

Sun Belle Inc. has launched a new green initiative at its 64,000 square foot Jessup, Maryland warehouse and distribution facility with the installation of a 450 kW rooftop solar array system.

The array is projected to generate 592 MWh annually, offsetting more than 35% of the facility's energy needs. Aurora Energy, Inc., of Columbia, Maryland, teamed with Sun Belle to carry out the project.

"Due to our constant refrigeration demands, we sought a solution that would offset rising utility costs and make a positive environmental impact," said Janice L. Honigberg, president of Sun Belle Inc.

"Aurora Energy offered a perfect solution for us with the added benefit of being able to utilize land adjacent to our facility as a pollinator meadow."

The solar array, utilizing SunPower P19-395-COM modules, covers 33,500 square feet of roof space and will offset approximately 420 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually. This is enough to power 48 homes.

"Sun Belle's investment in rooftop solar capitalizes an underutilized asset - the rooftop of their facility. They have converted this warehouse roof space to a small power plant that can produce clean energy while saving money. It's a win-win scenario," said Dr. Fariborz Majhouri, CEO of Aurora Energy, Inc.

Construction of a second array of solar panels (225 kW ground mounted) is scheduled to begin later this fall and will further offset the facility's needs by generating another 287 MWh annually, increasing the beneficial impact of Sun Belle's green initiative.

The ground-mounted system will utilize another 12,680 square feet of land adjacent to the Sun Belle warehouse and will also include a pollinator meadow - further affirming Sun Belle's commitment to the environment. Pollinator plants may include wild senna, showy tick trefoil, oxeye sunflower, partridge pea, big bluestem and various varieties of switchgrass also native to the mid-Atlantic coast.

Sun Belle Inc. was established in Washington, DC in 1986 by Honigberg and is the exclusive marketer of the Sun Belle and Green Belle brands. The company distributes conventional and organic blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, golden berries, red currants and pomegranate arils; certified biodynamic organic cranberries and blueberries; and green house and specialty produce.

In addition to the warehouse in Jessup MD, Sun Belle also has distribution facilities in Miami, Florida; Schiller Park, Illinois; and Oxnard, California. In September, Sun Belle plans to open a fifth distribution center in Laredo, Texas.