal Pace told *Bloomberg*. Los Sueños Farms could be the answer to Pueblo's crumbling economy, and could serve as a great example for other states and counties considering similar salvation. "Local taxes and the city of Pueblo set up a scholarship that will give 400 college kids \$1,000 per year," explained Caddy.

The funding goes to Pueblo Community College and Colorado State University-Pueblo. Commissioner Sal Pace had been "floating the idea of a special funding source." Over 1,300 jobs and \$120 million in revenue were created by the Colorado cannabis industry in 2014. Also in 2014, Pueblo County collected \$1.8 million in revenue from cannabis ventures.

Colorado is home to around 938 cannabis collectives—a higher number than the number of Starbucks franchises. "The sky is the limit as long as the public keeps demanding sun grown, natural pesticide-free cannabis," says Caddy. **Q**

