

Third Annual CEA Summit East Sparks Innovation and Collaboration In Virginia

Building on the success of previous years, the 3rd annual Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) Summit East returned to IALR in Danville, VA Oct. 1-2, 2024.

DANVILLE, VA, UNITED STATES, October 4, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Building on the success of previous years, the third annual Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) Summit East returned to the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) in Danville, VA from October 1-2, 2024.

Co-hosted by [Indoor Ag-Con](#) and the [CEA Innovation Center](#)—a joint project

with Virginia Tech's School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, IALR and the Virginia Seafood Agricultural Research and Extension Center —the event attracted almost 250 attendees from 35 US states, Canada, the Netherlands, and Hong Kong. The diverse audience of growers,

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educators, scientists, Extension personnel, suppliers, tech specialists, and government leaders gathered to explore the latest advancements in CEA technology and build valuable partnerships.

The two-day event featured a packed agenda of keynote presentations, panels, breakout sessions, and tours of the CEA Innovation Center facilities. Attendees had the opportunity to engage with 21 tabletop exhibits showcasing cutting-edge innovations and services shaping the future of CEA. Alongside these sessions, a range of networking opportunities fostered new connections and strengthened existing partnerships.



CEA Summit East Held Oct 1-2, 2024 in Danville, Virginia

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Indoor Ag-Con. “The diversity of expertise represented here is impressive, and it's a testament to the collaborative nature of this growing sector. ”

“It’s inspiring to see leaders across the CEA spectrum come together to exchange ideas and strategies that drive our industry forward,” adds Dr. Scott Lowman, Co-Director of the CEA Innovation Center and Vice President of Applied Research at IALR. “This event underscores the importance of partnerships and shared knowledge in achieving the growth and success we envision for CEA.”

Standing-Room Only Keynote With Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin Kicks Off Event

Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin, a steadfast supporter of the indoor agriculture sector, kicked off the event with a keynote address to a standing-room only audience. His session was immediately followed by the session, “What Is CEA: It’s Mission, Definition and Purpose,” with Paul Brentlinger, CEO, CropKing, Inc; Jessica Soare, Senior Director of Marketing,

BrightFarms; Mike Ross, Co-Founder & CEO, Beanstalk; and Dr. Michael Evans, Virginia Tech and Co-Director of the CEA Innovation Center. On the second day, the Leadership Insights Panel welcomed John McMahon, Co-Founder & COO, Better Future Farms; Molly Montgomery, Acting CEO Executive Chair, AeroFarms; Carl Gupton, CEO, Greenswell Growers; and moderator Emily Gee, CEA Alliance Board Member and Marketing Director, AeroFarms, to the stage. In addition, the panel "Horizon Ahead" moderated by Kelli Rodda, Editorial Director, GIE Media, brought together Andrew Brooks, Business Development Manager, Priva; Cody Journell, Founder | CEO, Vegg, Inc; and Maximilian Knight, CEO, Rooted Robotics, to discuss emerging trends, technological advancements and innovations shaping CEA today.

Educational Tracks



Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin Gives CEA Summit East Opening Morning Keynote to Standing-Room only audience.



CEA Summit East 2024 Showcased Innovations from Tabletop Exhibitors

The CEA Summit featured three educational tracks – Production, Business and Education, Workforce and Training– that brought academics, growers and business experts together covering a wide range of topics ranging from food safety, economics of CEA, crop selection and aquaponics to strategies for energy management, onboarding training programs for new employees, building international partnerships. Other panel discussions 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 hosted the 2nd CEA Graduate Student 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.

Eight finalists competed and Liam Reynolds, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign took first prize for his poster, "Evaluation of Radish, Broccoli, and Lettuce Microgreens Irrigated with Hydrothermal Liquefaction Aqueous Phase." Nathaniel King-Smith, The Ohio State University, was awarded second place for his poster, "Exploring Sustainable Alternatives for Critical Materials: Hydroponic Cultivation of Rubber Dandelion (*T.kok-saghyz*) for Rubber Production."

CEA Innovation Center Tour

The event wrapped up with group tours of the CEA Innovation Center. 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.

The next edition of CEA Summit East will be held September 9-10, 2025. Look for more information coming soon to the event website – www.ceasummit.com. In addition, save the dates for the next edition of Indoor Ag-Con, March 11-12, 2025 at the Westgate Las Vegas.

ABOUT INDOOR AG-CON

Founded in 2013, Indoor Ag-Con has emerged as the largest trade show and conference for vertical farming | greenhouse | controlled environment agriculture. Its events are crop-agnostic and touch all sectors of the business, covering produce, legal cannabis | hemp, alternate protein and non-food crops. For more information, visit www.indoor.ag.

ABOUT THE CEA INNOVATION CENTER

The Virginia Tech-IALR Controlled Environment Agriculture Innovation Center is a joint project with Virginia Tech's School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, IALR 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. For more information, visit <https://ceaic.org/>

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