GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Bonnie Breaks Ground on New HQ

Chris Beytes



Bonnie Plants—which has called Union Springs, Alabama, home since its founding in 1918—just broke ground on this state-of-the-art corporate headquarters. It will be located in Opelika, Alabama, about an hour northeast of Union Springs, but quite close to Auburn University.

Why move to the Auburn/Opelika area from the town that's been the company's physical and spiritual home for 102 years?

"To support Bonnie's future growth … and also facilitate our recent partnership with Auburn University," CEO Mike Sutterer told GrowerTalks via email. Mike explained that they want to enhance their recruiting and retention efforts, and add new and emerging capabilities in areas such as analytics, supply chain and e-commerce.

The new Bonnie building, slated to open in late 2021, will include several sustainable features, including a 10-ft.-high indoor living wall. The design of the facility incorporates Bonnie's agriculture roots, with a modern farmhouse approach on the exterior and exposed wood beams inside.

The move to Opelika will facilitate Bonnie's new partnership with Auburn University. Bonnie has made investments in several key areas of the university, including the Harbert College of Business and the College of Agriculture. They hope the partnership with Auburn will create additional awareness of Bonnie as a potential employer for students

and alumni, with the goal of increasing internships and full-time recruiting. They've made a gift to support two newly endowed annual scholarships—one to a student in the Harbert College of Business studying business analytics and the other in the College of Agriculture for a student majoring in horticulture. The partnership also includes support for Auburn's Center for Supply Chain Innovation.

"Auburn University is nationally recognized with strong, talented faculty, student and alumni networks, and is an ideal partner for Bonnie and its future," Mike explained.

As for Union Springs, "We're definitely not leaving," Mike added. "We'll still have a huge presence here—in fact, we're investing to expand our operations. We've got 450-plus acres of production in Union Springs—it's the largest and most strategically important facility of the 80 growing operations we have around the United States. We're expanding our production for finished goods and plugs—including both vegetables and new growth areas like flowers. We are also significantly expanding our e-commerce fulfillment capabilities and footprint as that business continues to explode with growth. We've got near-term planned capital investments to support increased output and greater overall efficiency.

"In addition, we're adding over three dozen new positions in production and e-commerce to support our mission in Union Springs. Beyond 2021, our plan is to continue to invest in these areas." **GT**