

Choosing a suitable site for your cannabis operation



Location plays a crucial role in the capital expenditure, operational requirements and yield of a commercial cannabis operation. **Thomas Walker** provides some insights on how to select the ideal site.

Greenhouses or indoor cultivation, along with their respective technologies, make it theoretically possible today to produce cannabis in any environment, including in regions that experience extreme humidity, temperatures and rainfall. But the cost of building

and maintaining this infrastructure may make the business unviable. For example, growing cannabis in an environment classified as a tropical rainforest will cost more than if it is grown on a site with low relative humidity. Erecting a greenhouse in an area that experiences a high

degree of cloud cover will require supplemental lighting. Site selection becomes even more important when the crop is grown in the open, as it is totally exposed to the outside temperature, humidity, rainfall, pests and pathogens.

But the environment is not the only factor. Here are other key aspects that should determine where you locate your operation:

• **Access**

The site will need to offer easy access to vehicles. These include large trucks for the initial construction phase and, thereafter, vehicles transporting equipment, inputs, produce and employees. In addition, if the site is more than 45 minutes away from the main source of labour, look elsewhere.

• **Electricity**

Access to electricity is critical. If the site is in a subtropical area, you will need additional power for dehumidification and climate control equipment.

Sufficient power will also be required for lighting should the area experience a high number of cloudy days.

• **Water**

Water quality and volume are important

when selecting a site. Cannabis requires large quantities of water. If filtration is needed, obtain a mineral analysis of the water.

• **Proximity to farms and other cannabis operations**

Find out what crops are grown on the neighbouring farms (if any). Producers of fruit, vegetables and other crops often spray pesticides, herbicides and fungicides, which can easily be carried on the wind and contaminate cannabis. Tests are performed on cannabis as part of compliance requirements, and chemicals are likely to show up, marking the crop for destruction.

Nearby cannabis farms may also pose a risk. If male cannabis plants are grown here, your crop could become pollinated. (Cannabis pollen has been shown to travel up to 16km.) This could lead to the destruction of your crop, as it may be outside your cannabinoid profile.

Refineries or businesses that vent chemicals into the air are another potential risk. These residues can settle on outdoor crops or be sucked in by a greenhouse's climate control system.

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