

Beli Farms

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Wellborn, FL 32094

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January 15, 2025

Re: Robert Hochmuth- Nomination NACAA Hall of Fame Award

To whom it may concern,

It is with great pleasure that I am supporting the nomination of Robert Hochmuth to the NACAA Hall of Fame.

Our company, Beli Farms, has been involved in the production of greenhouse vegetables in North Florida for over 30 years and Bob has been supporting us from the very beginning. It all started when Bob along with his brother, Dr. George Hochmuth, took me along for the ride visiting local hydroponic growers, whom they were supporting and encouraging as part of what was then an embryonic industry. Through those visits, I made the decision to dive into that nascent industry.

For the next 20 or so years the farm grew from a single quonset greenhouse to a five acre greenhouse operation and Bob was there at every stage to support, advise and encourage us. For brevity, I will share three examples of how Bob's talents in his role as our extension agent helped save the day:

Early in the development of our small hydroponic vegetable industry a problem with the marketability of our tomatoes due to softness of the fruit and also what is called green shoulder. These conditions were characteristic of the varieties we used then. With variety trials and education, Bob was able to introduce fresh new varieties that solved these problems effectively.

Another was a vexing problem that arose with the greenhouse tomato crops in our area where tomato plants appeared to show symptoms of what many believed to be the effects of herbicide contamination of a commonly used fungicide. Many growers closed shop believing their greenhouses were contaminated. However, with Bob's leadership and persistence, he educated many of us that in fact the culprit was a whitefly transmitted virus. This one event helped our farm and many others adapt and grow.

At our farm, our two fertigation tanks collapsed unexpectedly within a few days of each other and were our only method to irrigate the crops. We reached out to Bob with great concern. Within a couple of hours he offered a solution and 24 hours later, thanks to his involvement, we had new injectors installed, saving several acres of tomatoes from total loss.

For these situations and for the many other notable activities that Bob has excelled in, e.g. nutrition, food safety, training, etc, that has had measurable impact in our industry I wholeheartedly support his nomination for the NACAA Hall of Fame Award.

Sincerely,

Emil Belibasis
Beli Farms Owner