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News (/News)

AeroFarms gets \$1 million research grant

By [Tom Karst \(/users/tomkarst\)](#) September 08, 2017 | 1:47 pm EDT



Plants grow at indoor vertical farming company
AeroFarm's research and development facility in Newark, N.J. The company has been awarded a \$1 million Seeding Solutions grant from the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research to improve controlled environment specialty crop characteristics such as taste and nutritional quality.

Photo by AeroFarms

Newark, N.J.-based AeroFarms has been awarded a \$1 million Seeding Solutions grant from the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research.

The foundation is a nonprofit organization established in the 2014 farm bill, according to a news release, and the grant was celebrated by research and industry leaders at a Sept. 7 function at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

AeroFarms, an indoor vertical farming company, will match the foundation's grant for a total investment of nearly \$2 million, according to the release.

Principal investigator Roger Buelow, chief technology officer at AeroFarms, will work with Rutgers University and Cornell University scientists on using vertical farming systems technology to improve specialty crop characteristics such as taste and nutritional quality.

According to the release, the project seeks to advance crop production by measuring the link between stressed plants, the phytochemicals they produce and the taste and texture of the specialty crops grown.

The work is expected to result in commercial production of improved leafy green varieties and yield science-based best practices for farming, according to the release.

"With more than half the world living in urban areas, continuing to provide nutritious food to the burgeoning population must include envisioning our cities as places where abundant, nutritious foods can be grown and delivered locally," Sally Rockey, executive director of the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, said in the release. "We look forward to seeing this grant to AeroFarms catalyze innovation in vertical farming and plant production for the benefit of urban farmers and the communities they serve."

David Rosenberg, co-Founder and CEO of AeroFarms, said in the release that the company was honored to have been selected for the award.

"This FFAR grant is a huge endorsement for our company and recognition of our history and differentiated approach to be able to optimize for taste, texture, color, nutrition and yield and help lead the industry forward," he said in the release.

Information gained from the research will be published and presented at controlled environment agriculture industry conferences, according to the release, including events tailored to startup companies and prospective entrepreneurs.

"Pioneering initiatives like the work by AeroFarms and FFAR will help lead the produce industry with a science-backed approach to understand how to grow great tasting and nutritionally dense products consistently all year," Tom Stenzel, CEO of United Fresh Produce Association, said in the release. "We believe that there is a need for even more public/private partnerships like this to spur breakthroughs."

About the Author:



Tom Karst is national editor for The Packer and Farm Journal Media, covering issues of importance to the produce industry including immigration, farm policy and food safety. He began his career with The Packer in 1984 as one of the founding editors of ProNet, a pioneering electronic news service for the produce industry. Tom has also served as markets editor for The Packer and editor of Global Produce magazine, among other positions. Tom is also the main author of Fresh Talk, www.tinyurl.com/freshtalkblog, an industry blog that has been active since November 2006. Previous to coming to The Packer, Tom worked from 1982 to 1984 at Harris Electronic News, a farm videotext service based in

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