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For immediate release

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COLUMBIA, S.C. – The S.C. Department of Corrections, joined by the S.C. Department of Agriculture and South Carolina-based AmplifiedAg, Inc., received legislative approval Tuesday to build a vertical farming facility and training program at Camille Griffin Graham Correctional Institution, a women's prison located in Columbia, S.C.

This initiative marks the first vertical farm in the United States to be located onsite a correctional institution. This modern agricultural operation will provide incarcerated individuals with real world experience and career training in the fields of vertical farming and agricultural technology. In addition, the farm will supply fresh, healthy, pesticide-free lettuce – estimated to produce 48,000 pounds of lettuce per year – to the institution's cafeteria and food program.

“This partnership is good in so many ways,” SCDC Director Bryan Stirling said. “Inmates learn job skills while providing food for the institution. We see this as a win-win. We appreciate the legislature's continued support in fostering innovative programs to improve our prison system and keep the public safe by helping reduce recidivism.”

The \$1.2 million project received approval for \$350,000 in state funds from the State Fiscal Accountability Authority Tuesday. The remainder is expected to come from private donations. The facility will be built by program partner and Charleston, S.C.-based agricultural technology company, [AmplifiedAg](#). The farm facility will use the same technology and modular growing infrastructure as AmplifiedAg's commercial, non-profit, and government research partners—and will be upfitted with enhanced security for the safety of incarcerated persons and employees. The farm facility will consist of eight total farming modules; four modules for

growing lettuce, and four support modules for food processing, logistics, and food safety checkpoints.

Vertical farming and agricultural technology are rapidly growing industries in modern agriculture and present valuable vocational opportunities for incarcerated persons. SCDC, SCDA, AmplifiedAg and other reentry organizations are collaborating to develop a full spectrum vertical farm training program, where incarcerated persons will receive hands-on experience in every aspect of vertical farm production including horticulture, farming (seeding, growing, harvesting), technology, and food processing and packaging.

The objective of the vertical farming program at Camille Graham is to provide access to fresh produce, create a positive environment where incarcerated persons can contribute directly to their community, and ultimately provide STEM skills development and agricultural work experience for individuals to secure meaningful employment after incarceration — contributing to South Carolina’s [lowest in the nation](#) recidivism rate, while bolstering the South Carolina agricultural workforce.

“South Carolina is on the cutting edge of agriculture innovation, and this initiative shows it,” S.C. Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers said. “This partnership between AmplifiedAg and two state agencies will offer meaningful job training and a healthy work environment to incarcerated people, helping them learn the importance of farming.”

Founder and CEO of AmplifiedAg, Don Taylor adds, “It is an honor and a privilege to be partnering and supporting the Camille Graham vertical farming initiative. This is an important and innovative program and has the potential to positively impact the daily lives of incarcerated individuals, reduce recidivism, create new jobs in agriculture, and contribute to the facility’s healthy food security program. Camille Graham is a model institution, and our objective is to prove the program’s success and expand the initiative to other institutions across the state of South Carolina and the nation.”

AmplifiedAg modular farms are designed to grow produce year-round, and can operate regardless of climate, weather or land, enabling local food production close to the point of consumption. A single 320 square foot module produces 3,400 heads of lettuce every harvest, with an average of 16 harvests per year.

The technology-enabled farms are complete with automated hydroponic growing systems, LED lights, and an advanced software platform that monitors and controls every aspect of the environment (including temperature, water, air, light, humidity) as well as food safety and traceability. The controlled farm environments are built to USDA and FDA world-class food safety standards and therefore do not require the use of pesticides. Water usage inside the farms is minimal, using up to 95 percent less water than field grown lettuce.

Media Assets For Download: [AmplifiedAg Farm Interior Photos](#)

Photo Credit: AmplifiedAg, Inc.