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ONLY IN THE JOURNAL-NEWS

## Blockbuster deal propels 80 Acres Farms forward

Soli Organic merges  
with Hamilton-based  
business to boost  
farming network.

By Michael D. Pitman  
Staff Writer

A decade ago, 80 Acres Farms was a start-up company in Cincinnati, trying to make a name for itself.

While it may not be a household name yet, the recently announced partnership with Soli Organic, a national leader in organic agriculture, 80 Acres Farms is projected to be one of the world's largest indoor agriculture companies.

The Hamilton-based vertical farming company has been an industry leader for the past several years through expansions and acquisitions, but in what 80 Acres and Soli Organic are calling a "strategic merger," company officials say they are now set up to have the most advanced indoor farming networks in the world.

This newly formed company, which will operate under the 80 Acres Farms name and remain headquartered in Hamilton, is projected to end its first year with revenues approaching \$200 million, according to the company. This merger will give 80 Acres around 1,400 total employees companywide, said Jed Portman, an 80 Acres Farms spokesman, adding the vast majority will remain at Soli facilities.

Hamilton has leaned into 80 Acres throughout its years. The company has a pair of indoor



80 Acres Farms and Soli Organic have merged to form a new company, retaining the 80 Acres Farms name and doubling down on the vertical farming industry. The merger, which is projected to net nearly \$200 million in revenues in the first year, is seen as the evolution of the industry by company officials. Pictured are 80 Acres employees working to harvest lettuce and microgreens at the facility on Enterprise Park Drive in Hamilton. NICK GRAHAM / FILE 2024

farms in the city, one in a rehabilitated South Second Street building in downtown Hamilton and a larger production facility on Enterprise Park Drive. The company's headquarter offices are on the seventh floor of city building at One Renaissance Center, 345 High St.

It is Hamilton's third-largest electric consumer, and there is a Utility Economic Development Agreement that helps incentiv-

ize 80 Acres' growth.

"80 Acres is a powerhouse in their industry, putting Hamilton on the map for innovation and sustainable food production," said Aaron Hufford. We're proud to see this homegrown company continue to expand its footprint across the globe."

Mike Zelkind, co-founder of 80 Acres Farms and CEO of the combined company, said this merger is the evolution of verti-

cal farming.

"This merger unites two top operators that, together, have the scale, economics, and teams to deliver the results that the industry has been waiting for," Zelkind said. "Both companies have spent decades developing enhanced technology, improving operations, and building winning brands."

Farms continued on A8

MILITARY

## Persistent, 'severe' VA staffing shortages exist

Shortage numbers  
have been on the rise  
since last fiscal year.

By Thomas Gnau  
Staff Writer

Staffing shortages at Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities nationally rose 50% in the last fiscal year, a recent inspector general's (IG) report found.

In fiscal year 2025, VHA facilities reported a total of 4,434 "severe" occupational staffing shortages nationally, a 50% increase from the previous fiscal year, in which facilities reported 2,959 total shortage occupations, the IG states.

Staffing shortages at the VA Dayton Medical Center include clinical medical officers in the fields of urology, surgery, cardiovascular diseases, radiology, medical oncology and other medical areas, the report indicated.

The report also found Dayton shortages in ophthalmology, orthopedic surgery, hematology/oncology, practical nursing, dental hygiene and other areas.

As well, the report identifies non-clinical shortages in fields such as police, food service worker and maintenance mechanic.

Although the problems highlighted in the IG report are not new, the report was issued at a time when the Department of Veterans Affairs under the administration of President

VA continued on A8

CLOSER LOOK

## Deportations reach new high after summer arrest surge

Trump immigration  
campaign yields at  
least 180,000 expelled.

By Albert Sun  
©2025 The New York Times

President Donald Trump's campaign promise of mass deportations may be coming closer to reality. Until June, deportations had lagged behind immigration arrests and detentions. By the first week of August, deportations reached nearly 1,500 people per

day, according to the latest data, a pace not seen since the Obama administration.

With an infusion of cash from Trump's domestic policy bill signed in July – an additional \$76 billion that Immigration and Customs Enforcement can spend over a little more than four years – the agency appears poised to scale its operations even further.

At least 180,000 people have been deported by ICE under Trump so far. At the current higher pace, the agency is on track to deport more than 400,000 peo-

ple in his first year in office, well more than the 271,000 people ICE removed in the year ending in September but still short of the administration's stated goal of 1 million deportations a year.

(The Department of Homeland Security says the total number of deportations so far under Trump is much higher – at 332,000. That figure includes people who are turned around or quickly deported at U.S. borders by Customs and Border Protection.)

Deportations continued on A8



A man is detained by immigration agents at a car wash on Aug. 15 in Montebello, California. GREGORY BULL / AP

THE LATEST

Trump threatening to  
deploy military forces  
to more cities. **B1**

Nearly \$30 billion  
of new ICE budget is  
to hire more staff. **B2**

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