



January 2, 2024,

[Pierson, Manitoba] – Valleyview Consumers Co-op is pleased to announce a strategic partnership with Real Garlic owners Kendra and Mark Custance to provide locally grown produce to southwestern Manitoba year-round. Valleyview Consumers Co-op Ltd. entered into a lease-to-own agreement with Mark and Kendra Custance. They will operate a Growcer unit at their farm near Pierson, Manitoba, providing products under *Real Greens*. This collaboration aims to enhance the local business ecosystem, deliver value to our members, and strengthen our commitment to the community.

Made in Canada and featured on the Dragon's Den television show, the Growcer hydroponic vertical farming unit will produce roughly 34,000 heads of lettuce annually and use 90% less water than standard farming. Valleyview Co-op General Manager Greg Gill: "We can reduce the environmental impact from shipping and warehousing to ensure our members receive the freshest product grown at home in Manitoba. This partnership creates part-time employment and should minimize weather and logistical issues, creating a consistent product supply with minimal impact on pricing."

*Real Greens* owner Mark Custance says they are excited to see this project's impact on the community: "We love the opportunity that *Growcer* brings to communities; this feels much better than paper straws in plastic cups. This is an opportunity to make a difference in the quality of the produce and take on wasteful transportation. We envision some staff working at the Growcer unit and Valleyview Co-op, closing the loop from farm to table!"

*Real Greens* expects to have its first crop of butter lettuce in-store in the first quarter 2024.



**Interview**

Kendra and Mark Custance

Owners, Real Greens

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Photo Credit June Wilson

Laura Johnson (Valleyview Co-op Pierson Food Manager), Mark Custance (Owner, Real Greens), Kendra Custance (Owner, Real Greens), Greg Gill (Valleyview Co-op General Manager)

