# Rehabilitation via vertical farming trialled for the first time in UK prisons

For the first time in the UK, vertical farming will be trialled in a prison setting as part of a strategy to aid rehabilitation by empowering prisoners and helping them develop new skills to reintegrate back into society.

The first aeroponic container farm, called [DROP & GROW](https://www.lettusgrow.com/container-farm), has been delivered by [LettUs Grow](https://www.lettusgrow.com/) to [HM Prison Hewell](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hewell-prison). Prisoners will be introduced to indoor farming practices to gain experience in a fast growing industry and train in horticulture, with the aim of helping them secure full-time employment upon release.

The main purpose of the farm is training rather than food production. The salad, vegetables and herbs produced in the container farm will be incorporated into prisoner meals. The prisoners will learn plant husbandry skills, how aeroponics works, how to use a farm management software platform, indoor farm standard operating procedures, as well as [HACCP](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/hazard-analysis-and-critical-control-point-haccp) and [Food Safety](https://www.gov.uk/food-safety-your-responsibilities).

The prisoners will be learning to grow with state of the art [ultrasonic aeroponic technology](https://www.lettusgrow.com/blog/aeroponics-ultrasonics-indoor-farming). Aeroponics is a method of growing plants without soil, in a nutrient-rich mist. Prisons Minister Stuart Andrew MP said: *“This innovative scheme reflects our drive to equip prisoners with the cutting-edge practical skills needed to gain employment and play a positive role in society.*

*“Allied to education, family ties and addiction treatment, stable work holds the key to a life free from crime and safer communities for us all.”*

Only [17% of ex-offenders manage to secure a job within a year](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unlock-opportunity-employer-information-pack-and-case-studies/employing-prisoners-and-ex-offenders) of release. Employment is a key pillar of the Government’s strategy for rehabilitation as it’s one of the most effective ways of improving life quality and reducing re-offending. This is the first governmental institution in the UK to have brought controlled environmental agriculture into the prison system.

Ralph Lubowski, Governor of HMP said: *"I am delighted to partner with LettUs Grow in this fantastic initiative, which will give our prisoners the opportunity, confidence and training to turn their lives around.*

*“Vertical farming is an innovative, emerging industry and this partnership highlights our commitment to ensuring that prisoners are skilled up to find work on release."*

Billy Rodgers, Growing Specialist and Partner Support Manager at LettUs Grow, said: *“We’re offering an extra level of support, on top of the usual training, for this project by putting together growing plans, managing consumables like seeds or fertiliser, and delivering at regular intervals throughout the year.*

*“The aim is to take pressure off Site Managers and make running the farm as easy as possible by creating a structure to follow. This means they can focus on what’s most important: upskilling, empowering and rehabilitating the prisoners.”*

If you’d like to know more about the project you can read [the case study on the LettUs Grow website.](https://www.lettusgrow.com/hmp-hewell-case-study)