



COLORADO
Energy Office



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Office of Gov. John Hickenlooper

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Hotchkiss Organic Orchard Taps Colorado C-PACE for Renewable Energy System

Western Slope solar project marks first agricultural property to utilize state program

DENVER – Feb. 8, 2018 – Colorado Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE), which helps building owners and developers finance energy efficiency measures, today announced the state’s first agricultural project funded through the program. [Ela Family Farms](#), a Hotchkiss-based certified organic orchard, will use C-PACE financing to install a new solar photovoltaic (PV) system at its warehouse. Along with producing renewable energy, the installment is projected to save the fourth-generation orchard more than \$113,000 in energy costs over the system’s lifetime.

Hotchkiss-based [Empowered Energy Systems, LLC](#) will install the 25kW solar PV system at Ela Family Farms’ 7,391-square-foot warehouse. “C-PACE financing is a game-changer for our rural county’s agricultural producers and businesses,” said Brad Burritt, a co-owner of Empowered Energy Systems. “Being able to offer long-term financing with no down payment makes solar more affordable, and it’s a smart investment for rural businesses. We’re proud to install the first C-PACE project on the Western Slope.”

Colorado C-PACE is a public-private partnership designed to help commercial property owners and real estate developers finance energy efficiency projects with affordable, long-term financing. The program relies on private capital providers, and not taxpayer dollars, to fund projects. [Region 9 Economic Development District of SW Colorado](#), a nonprofit that promotes and coordinates economic development efforts throughout southwest Colorado, funded the \$60,420 Ela Family Farms investment working through Colorado C-PACE.

“For four generations, the Ela family has tried to be innovative and farm in the most environmentally-friendly manner possible,” said Steve Ela, owner of Ela Family Farms. “While we were converting the farm to 100 percent certified organic production, we changed our watering system from wasteful furrow irrigation to sprinkler-and-drip irrigation. A solar PV system to power our fruit coolers with renewable energy seemed like the logical next step. The fact that it will lower our utility bills is an added bonus.”

“C-PACE is available statewide to commercial property owners in counties that have joined the program—whether that’s in downtown Denver or rural Dolores,” said Paul Scharfenberger, chairman of the Colorado New Energy Improvement District, which oversees Colorado C-PACE, and chief operating officer of the Colorado Energy Office. “The relatively small size of this project, and the fact that it was agricultural, didn’t exclude it from obtaining funding. This is a testament to the program’s value and the number of lenders who have signed up to participate—22 and counting—which is more than any other statewide C-PACE program.”

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About Colorado C-PACE

Colorado C-PACE provides financing for commercial property energy and water improvements including new heating/cooling systems, lighting, water pumps, insulation and renewable energy projects. C-PACE offers long-term financing that covers 100 percent of the project cost and is repaid over a period of up to 20 years, with payments structured as a regular line item on the property tax bill. When a property is sold, the C-PACE assessment can stay with the property and transfer to the new owner, who benefits from the ongoing utility cost savings. Colorado C-PACE is managed by the Colorado New Energy Improvement District and receives support from the Colorado Energy Office. See copace.com for more information.

About Colorado Energy Office

The Colorado Energy Office works to deliver cost-effective energy services and advance innovative energy solutions for the benefit of all Coloradans. Go to colorado.gov/energyoffice to learn more.