

11/3/2025

Pairing Up

Jennifer Polanz

Jennifer Polanz (JP): *What is your background in agriculture?*

Shawn Cutter (SC): I'm a sixth gen farmer, so my family has 450 acres of regenerative organic farm in Northeast Ohio. I grew up on that farm. Growing up, we had dairy steers and we raised dairy beef. I come from an area with a lot of dairy, so it's what I grew up in.

JP: *And what led you to explore co-location with ag and energy producers?*

SC: That also goes back to my background on top of farming. Farming, I think, was more of my dad's hobby. The primary family business was oil and gas. We grew up with and still have oil wells that have been producing on our property since the '50s. Using what's on the farm, what's under the ground, what on top of the ground, and using waste—that's always been ingrained in my psyche. But I got into technology, did that for about a decade, then solved some problems for the family business, and grew my first tech company. I'm a problem solver—I connect dots between things.

I really saw an opportunity for impact, to leverage energy to solve key challenges in growing indoors, growing 24-7, 365, close to where people are. I really saw the opportunity to take what I had learned with shale producers and some of the largest energy companies in the world. I learned that they already have the technology, the expertise and the energy, most importantly. And they actually want to do good. You know, they want to apply their resources to something and they don't get a lot of opportunities. So, is there a way to connect those two together in a way that leverages energy, in a more sustainable way to grow more food where people live?

JP: *Tell me what are the challenges and the risks with co-location with ag and energy producers?*

SC: The obvious risks are your hydrocarbons are flammable. You're bringing combustible material more and a lot of it, potentially on site. So, there is an element of explosion, but if you do things the right way, it's the safest way of delivering energy. Some of it's an operational risk. But initially it's just the upfront risk on the project of putting all of those pieces together when you may not understand energy and how to contract it. What I found is a lot of greenhouse operators had financial challenges. What I saw in some of the public information was that they don't know how to purchase their energy. You don't just have to pay retail, whatever comes off of the pipeline. If you're big enough there's ways to structure that so you don't get impacted by a

really cold day. That kind of takes you out and in a low margin business, you can't have those days. You have to eliminate that risk, and part of that is just sizing appropriately.

JP: *We had talked about data centers being an opportunity, as well. Can you talk a little bit about that?*

SC: Yeah, we, EnergiAcres, pivoted in the sense that we found a behind-the-meter solution. What we we're doing for food, we improved it by targeting data centers, providing them with a power solution. And ultimately, we see the build out of AI and the infrastructure that's happening. You're essentially building new city-size plants and we can build large scale greenhouses next door. We're providing a circular model that powers data centers, and uses the waste energy and CO2 to provide to the greenhouses. That's kind of our circular model, rinse, repeat. The first project we're working on is in Mansfield, Ohio.

JP: *What's the payoff for the greenhouse specifically?*

SC: The greenhouse has a buildable footprint, so some of the early de-risking that's needed in a project—water access, power access, gas access—all of those are solved, including the CO2 that's captured on site. If we can eliminate that early development cost and risk involved because we've already delivered the infrastructure that's necessary for data center and power plant, then phase two build out is a lot easier. Additionally, some of the other utilities you need, like water filtration, is easier when you have lots of extra energy to clean water. Some of that depends on the size of equipment. But we do everything possible to deliver the lowest cost of energy to a greenhouse and the lowest cost for free CO2 to enrich the food.

JP: *What are you working on now that could help indoor growers in the future?*

SC: We are working on our first project that in Mansfield, Ohio, that starts with a half a gigawatt—500 megawatts of power—that will be produced with a natural gas data center. We have 120 acres to build on, where the first 40-acre greenhouse we've lined up will go. What we're doing on our first project is bringing in the best partners and we are the lane and energy infrastructure developers that everyone else is plugging into. We're going to do this first one, and get the proof of concept, prototype fully out.

Additionally, there's one more project we've been working on for last few years called Project Everberry. That's a public-private partnership that will deliver prototype units. Think 1-acre, no larger, with a co-gen unit with CO2 capture—all of that baked into the unit—and we'll have prototype units. This will be part of an agritourism development in Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. We connect those food centers to the local food hubs. We're working with Grow Ohio Valley, out of Wheeling, and Ohio State, Penn State and WVU on part of this project to deploy these prototypes. This is an Appalachian Regional Commission project and funded opportunity.