



India Opens Strawberry Vertical Farm, Updates & CEA Summit East

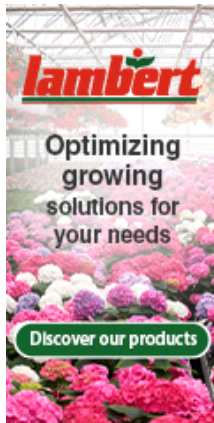
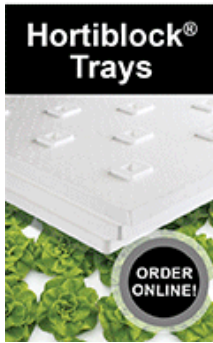


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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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CEA Summit East
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UG CEA Team
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Two Grower Updates

Cox Farms Featured on All Access

Cox Farms' appearance on All Access with Andy Garcia has officially been released. The segment highlights the automation and diversity of the Cox Farms brand. From the leafy greens grown under BrightFarms to the strawberries produced by Mucci, the largest greenhouse operator in North America shows off the technology and systems behind its produce.

Follow [the link here](#) to learn more.

AeroFarms Update

In a likely end to the volatility of the past six months, Palm Ventures, a family investment office, has announced the acquisition of AeroFarms.

The secrecy leading up to this point makes more sense now, as the overall scope, experience and trajectory planned for AeroFarms appears to be well thought out—at least at first glance. Taking over as CEO is Gustavo Burger, whose prior experience includes leadership roles at Kraft Heinz and Anheuser-Busch InBev, two major players in the agricultural and consumer packaged goods space. Palm Ventures also has a track record of long-term, patient strategies for the businesses it backs. That approach often differs from a lot of venture capital, which tends to expect profitability and returns on shorter timelines, frequently within five years.

If indoor farming is going to succeed, companies like AeroFarms need the stability and patience to work out production practices, branding and marketing. Betting on a consumer shift toward nutrient-dense, sustainably grown foods, AeroFarms aims to build on its existing foundation and improve operational performance. Let's hope this approach leads to long-term success, both within AeroFarms and across the industry.

Read about the acquisition [here](#).



UF Greenhouse Training on Water Quality and Treatment

Yogi Berra once said, “That’s too coincidental to be a coincidence.” I say, if you’d like to know how to deal with an algae-ridden pool and create clean agricultural water, U of F has the greenhouse training course for you!

Offered from July 6-31, this course covers all aspects of water use in greenhouses, from interpreting water quality tests to designing water treatment and monitoring systems. Eight lectures are given over four weeks. The certificate course is taught by 11 instructors from top ag schools across the U.S., so expect the latest in the science and technology of agricultural water.

The course is offered in both English and Spanish. Follow the [link here](#) to learn more and register.



Image from U of Florida—learn to turn potentially hazardous outdoor water into usable irrigation water.



Forbes AI in CEA

The German startup Eternal Ag was recently featured in [Forbes](#) for its automated tomato harvesting system. These 22-hour-a-day harvesters can handle the fruit by the stem, cut, sanitize the plant wound and transport produce to be packaged. Requiring a meager two hours of sleep to recharge, the robots aim to ease issues with labor, energy consumption and capital economics in greenhouse production. Powered by machine-learning vision, the platform aims to expand its target crops from tomatoes to cucumbers and other greenhouse fruit.

The article also touches on a topic we’ve covered before: pairing data centers with greenhouses to use computational waste heat to warm indoor climates. The numbers floored me. A 10-hectare (25-acre)

greenhouse requiring 15MW to operate can meet its thermal energy demands by pairing with a small-to-medium-sized data center. If one small-to-medium data center can heat 25 acres of greenhouse, I don't even want to know what the large and mondo-sized ones consume. It seems like waste heat from data centers should be required to be recycled one way or another.

The real take-home for me is that the two biggest concerns of greenhouse growers, energy for heating and labor, are both being addressed by the AI movement. While I still expect greenhouses to need people for decades to come, some relief on the two largest expenses could dramatically expand the economic viability of CEA.



CEA Summit East 2026 Unveils Conference Program

This year's CEA Summit East plans to hold four deep-dive tracks for greenhouse education. Each track will feature three sessions, including 90-minute breakout tracks, keynotes, panel presentations and industry and research showcase sessions.

The four tracks are:

- Launching a CEA Operation
- Core Horticultural Skills
- Technology Selection and Data Management
- Food Safety and Pest Management

The current speaker list includes over 40 speakers, ranging from academic researchers to industry CEOs and head growers.

This year's conference takes place September 15–16 in Danville, Virginia. Follow the link [here to learn more and register](#).



India Vertical Strawberry Farm Harvests First Fruit

Fragaria, a vertical farming company, recently harvested its first strawberry fruit at its Bangalore farm.

Fragaria was founded by a multinational team with roots in India, Mexico and South Africa, plus a touch of Dutch education from Wageningen. After raising \$2M in seed funding almost a year ago, the team is now celebrating the start of plant production at its new facility.

This is the second facility Fragaria has built, the first being its pilot farm in Chennai. Once the pilot farm hit its production goals, the team began planning and constructing the full production facility. While the build-out and planting are still in progress, the push toward a daily output of 120 kg of strawberries has begun.

Fragaria hopes to become a trusted and beloved fruit brand in India, another example of branding being a priority to drive appreciation of CEA crops.

Learn more about the company [here](#).



Fragaria's first strawberry, courtesy of Damian Lopez Salazar, Co-founder.

UG CEA Team

The University of Georgia recently featured its five CEA professors, giving background on the “Fab 5” research team. These five specialize in a range of topics, from pathology and entomology to technological integration and emerging greenhouse technologies. The article features Zhihang Song, Ruchika Kashyap, Andrew Ogden, Erich Schoeller and Rhuanito Ferrarezi.

Particularly interesting to me is the work of Dr. Andrew Ogden, a plant breeder who specializes in creating horticultural cultivars well adapted to growing in controlled environments. Breeding specifically for greenhouse production is an area that hasn't been a priority across a lot of crop types. Even more interesting is Dr. Ogden's focus on cucurbit crops—developing new hybrids of summer squash and beginning new projects with melons as well.

Each scientist offers a unique window into their area of expertise. Follow the link [here to read the full article](#).

Greenhouse in Colorado

A local update for folks here in Colorado. STEAD School, a STEM high school in Commerce City, is looking for a partner to operate the new greenhouse on its campus. The greenhouse has a 4,000-lettuce-head capacity and comes with access to the school's internship program for students. All that's requested as rent is the utility cost of operation.

If I didn't already operate a greenhouse here in Denver, I'd jump at this opportunity. For folks interested in running a greenhouse in an educational setting, or as a small community food system, this could be your chance to start growing at minimal startup cost.

Anyone interested, or who'd like to see photos and specs, please email Rachel Balkcom at RBalkcom@thesteadschool.org.



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