

Hernando Today

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Local Company Contributes To Organic Farming

By TONY HOLT, Hernando Today

BROOKSVILLE - Ray Nielsen knows mostly all of the ins and outs of organic farming. His knowledge is so valuable, he helped author the National Organic Program, which was enacted during the Clinton Administration. Now he is parlaying his talents and experience into his new company, Green World Path Inc. The industrial company is only a few months old and has already been actively involved in mixing and distributing [organic products](#) across the country. But he hopes to see more customers pull up to the rear of the building and load the chemicals by the barrel. "We've started to get a big influx of local (businesses) now," said Nielsen, who walked through the large warehouse portion of the building where the [pungent odor](#) of [fish oil](#) was palpable at every corner. Once the ingredients are mixed and ready for distribution, the odor will dissipate.

One of his local customers is Jeff Kost, owner of Kost Effectives, a local [organic lawn care](#) company. "This is a great alternative to chemical spraying," Kost said. "Most customers want to get away from those chemicals because they have pets and children. You also get much stronger lawns. It's a bit of a process. It doesn't work overnight, but it does work." It works well enough for Kost to run a [profitable business](#) with little or no advertising. His customers tell their friends and that is how he keeps growing, he said

The same goes for the entire [organic farming](#) community. Nielsen and Dave MacLean, vice president of Green World Path, believe the industry will grow 15-fold in the next 20 years. "Soil needs four things - air, water fungi and bacteria," Nielsen said. "Indiscriminate use and misuse of chemicals have killed off the [biological properties](#) of soil." MacLean said Parkinson's disease is one of many [chronic illnesses](#) linked to pesticide exposure. That is why that shift to [organic farming](#) is becoming more obvious. There have been [great strides](#) by the U.S. organic industry. From the end of 2004 to the end of 2005, it grew by 17 percent to reach \$14.6 billion in sales. Non-food [organic products](#) grew by 32.5 percent.

Today, organic food markets are everywhere - including Spring Hill. Word is getting around, but Nielsen would like to see it become even more prevalent. "Now we have Earth Day," he said. "For one day, there's a lot of media attention. That window may stay open a week or two, but it usually gets closed.

"We don't take the negative route," he continued. "We just do what we do best. (We're) not satisfied with the progress, but (we're) pleased with some of the results."

Green World Path employs up to seven people, including chemist J.B. Williams, who spends a lot of time in the lab. He was hired after spending a large portion of his career in plastics. The move to the fledgling organic company was a welcome transition. "This is my first shot at it and I enjoy it very much," Williams said. Nielsen hopes to work hand-in-hand with the University of Florida IFAS Extension, which regularly provides lessons on horticulture. "We want to be a shining star in the community," he said. "We want to be deeply involved in everything." Another one of his goals is to see more widespread "urban farming." Maybe in the future, people will not even need a backyard to do their own growing. His warehouse is stocked with the hydroponic pots needed to make that a reality. "That's where we want to go with this," Nielsen said. "I'd like to see more window or roof growing. People can grow their own veggies and pick them five minutes before dinnertime."