

Alliances and Innovation Headline 2nd Annual Edition of CEA Summit East In Virginia

Building alliances and forging new connections were key themes that drove the Sept. 19-20, 2023, edition of CEA Summit East held at the IALR in Danville, VA

DANVILLE, VIRGINIA, UNITED STATES, September 25, 2023 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Building alliances, sharing information and forging new connections were key themes that drove the September 19-20, 2023, edition of the Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) Summit East held at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research ([IALR](#)) in Danville, Virginia.



CEA Summit East Attracts 240 Attendees for 2023 Edition

Co-hosted by [Indoor Ag-Con](#) and the Virginia Tech- IALR Controlled Environment Agriculture Innovation Center (a partnership between the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences at Virginia Tech, the Virginia Seafood Agricultural Research and Extension Center, and IALR), the 2nd annual edition attracted 240 attendees from 33 U.S. states, Canada, the Netherlands and Sweden, including growers, educators, scientists, Virginia Cooperative Extension specialists, suppliers, engineers, tech specialists, architect/developers and other industry members.

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Brian Sullivan, CEO, Indoor Ag-Con

During the day and one-half event, attendees enjoyed quality time to meet, network and learn during keynotes, panels, and breakout conference sessions; explored 21

tabletop exhibits presenting the latest innovations and services; and enjoyed a host of networking opportunities.

“It’s exciting to see this event grow in both attendance and vendor/sponsor support,” said Brian Sullivan, CEO, Indoor Ag-Con. “Together with the CEA Innovation Center, we’re building a strong event where business and academia unite to drive our industry forward.”

“The CEA Summit exemplifies the collaborative spirit that defines our mission,” said Scott Lowman, Co-Director, Controlled Environment Agriculture Innovation Center and Vice President, Applied Research, IALR. “It’s rewarding to see industry leaders from all sectors of CEA convene here to share lessons learned, best practices, research findings and ways to help accelerate our collective growth.”

Event highlights included:

Morning Kick-Off Keynotes

Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matthew Lohr kicked off opening morning with his keynote address, “Virginia’s Commitment to Next Generation Agriculture: Leading the Indoor Farming Revolution.” On the 2nd day, AeroFarms President and CFO opened the event with a keynote that came on the heels of the company’s announcement that it had emerged fully funded from Chapter 11.

Educational Tracks

The CEA Summit featured four educational tracks – Grower, Business & Marketing, Up & Coming Technology and Education, Outreach & Workforce Development– that brought academics, growers and business experts together covering a wide range of topics ranging from scaling up and negotiating energy costs to the future of CEA crops, getting started in aquaponics, and lessons learned from recent college graduates entering the CEA sector. Other panel discussions



(L-R) : Michael Schwarz, Ph.D., CEA Innovation Center & Virginia Seafood AREC; Brian Sullivan, Indoor Ag-Con; John H. Hughes, IV, ED.D, IALR; Matthew Lohr, Virginia Secretary of Ag & Forestry; Scott Lowman, Ph.D., CEA Innovation Center & IALR.



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 **INDOOR AG-CON**

Co-hosted by Indoor Ag-Con & the CEA Innovation Center (VT-IALR CEA-IC), a partnership between the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences at Virginia Tech and Virginia Seafood Agricultural Research and Extension Center at Virginia Tech and the IALR

and 15-minute CEA Industry & Research Showcase sessions gave attendees the chance to hear about some of the latest research findings and other industry success stories.

Tabletop Exhibits & Networking

In addition to conference sessions, attendees had ample opportunities to visit with the Summit's 21 tabletop exhibitors during coffee breaks, luncheon roundtables and an afternoon cocktail reception.

Graduate Student Poster Competition

This year's summit kicked off a new CEA Poster Competition to provide an opportunity for graduate students to share high quality CEA-related research; to expose commercial companies to qualified candidates; to foster collaboration between individuals in academia and in private industry. Six finalists competed and Nelda Hernandez, Auburn University, took first prize for her poster, "Hydroponics as an Alternative Production System for Strawberry (*Fragaria ×ananassa* Duch.) in Alabama."

CEA Innovation Center Tour

The event wrapped up with group tours of the CEA Innovation Center. 90+ conference attendees took advantage of the unique opportunity to get an inside look at the CEA Innovation Center's hydroponic systems and facilities, including the greenhouse and vertical growing racks. They also got to hear more about some of the Center's exciting research projects.

Look for more information coming soon on dates and details for the 2024 edition. In the meantime, industry members can make plans to attend Indoor Ag-Con, March 11-12, 2024, as it returns to Caesars Forum, Las Vegas, to once again co-locate with the National Grocers Association (NGA) Show.

ABOUT INDOOR AG-CON

Indoor Ag-Con is the premier global event series focused on the future of indoor farming. Since 2013, the trade show and conference, the industry's largest, has been at the forefront of the rapidly expanding vertical farming and controlled environment agriculture sector, providing a platform for industry leaders, innovators, and researchers to connect, share knowledge, and drive the industry forward. For more information, visit www.indoor.ag

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA TECH-IALR CEA INNOVATION CENTER

The Virginia Tech-IALR Controlled Environment Agriculture Innovation Center is a joint project between IALR and Virginia Tech's School of Plant and Environmental Sciences and the Virginia Seafood Agricultural Research and Extension Center. By developing strategic partnerships with both industry and academia, the goal of the Innovation Center is to conduct research and educational programming to develop, promote and advance the CEA sector in the U.S. and internationally. More information--www.ialr.org/cea

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