

NEWBERRY
Office of the City Manager *Florida*

25493 NW 1st Ave.
Newberry FL 32669
Tel: 352-472-2161
www.NewberryFL.gov

MEDIA RELEASE

March 17, 2026

Newberry Welcomes New F-300 AgFoodTech Accelerator Cohort

- Ignition Packaging transforms agricultural waste into biodegradable packaging
- RootMatrix Bio develops biodegradable polymers reducing runoff and water use
- Apiflair Technologies builds bio-inspired aerial vehicles detecting crop diseases
- AgriBugs builds autonomous drone ports and helps detect diseases with drones

NEWBERRY, FL. - The City of Newberry welcomed four innovative startup companies into the F-300 AgFoodTech Startup Accelerator Spring 2026 cohort: Ignition Packaging; RootMatrix Bio; Apiflair Technologies; and AgriBugs. The City is committed to fostering innovation solving problems and inefficiencies in today's agricultural sector.

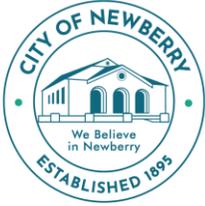
These startups are transforming agricultural waste into biodegradable packaging, developing biodegradable polymers reducing runoff and water use, building bio-inspired aerial vehicles detecting crop diseases, and building autonomous drone ports and helping detect diseases with drones.

The welcome reception was held at Newberry's Municipal Building and attended by approximately 40 people, which included the Mayor, several City Commissioners, the City Manager, and City team members. Representatives from Alachua County, University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), Santa Fe College, Alachua County Farm Bureau, and private sector companies also participated.

Mayor Tim Marden delivered opening remarks and the leader of UF/IFAS, UF Senior Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources Dr. J. Scott Angle, provided keynote remarks. "Newberry is emerging as an agriculture and food technology hotspot," said Mayor Marden. "I am excited to see innovative technologies showcased in Newberry, strengthening the food supply chain and create value for farmers," added the Mayor.

The F-300 Accelerator is a 12-week growth program for early-stage agriculture and food technology startup founders seeking to grow their businesses. It features in-person networking sessions in Newberry and online educational workshops. Mentorship and connections with experts round-out the program, which is in its second year.

The entrepreneurs in this cohort have Florida-based businesses. They toured Newberry and visited the city's original diesel-powered 1910 electric generating power plant with Assistant



NEWBERRY
Office of the City Manager *Florida*

25493 NW 1st Ave.
Newberry FL 32669
Tel: 352-472-2161
www.NewberryFL.gov

City Manager/CFO Dallas Lee. “Newberry’s Historic Electric Generating Plant powered our homes and businesses for many years in the 20th century,” commented City Manager Jordan Marlowe. “As we embrace our past and plan for the future, we are thrilled to facilitate agricultural innovation in Newberry,” noted Marlowe.

The F-300 Accelerator cohort participants are as follows:

Ignition Packaging, LLC

Founder: Abdu Bejjaj | abdu@ignitionpkg.com



Ignition Packaging transforms agricultural waste into commercially viable, biodegradable packaging designed to replace styrofoam at scale. By partnering directly with farms, it creates a circular supply chain that improves farm economics while addressing plastic pollution. Founder Abdu Bejjaj is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Florida (UF) in Geomatics - Geospatial Analysis. He won first place in the 2025 UF Big Idea Gator Business Plan Competition hosted by the UF Warrington College of Business.



NEWBERRY
Office of the City Manager *Florida*

25493 NW 1st Ave.
Newberry FL 32669
Tel: 352-472-2161
www.NewberryFL.gov

RootMatrix Bio, LLC

Founder: Noa Cohen, PhD | noac@rootmatrix-bio.com



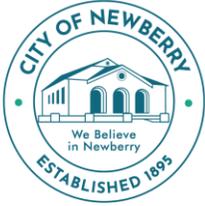
RootMatrix Bio is developing a biodegradable, architecture-engineered scaffold platform for agriculture that co-manages water and nutrient delivery directly in the root zone. It combines materials science and predictive modeling to optimize performance while reducing runoff, water use, and input waste. Founder Noa Cohen has a PhD in Materials Engineering from Technion - Israel Institute of Technology and was a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University.

Apiflair Technologies, LLC

Founder: Shruti Choudhary, PhD | shrutichoudhary@apiflairtech.com



Apiflair Technologies is building an iron dome for crops using a swarm of bio-inspired aerial vehicles to automate precision pollinations and detect crop diseases. One of the sensors in its technology provides early detection of airborne traces of citrus greening disease. Founder Shruti Choudhary has a PhD in Chemical, Environmental, and Materials Engineering from the University of Miami.



NEWBERRY
Office of the City Manager *Florida*

25493 NW 1st Ave.
Newberry FL 32669
Tel: 352-472-2161
www.NewberryFL.gov

AgriBugs, LLC

Founder: Darren Raj | darren@agribugs.com



AgriBugs builds autonomous, solar-powered drone ports that stay in the field and launch missions without a pilot on-site. Its system delivers frequent RGB and multispectral crop insights—helping growers and researchers catch stress, irrigation issues, and disease early through continuous, off-grid monitoring. Founder Darren Raj has a Bachelor's Degree in Information Technology/Computer Science from Florida State University.

About the City of Newberry

Newberry is a fast-growing city in Florida. A charming and warm community nestled in the heart of North Central Florida, Newberry has a 100+ year history in agriculture and hosts America's longest running watermelon festival. Newberry is building an agriculture and food technology innovation ecosystem benefiting producers and consumers. Its 170+ acre AgFoodTech Innovation Park is home to the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension Alachua County office.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Jordan Marlowe, Newberry City Manager

352-472-2161 Ext 3918

marlowejh@newberryfl.gov
