

Bonnie Plants plans greenhouse projects, e-commerce upgrades in Alabama



More stories in Rural Development

UNION SPRINGS, Alabama — Bonnie Plants, the nation's largest grower of vegetable and herb plants for home gardens, announced plans today to upgrade and expand its greenhouse facilities in Bullock County with a multimillion-dollar project that will improve production and strengthen its e-commerce operations. "This new operation will be one of the most state-of-the-art facilities within Bonnie's network of over 300 acres of greenhouses nationwide," said Mike Sutterer, president and CEO of Bonnie Plants.

"When completed, this project will expand our growing and distribution space in Union Springs by more than 30 percent while improving how we grow and distribute vegetables and herbs as well as our new growth segments of flowers, succulents and houseplants."

The expansion in Union Springs includes seven acres of open-roof, natural-ventilation greenhouses, which provide a variety of benefits compared to traditional fan and shutter greenhouses, including better temperature and humidity control, energy savings and reduced need for irrigation — plus an additional four acres of outdoor growing area.

There will also be a 7,800-square-foot production line and 45,900-square-foot e-commerce distribution warehouse at each end of the greenhouses. Including potting, finish growth and distribution in one central facility will create better, sturdier plants by reducing handling time and variations in temperature and climate as the plants are moved through the facility, improving plant quality for consumers.

The expansion project will create an estimated 60 jobs at the Bullock County site. "We're excited that we'll be able to continue our commitment to this community by adding more associates to the Bonnie family through this expansion."

The upgrade will also allow Bonnie to strengthen direct fulfillment for its ever-expanding e-commerce division.

This expansion project began as a way to support the surging demand following a 450 percent increase in e-commerce sales in 2020 and another increase of at least 400 percent planned for 2021.



Alabama-based Bonnie Plants announced plans today to upgrade and expand its greenhouse facilities in Bullock County and enhance its e-commerce efforts.

"E-commerce has been one of the fastest-growing channels for Bonnie Plants for the past several years," said Sidney Phelps, director of E-commerce for Bonnie Plants. "As consumers are buying more things online, they're even choosing to have plants for their gardens delivered directly to their homes. "This new expansion allows us to offer a best-in-class experience for distribution while keeping the overall plant health at the highest quality."

GROWTH PLANS

In conjunction with the increased investment in Union Springs, last year Bonnie announced it was relocating certain headquarters positions to a new state-of-the-art building in Opelika with the goal of leveraging the location, building and amenities to help Bonnie's employee recruiting and retention efforts.

A groundbreaking ceremony for the new building was last August, and construction is scheduled to be completed late Fall 2021. "We're proud that the new greenhouse facilities will not only create expansion for our products and operations, but for employment in Bullock County as well," Sutterer said "Union Springs has been an integral part of Bonnie's history for more than 100 years and that isn't changing. "We're excited that we'll be able to continue our commitment to this community by adding more associates to the Bonnie family through this expansion." Construction on the expansion in Union Springs began in December 2020 and is expected to be completed this Fall.

Brenda Tuck, rural development manager for the Alabama Department of Commerce, said Bonnie Plant's growth project will have a major economic impact on Bullock County, where the company was founded in 1918.

"It is so exciting to see Bonnie Plants, with more than a century of history in Bullock County, continuing to grow and expand with the changing culture. Their foresight and ability to adapt to the conditions and restraints we all found ourselves in through the pandemic is exceptional as they worked to meet the needs of people throughout their service area," she said. "They are a testament to the strength and long-standing economic successes of Bullock County.

"It's always a pleasure to work with David Padgett at the Bullock County Development Authority as he assists companies through growth and expansion opportunities," Tuck added.