

ComEd, EPRI Collaborate on Sustainable Electric Technology to Help Grow Healthy Food Year-Round

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Installation of four climate-controlled, modified shipping containers help bring locally sourced produce to neighborhoods, support education opportunities in agriculture

CHICAGO--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- To help bring more locally sourced produce into communities, while supporting education opportunities in agriculture, ComEd is collaborating with EPRI, an independent, nonprofit energy R&D institute, to install four agricultural pods (ag pods) across northern Illinois.

An ag pod is a controlled environment agriculture (CEA) farm made from a custom shipping container equipped with LED lighting, a high-efficiency HVAC system, recirculating water pumps, a dehumidification system, and sensors. Indoor agriculture facilities like these allow for the year-round local production of a wide variety of crops regardless of outdoor conditions. The container uses electric technologies to create a microclimate that optimizes plant production and helps meet other community energy, water, and sustainability goals.

“ComEd is proud to collaborate on this exciting project that will help sustainably increase access to healthy food in our communities and provide agricultural learning opportunities using this innovative farming method,” said **Gil C. Quiniones, CEO of ComEd**. “By helping the agriculture industry understand how lighting, water use and other systems impact plant production, we can help expand food resource options for disadvantaged communities across the areas we serve.”

Each ag pod, which was fully installed and activated in early December, will be managed by a local organization that will receive training from ComEd, EPRI, and the farm’s manufacturer before becoming farm managers to the pod. Locations of each pod, and their supporting organizations are:

- 4927 S. Indiana Ave. in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood, managed by the **Emerald South Economic Development Collaborative**
- 5812 S. Green St. in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood managed by **Grow Greater Englewood**
- Northern Illinois University Anderson Hall, 1425 W. Lincoln Hwy, Dekalb, Ill., managed by **Northern Illinois University's Edible Campus program**
- 1443 S. Harding Ave. in Chicago's North Lawndale neighborhood, managed by the **Young Mens Educational Network (YMEN)**

"Indoor agriculture is a rapidly emerging industry across the United States. We're seeing innovative designs, technologies, and energy applications that not only help achieve year-round crop cultivation but also contribute to the community," said **Arshad Mansoor, president and CEO, EPRI**. "EPRI is excited to include ComEd as part of this larger collaborative project and explore potential opportunities from this CEA farm to benefit the northern Illinois community."

Each farm has an embedded system that allows farmers to remotely control the lighting, temperature and watering conditions to create the ideal setting needed for produce to thrive. To evaluate each farm's operation, EPRI and ComEd installed a custom monitoring and verification (M&V) system to continuously gather real-time data on growing conditions.

"A primary tenet of Emerald South's work is the stewardship of the vacant land in our communities," said **Ghian Foreman, President and CEO of Emerald South Economic Development Collaborative**. "With this ag pod at the closed Overton school, we look forward to supporting the food accessibility of our residents by partnering with the community to promote land care and environmental sustainability."

"We're excited to use these emerging technologies to expand education around the power of local food systems and to support community-based farms in growing fresh, healthy food for residents year round," said **Anton Seals, Lead Steward of Grow Greater Englewood**. "We hope to see this type of investment and innovation around urban agriculture continue."

"Northern Illinois University is excited to be a part of this amazing opportunity to partner with ComEd and EPRI on the installation of our ag pod grow container," said **Bryan Flower, assistant director of food systems innovation at NIU**. "The amazing educational and research opportunities this unit will afford us are boundless. It also will be a truly special addition to our growing Edible Campus program, which already includes nearly 100 garden beds across campus, plus a one-third acre market garden."

"This ag pod is going to be such an incredible asset to the North Lawndale community as we seek to help neighbors

access highly nutritious, locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. With only one viable grocery store to serve 35,000 neighbors, ComEd and EPRI are making an investment to enrich the lives of thousands of people in our community,” said **Mike Trout, YMEN Executive Director**. “This project has brought together more than 20 neighborhood organizations all committed to the same vision of healthy lives and healthy families. This ag pod is more than a growing container, it is a tool for the safety, wellbeing, and flourishing of our 35,000 neighbors. YMEN is thrilled to be entrusted with the stewardship of such a gift to North Lawndale. Let all of Chicago know that... something good is growin’ in the hood!”

ComEd is one of 16 energy companies participating in EPRI’s national study designed to demonstrate and better understand opportunities surrounding indoor food production and CEA farm operation. Through the M&V system, EPRI researchers are able to evaluate how energy loads, water use, and other controlled parameters vary across different facilities and locations. Other trackable data will help address questions regarding distribution planning, rate design, and larger societal benefits. After about 16 months of growing, ComEd and EPRI will collect, document and publish project data and results to share lessons learned and best practices with other utilities and communities.

About ComEd

ComEd is a unit of Chicago-based Exelon Corporation (NASDAQ: EXC), a Fortune 250 energy company with approximately 10 million electricity and natural gas customers – the largest number of customers in the U.S. ComEd powers the lives of more than 4 million customers across northern Illinois, or 70 percent of the state’s population. For more information visit **ComEd.com** and connect with the company on **Facebook** , **X** , **Instagram** and **YouTube** .

About EPRI

Founded in 1972, EPRI is the world's preeminent independent, non-profit energy research and development organization, with offices around the world. EPRI's trusted experts collaborate with more than 450 companies in 45 countries, driving innovation to ensure the public has clean, safe, reliable, affordable, and equitable access to electricity across the globe. Together, we are shaping the future of energy.

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