

Innovative Agriculture... and Herbs



TIM HEYDON
President & CEO of
Shenandoah Growers

Innovation Village @ Rockingham (IV@R), surrounded by rich farmland with a highly-trained and dedicated workforce, is a magnet for professionals focusing on the research, testing, processing, and distribution of products and services in agriculture and crop sciences.

Here in the Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, farmers and food processors use science and technology to produce beer, soy milk, dairy, poultry, beef, chocolate, fruit, wine, potato chips and Little Debbie snack cakes.

Tim Heydon never guessed that his MBA project at James Madison University (JMU) would lead to high-tech, certified organic, fresh herb growing. Today he is President & CEO of Shenandoah Growers, where computers manage the climate in greenhouses that grow more than 11 million individual certified organic herb plants offered for sale year round to supermarkets along the entire East Coast, and as far west as Milwaukee and Chicago.

"Our plants are grown in the optimum environment for quality and taste, and the growing system utilizes the principles of sustainability," Heydon says. "The seeds are planted in a certified organic soil, germinated in controlled conditions, and are moved to the greenhouses where the climate is set to optimum conditions for growing no matter the conditions outside. The plants receive organic nutrient at the roots, water is collected from the roof surface of the greenhouses, and the plants are stimulated by gentle mechanical brushes to mimic natural breezes and collect unwanted insects in a natural way.

"When the plants are ready, they are packaged individually and shipped fresh for sale in produce departments at grocery stores," Heydon explains.

"November and December are our biggest season," he adds, "when families are cooking holiday meals."

IV@R is the ideal location for food processors and companies that support them. Easy access from I-81 and less than a day's drive from two-thirds of the U.S population, the Village offers superior logistics and time-to-market advantages. Innovation Village @ Rockingham is infused with a strong community spirit and "can-do" optimism that helps great ideas move to reality. IV@R is a 365-acre master planned village being developed in three phases, allowing for the establishment of new facilities or campuses customized for each company's specific needs.