

Ohio

Business and Cooperative Services | Rural Energy for America Program

Energy Grant Adds Flavor to America's Salads and Sandwiches



Dave Loewen, general manager of Mucci Farms, shows off a new tomato crop in 75-acre growing space of their greenhouse in Huron, Ohio. USDA Photo.

Mucci Farms is a large greenhouse with 75 acres of growing space not far from the shores of Lake Erie in Huron, Ohio, and provides the ideal growing environment for the nearly 12 million units of tomatoes and cucumbers it produces annually.

“We are farmers at heart producing fresh fruits and vegetables using the most sustainable growing methods possible,” said Dave Loewen, general manager at Mucci Farms’ Huron greenhouse. “We grow a variety of tomatoes and cucumbers at this site and ship to retailers and wholesalers across the country for consumers to use in their salads and sandwiches.”

The greenhouse is a self-contained indoor ecosystem that includes an irrigation system, bees for pollination, and “good bugs” that prey on the “bad bugs” for pest control.

But growing crops indoors on so many acres require lots of light, especially during Ohio’s long winter months. So, the greenhouse relies on a system of high-pressure sodium and LED lights to produce the “sunlight” needed to keep America’s salad plates and sandwiches supplied with fresh tomatoes and cucumbers.

Thinking of ways they could lower costs and save energy, Mucci Farms connected with Ohio’s USDA Rural Development team to learn how [Rural Energy for America Program \(REAP\)](#) grants could help them invest in more energy efficient systems, like lighting.

When they received a grant in 2023, Mucci Farms purchased and installed new high-pressure sodium and LED lighting for its entire growing area that is more energy efficient, and the results have been a game changer.



New high-pressure sodium and LED lighting overhead provide "sunshine" for a new tomato crop in Mucci Farms' 75-acre greenhouse in Huron, Ohio. USDA

Mucci Farms – Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)

The new lighting provides 30% to 40% more available light while saving 1.5 megawatts of electricity per hour, or nearly 3,700 megawatt hours annually. By using less energy, Mucci Farms saves almost \$200,000 annually which they reinvest back into the business.

Saving money is just one added benefit the grant provides for Mucci Farms. Keeping the greenhouses operating year-round also means increased production because of more growing time, and steady jobs for 220 to 250 local employees. So, it is a win-win for the company and the community.

“The grant money has helped us to convert a portion of our greenhouse from all high-pressure sodium lights to a combination of high-pressure sodium lights and LED lights,” said Dave. “This has allowed us to lower our energy consumption and also increase our yield.”

Obligation amount: \$500,000

Obligation date: September 22, 2023

Congressional: U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur (OH-09); U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown and J.D. Vance

Impact: Increased growing time leads to greater yield for farm’s tomato and cucumber crops.