

MightyGrow sows seeds for expansion

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MightyGrow Organics in Fruitdale — which manufactures premium, poultry-litter-based fertilizers — is undergoing a major expansion that should be complete this month and includes an extra mill, a new dryer that can operate regardless of weather, a 10,000-square-foot warehouse and added jobs.

“Pelletizing our product has been a huge improvement,” said CEO Michael LaBelle, who started operations with Anne LaBelle in early 2009. “We started with a granular product, then responded to market demand by installing a small pellet mill early last year. It didn’t take us long to realize we needed more capacity, and we also needed someone with big-business expertise to help us grow the company.”

Bill Sanderson joined the MightyGrow management team as president in March 2012 and recognized right away that the current production system was not going to keep up with demand.

“We have made a significant investment in a major facility expansion, including equipment and personnel,” he said. “We just installed a second, large pellet mill that triples our capacity. We also added some major components to our production line, including a large, gas-powered dryer that lets us operate regardless of weather. South Alabama Gas installed a 30,000-gallon propane tank at our facility to power the new drying system.”

Other improvements include an employee break room with showers and the warehouse.

MightyGrow started 2013 with five production workers and one part-time office clerk, has just hired several new employees and anti-



Photo Submitted

From left: Paula Turner, Michael LaBelle, Joseph West, Anne LaBelle, Derrick Roberson, Bill Sanderson, James Holloway, Will Sanderson, Danny Busby and Orlando Holloway.

pates needing 14 people per shift, adding a second shift before summer. To run the mills at full capacity, making 72,000 tons per year, will require three shifts six days a week. The company expects to run 18,000 to 20,000 tons of product this year and ramp up to full capacity as soon as possible.

“Previously, we made product as needed and really didn’t have the ability to build up our inventory,” said LaBelle. “To meet peak season demand, we need to warehouse significant inventory.”

MightyGrow began producing a high-quality granular fertilizer by using an innovative microbial process. All MightyGrow products contain valuable trace minerals, which help plants grow stronger and faster while greatly improving flavor and insect resistance, and customer response has been outstanding.



Photo Submitted

From left, Michael Labelle, Alabama Secretary of Agriculture John McMillan and Anne LaBelle.

Growth in the organic industry has held steady through the recent economic downturn. Many of MightyGrow’s customers are USDA-certified organic farmers, but conventional farmers are also getting im-

pressive results. Row crops respond well to poultry litter, and MightyGrow has just introduced a low-cost AgBlend fertilizer, available in bulk only.

Other customers include golf courses, landscape

contractors, lawn maintenance companies, nurseries and cut flower growers. The rose garden at Bellingrath Gardens has been fertilized with MightyGrow for the past two years, and the manager has been very impressed with the improved health and increased number of the buds.

MightyGrow even has something special for hunters. This past fall, the company introduced HealthyHabitat, the first fertilizer specially formulated for wildlife food plots. HealthyHabitat makes forage taste better, attracting deer to green fields. The forage is more nutritious, promoting healthy herds and antler growth. You’ll be hearing about HealthyHabitat on the new Alabama outdoors TV show, Crossroad Adventures, premiering April 6 on the Pursuit Channel. For more information, visit www.crossroadadventures.net.

The retail market is also significant.

“This expansion will meet the demand of retail distributors such as BWI, one of the largest distributors of lawn and garden supplies in the Southeast,” said Sanderson. “BWI recently added four of our products to their distribution and will be putting MightyGrow in stores throughout Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and the Florida Panhandle.”

What’s in the future for MightyGrow? According to LaBelle, additional facilities are planned for Alabama and Mississippi. “I’ve had several conversations over the past year with Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture John McMillan,” LaBelle said. “He is very aware of our potential and has expressed interest in us building a plant in north Alabama. He is planning a visit to tour our facility later this spring.”



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“Our yield has been much higher. We’ve even had fewer insects and fewer weeds. Everything has just worked a lot better since we changed over to MightyGrow.”
— C.C. Gaiennie, owner of Ole Market Lane Farm

“I’ve had increased production of the long-standing crops like: tomatoes, peppers, squash and zucchini, and it’s lasted longer with less put down.”
— John Bartlett, owner of Bartlett Farm in Louisiana

**Pelletized Poultry Litter Fertilizers
with Trace Minerals**



**MIGHTYGROW
ORGANICS**

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