

Retrofit payback tops solar

By **LEN RICHARDSON**

OCEAN Mist Farms, Castroville, has always been ahead of the curve, lighting the way. For instance, at this year's Produce Marketing Association Summit, the firm launched their Price Look-Up code sticker — the first PLU for bulk artichokes.

But Afreen Malik, Ocean Mist man-



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ager of environmental stewardship, is excited about the company's new lighting retrofit. She worked with Lime

Energy, Chicago, to reduce energy and improve cost savings in Ocean Mist's 100,000-square-foot facility that includes a wet and dry room for produce.

"Lime Energy projected that we would save \$52,000 per year, and based on our current records, we are well on the way to beating that goal," says Malik.

The facility was using a 10-year-old lighting system, and the improvements



Lime Energy made were immediately evident, she says.

"Our workers are reporting a noticeable improvement in the lighting conditions and are very happy that the new system doesn't need warm-up time, as it wasted everyone's time in the morning or after a blackout," Malik says. "The lights also now automatically turn off if no one is in the building. Lime Energy's work was so satisfactory that we are now working with the company to review a retrofit for outside lighting."

"Let's face it — the design and engineering of lights are much improved, and they last twice as long as the older ones," admits Dan Parke, Lime Energy president and chief operating officer. "Even so, this is less costly and a faster payback than solar, and we provide a three-year warranty."

"In addition, we work with states and utility companies to obtain maximum payback, but our expertise is to identify energy-efficiency upgrades. We don't sell electricity," Parke explains.

The savings

Here is how Parke adds up Ocean Mist's energy savings: "The retrofit project received over \$27,000 in energy-reducing incentives, offsetting Ocean Mist Farm's capital requirements and enabling the company to save over \$52,000 annually from reduced energy costs. In addition to the hard dollar savings, the permanent reduction of energy use resulting from this project provides the following environmental benefits each year."

- reduces 365,175 pounds of carbon dioxide, the leading cause of global warming

- reduces 5,405 pounds of sulfur dioxide, the leading cause of acid rain

- reduces 1,815 pounds of nitric dioxide, the leading cause of smog and acid precipitation

- equals the removal of 32 passenger cars from the road

Nor is the energy savings unique to Ocean Mist. Lime Energy's Dave Laybourn in the company's Glendora, Calif., office, works with food storage and production companies. Laybourn offers a list of more than 10 such companies that have saved energy, including United States Cold Storage, Associated Foods and Fresh Start Bakery.

Consider the benefits noted by Azteca Foods, a Chicago specialty foods producer and Lime Energy's newest project. Their retrofit is projected to save more than \$40,000 per year from reduced energy costs. The improved lighting fixtures will provide 30% more output and a more uniform lighting level. In addition to the permanent reduction of 423,747 kilowatt-hours per year in energy use, it is equal to removing 66 passenger cars from the road.



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