



CASE STUDY

# Cultiva Farms: Farming innovation in turbulent conditions

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When **Federico Boscolo**, the president of Cultiva Farms USA, expanded his family's farming operations from Italy to Jennings, Florida in 2015, he faced both opportunity and adversity.

Boscolo had identified a demand for locally-produced baby leaf greens on the east coast, but while the new location offered a promising market for Cultiva's premium baby greens, it also brought challenges: difficult growing conditions and the need to build infrastructure from scratch.

Despite these hurdles, Cultiva succeeded—and so did its products. In fact, Cultiva and its high-quality greens have thrived in the environment. Today, it is a key supplier for Taylor Farms, a leader in fresh-cut produce in the United States.

**What's behind their success?** Innovation, a focus on quality, resilience, and strategic partnerships—including one with Tosca.

A fresh perspective:

## Farming in Florida's hostile environment

As a crop, baby greens are challenging. They're sensitive to temperature, moisture, and handling. With its humid and unpredictable weather, Florida presents real difficulties for farmers like Boscolo.

**"This is really the most hostile environment that I've experienced,"** Boscolo shared. **"That's why nobody's doing it. People probably tried to come here thinking they could copy and paste what works in Salinas or Yuma—but it's completely different."**

To adapt, Cultiva brought in innovative growing techniques to the state, such as high tunnel farming techniques—which relied on a combination of plastic and steel to withstand hurricane season—and shading systems and passive cooling to grow year-round.

**"We learned how to farm year-round in Florida, and we've also learned how to go through hurricanes. We've been retrofitting structures so that, in a minute and a half, I can remove all the plastic and let the wind pass through,"** shares Boscolo.

Advanced irrigation systems and soil sensors encouraged efficient water usage, while composting and crop rotation protect soil health. Transportation is also key in their sustainability goals.

"For me, the carbon footprint is very important," Boscolo states. "We've been working on reducing it—not only on the field by cutting some fertilizer—but by exploring how transport and fleet changes can significantly lower environmental impact."

To this end, Cultiva faced another challenge: **packaging their product.**



**The packaging problem:**

# Sustainability and protection

Packaging challenges in the produce industry are significant, particularly for delicate crops like baby greens. Once the industry standard, corrugated boxes pose increasing problems for growers, distributors, and retailers as they try to move products throughout the supply chain with minimal loss and minimal compliance issues.

**This means produce suppliers, distributors, and retailers must contend with:**

- **Box failures:** Stacking corrugated boxes on top of one another creates pressure and compounds moisture issues, which can collapse boxes. This results in damaged products and increased food waste.
- **Traceability gaps:** Under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) 204, businesses in the food industry must take new measures to trace high-risk foods throughout the supply chain—a requirement that corrugated boxes can't support.
- **Sustainability concerns:** Single-use corrugated boxes have a short shelf life, creating significant waste streams and undermining sustainability.
- **Food safety:** Corrugated boxes can absorb moisture and harbor bacteria, which increases food safety risks, especially in high-humidity environments.

# Why baby greens demand a different approach

Baby greens occupy a unique spot in the produce sector, particularly regarding packaging. The challenges above are magnified due to the crop's delicate nature:

**Fragility:**

Baby greens are **sensitive to bruising and damage during transport**, making durable packaging essential.

**Environmental sensitivity:**

To maintain quality, baby greens must be **cooled to 32 F immediately after harvest**. Moreover, without adequate ventilation, respiration accelerates spoilage, shortening shelf life.

**Moisture control:**

**High humidity and moisture exposure can degrade product quality** and compromise structural integrity in corrugated boxes.

Recognizing the limitations of traditional packaging under these conditions, Cultiva looked for a solution that could meet the high bar for their requirements.

Tosca's solutions:

## More than crates

Boscolo knew that choosing the right packaging partner was essential for the success of their Florida-based farm. Having previously worked with reusable crates in Europe, he recognized their benefits.

**"We concentrated all our crate usage on Tosca,"** Boscolo explained, noting how Tosca's easy-to-standardize systems brought efficiency to their operations, making packaging **"so much easier."**

Another contributing factor is Cultiva's relationship with Taylor Farms, a long-standing Tosca client. "Taylor Farms is partially involved in our operations, and their preference for Tosca definitely played a role in our decision," Boscolo explained.



Tosca's integrated pallet solution saves space while reducing labor costs. And because Tosca's products are **4x stronger and more durable**, produce farms minimize damaged products.

## How Cultiva Farms uses Tosca's crates

Cultiva Farms relies on Tosca's reusable plastic crates (RPCs) specifically designed to handle and ship fresh produce to transport delicate baby greens. Features that allow for this include:

### Durability

Made from long-lasting, sustainable materials, Tosca's RPCs don't buckle under pressure from stacking, high humidity, and transportation. This leads to less product loss and rejection.

### Ventilation

Proper airflow helps baby greens quickly and evenly cool after harvest, keeping them fresher for longer.

### Standardization

Standardized crate sizes reduce the time required to pack and transport, which makes handling less complex, logistics simpler, and automation more effective.

The difference Tosca makes:

## Efficiency meets sustainability

By adopting **Tosca products**, Cultiva has been able to focus on innovating its farming practices rather than dealing with faulty packaging.



### Efficiency

Tosca's standardized designs make it easy to stack and secure containers, meaning less time spent adjusting loads or dealing with shifting during transit.



### Partnership

Tosca's collaborative approach has allowed Cultiva to streamline operations and optimize its supply chain, even in the face of unpredictable growing conditions.



### Sustainability

Single-use corrugated boxes quickly break down and generate waste, but Tosca's RPCs can be reused. This helps Cultiva reduce its environmental footprint.



### Service

Tosca's efficient and personalized customer service has helped Cultiva maintain a smooth order flow, which allows them to focus on innovations in farming rather than administrative tasks.



## Partner with Tosca

Tosca has been a leader in reusable packaging for over 60 years, helping businesses like Cultiva optimize their supply chains with innovative, sustainable solutions. Ready to transform your operations?

Here's how to get started:

#### Learn more:

Discover Tosca's reusable packaging options when you talk to a Tosca produce expert.

#### Start small:

Interested in testing before you commit? Tosca offers pilot programs to help you evaluate the impact of reusable packaging on your business.

#### Get support:

Tosca's team is ready to assist with onboarding, troubleshooting, and optimizing your packaging process for long-term success.