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Black River Produce Takes a Fresh Approach to Energy Efficiency

Springfield, VT — Black River Produce has taken its tradition of providing the freshest produce possible and teamed it with the latest and greatest in technology. The result: a highly energy-efficient facility that benefits Black River Produce owners and employees, and the entire state of Vermont.

Black River Produce recently purchased and transformed the Springfield, Vt. Idlenot Dairy processing plant, which has been non-operational since 1992, into a highly efficient produce distribution center.

Working with Springfield Regional Development Corporation and Efficiency Vermont, the statewide energy efficiency utility, Black River completely revamped the 54,000-square-foot facility to incorporate the best in energy-smart design. Those measures include the installation of high-performance lighting, a five-ton ENERGY STAR[®] HVAC unit and a customized 25,000-square-foot refrigeration system.

“We hold our new facility to the same high standards as our products,” said Mark Curran, co-owner of Black River Produce. “Incorporating energy efficiency into our process is a responsible way to do business, and the cost savings we’ve seen have been tremendous.”

Black River will save approximately 300,000 kilowatt-hours annually, which translates into \$24,000 in annual energy savings. With a significant rebate provided by Efficiency Vermont to offset costs, Black River will be able to pay back its investment in less than two and a half years.

“Black River’s major goal was to continue distributing the freshest products in the most efficient way possible, and much of that depends on maintaining exact refrigeration and temperature levels,” said Paul Lambert, business development specialist at Efficiency Vermont. “We were able to help them purchase the customized equipment they needed for a price that was right for them.”

Owners Mark Curran and Steve Birge also cite the positive environmental impacts and the statewide energy savings as beneficial results of this project. It is estimated that the company’s reduced energy use saves enough energy to power more than 37 households in Vermont and is equivalent to taking 200 cars off the road.

Bob Flint of the Springfield Regional Development Corporation recognizes additional benefits to Black River Produce’s purchase and renovation of the Idlenot Dairy plant.

“The Black River Produce facility is great for Springfield because it employs 150 people – about half of whom are Springfield residents – and the Black River owners are committed to keeping business in Vermont by purchasing produce from Vermont farmers,” said Flint. “Also, the Black River facility upgrade is a great example of how large companies can benefit from working with Efficiency Vermont.”

From the owners’ perspective, “becoming energy efficient not only makes good economic sense for us as a company, it also makes good sense for the whole state. We’ve reduced our strain on statewide energy resources, and ultimately that helps everyone.”

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Efficiency Vermont was created by the Vermont Legislature and the Vermont Public Service Board to help all Vermonters reduce energy costs, strengthen the economy and protect Vermont’s environment.

Efficiency Vermont is currently operated by Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC), an independent organization under contract to the Vermont Public Service Board. VEIC is a Vermont-based nonprofit organization founded in 1986. For more information, contact Efficiency Vermont at 1-888-921-5990 or visit www.encyvermont.com.