

Mucci Expansion Stalled; H.R. 420; Hydroponic Organics Petition



Greenhouse vegetable news from GrowerTalks magazine

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Controlled Environment Agriculture

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Survey Still Open
Mucci Farms' Lights
Update on CBD/H.R. 420
Petition Against Organic
Hydroponics
Stuppy's New Bench Heat

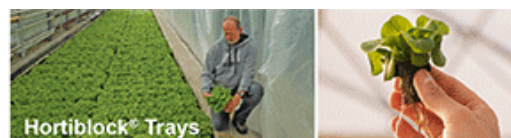


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Survey Still Open—Help Me Help You!

We have quite the list of topics to get to today, but before I get into the news, I wanted to remind you I have a survey still open for another week asking about your operation and what you'd like to see in this space. Your answers help us determine trends for what's happening in CEA, so please take five minutes to fill out the survey (it actually is taking an average of four minutes, but I rounded up). Please feel free to share the survey, too; the more people we have take it the better the results will be. Thank you to those who have taken it so far—your answers are much appreciated!

You can find it here: www.surveymonkey.com/r/D7NPC5R



Breaking News: Greenhouses Have Lights

Okay, that's rather snarky. My apologies. But apparently that's news to some who approved the Mucci Farms tomato greenhouses in Huron, Ohio, and now the expansion of that operation is on hold until the company comes up with a solution for light pollution.

According to [THIS](#) story in the *Sandusky Register* (total side note—I used to work for a competing newspaper against the *Reg* back in the day), the city has imposed a moratorium on expansion until Mucci Farms can fix the issue, which the grower says stems from venting the greenhouse. The story notes the lights can be seen from upwards of 30 miles away, and officials

and locals are worried the problem will only get worse with more greenhouses.

While Mucci Farms continues to work toward a solution, according to the story, the city of Huron is looking into legal options. Mucci Farms finished the Phase 1, 60-acre tomato greenhouse in May 2018 and had plans for two more phases totaling another 36 acres, with Phase 2 slated to begin this year.

This isn't the first time we've heard disputes over light pollution and it likely won't be the last. It might be time for more of an industry standard on this issue that can be presented to cities before construction begins. Is that even possible? Your thoughts? [Email me here.](#)



H.R. 420 & Hemp Update

It's certainly got attention as one of three bills introduced into the new House session: H.R. 420 is a bill to remove cannabis from the Controlled Substances Act. Introduced by Rep. Earl Blumenauer of Oregon, the bill also would create new federal oversight in the renamed Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Marijuana, Firearms and Explosives.

"While the bill number may be a bit tongue-in-cheek, the issue is very serious. Our federal marijuana laws are outdated, out of touch and have negatively impacted countless lives," writes the representative on his website announcing the new bill. "Congress cannot continue to be out of touch with a movement that a growing majority of Americans support. It's time to end this senseless prohibition."

Like I said, it's one of three cannabis or medical marijuana-focused bills introduced just since the beginning of the new Congress, and the issue crosses party lines, as both Democrats and Republicans are introducing measures. Fascinating times we live in!

Also, last enews I brought you information from our expert Dr. Brian Corr about hemp and I wanted to update that as there's a new development. Brian had said that while the Farm Bill legalized hemp production, it didn't change rules on CBD oil, one of the potential products from hemp. Last week, two Senators from Oregon asked the FDA to update federal regulations on CBD oil and permit interstate commerce of food products containing CBD oil, according to a news story in *The Seattle Times*.

"Farmers in Oregon and nationwide are poised to make real economic gains for their communities once these regulations are updated," Senators Ron Wyden and Jeffrey Merkley wrote. "We will be closely engaged in the ongoing implementation of our legislation, as it was Congress' intent to ensure that both U.S producers and consumers have access to a full range of hemp-derived products, including hemp-derived cannabinoids."

You can read the full letter [HERE](#), including the clarifications they're requesting from the FDA.



Petition Filed Against Organic Hydroponics

The debate continues as the Center for Food Safety (CFS) announced late last week it filed a new legal action asking the USDA to ban hydroponics from organic certification. You can read the full petition [HERE](#).

The CFS says “hydroponic production systems—a catch-all term that applies to food production methods that do not use soil—do not meet federal organic standards and violate organic law, which requires that organic farming include soil improvement and biodiversity conservation,” according to a media release from the CFS. “Hydroponic systems cannot comply with the organic standard’s vital soil standards because hydroponic crops do not use soil at all.”

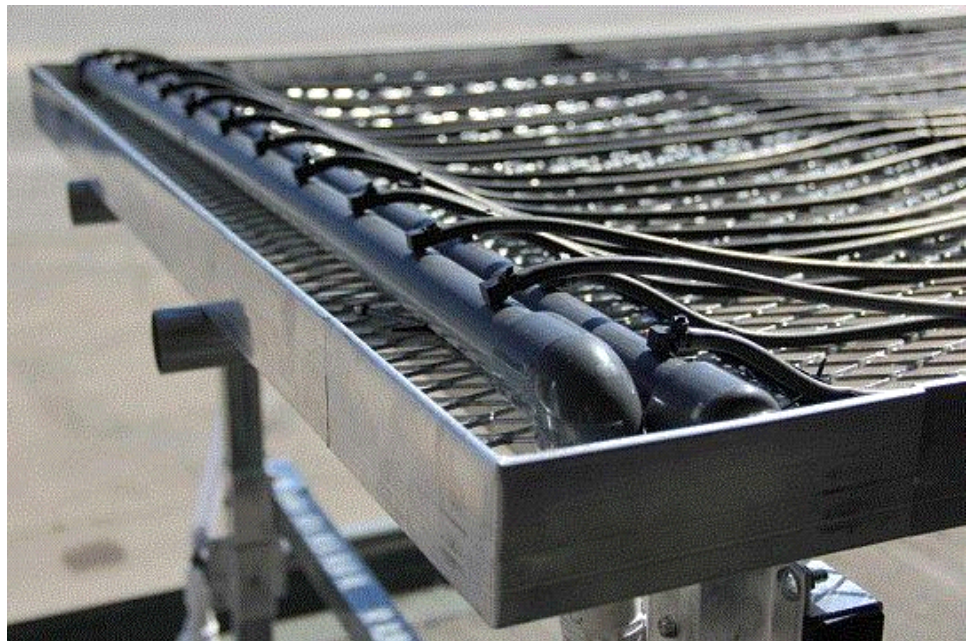
What is the CFS? It’s a non-profit environmental advocacy organization geared toward promoting organic and sustainable agriculture.

What’s interesting to me is the vast majority of hydroponic growers I talk to don’t really want to have an organic certification. They just don’t think it’s necessary, as long as they make sure their customers understand their growing methods. Most hydroponic lettuce and herb growers I talk to use biocontrols only, and the tomato growers use a mix of biocontrols and some pesticides, but from what I can tell pesticides are usually a last resort. Just my anecdotal observations from the interviews I’ve conducted over the past couple of years.

Stuppy Adds Bench Heat

Stuppy Greenhouse, Inc. recently announced it’s expanding its product line to include a new, pre-engineered, custom Hydronic Bench Heat system for growers.

“A better alternative to forced-air heat, bench heating warms the soil with direct contact from rubber tubing radiant heat to the root zone for even control of soil temperature,” says Stuppy Territory Sales & Marketing Manager Mike Kovalycsik in a media release. “This lets growers create different temperature zones for flexible growing with a system that responds quickly and efficiently.”



The new system from Stuppy is designed in-house with EPDM rubber tubing that resists high temperature or chemicals, while offering superior heat transfer capabilities and durable design. Mike says hydronic bench heat has been proven to promote higher seed germination rate,

accelerate rooting in young plants and improve plant growth, leading to better quality and fewer diseases.

Click [HERE](#) for more.

As always, feel free to email me at jpolanz@ballpublishing.com with comments, questions, news and views.

Until next time,



Jennifer Polanz
Editor-at-Large
Inside Grower

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