USDA NRCS
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

High Tunnel Harvest

What are high tunnels?

High tunnels, or hoophouses, are unheated greenhouses that can help market gardeners extend their growing season so that they can improve the profitability of their farms. Compared to open field conditions, plastic covered high tunnels result in a warmer production environment in the late fall and early spring.

High tunnels are tall enough to grow trellised vegetables and allow the grower to comfortably walk-in to tend the crops.

Cheu Vang produces many kinds of vegetables in his seasonal high tunnel, including exotic varieties that flourish with the longer growing season.

Extending the Harvest

Cheu and Chia Vang moved to America in April 1976 from Laos. Cheu had been in the Laotian Army and worked for USA Aid during the war. They moved to Jefferson, Wisconsin, in 2005 and started growing vegetables for local Farmer's Markets.

Cheu heard about NRCS and the seasonal high tunnel pilot project from his brother in Rhode Island. He was interested in growing earlier produced vegetables for the farmer's markets. Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Cheu's high tunnel is now complete.

Cheu's goals are:

- make sure everyone has healthy food to eat
- learning how to keep soil healthy and productive for his children
- to learn more about protecting the valuable natural resources on his farm

Soil Health

Jefferson County District Conservationist Dennis Vollmer, and Soil Conservation Technician Brendon Blank have been talking with Cheu about soil erosion and ways to improve the health of his soil. The High Tunnel project served as an introduction to NRCS, opening the door to more conservation practices to address soil erosion and runoff on highly erodible acres. Cheu is anxious to learn as much as he can to protect the soil.

Cheu has started growing cover crops after the vegetables. Next spring he plans to install contour grass buffer strips with technical assistance from NRCS. If that doesn't slow the erosion enough, he may work with NRCS to install a grassed waterway and diversion in the future.