25th North American Mushroom Conference
Draws Industry Leaders, Researchers
Conference to Feature Education & Discussion of Future of Mushroom Growing

Avondale, PA, Feb. 11, 2019 – Hundreds of mushroom industry growers, business leaders and researchers will gather in Orlando, Florida, February 14-16, for the 25th North American Mushroom Conference (NAMC). The conference brings together industry stakeholders from North America and around the world for discussions and educational sessions on issues affecting the industry. This year’s theme, Growing a Brighter Future, highlights innovations and advances in the industry and what mushroom businesses can expect in the future.

“This conference will address current trends in the industry and ways to help position businesses for the future,” said Dan Leo, Chairman 25th NAMC. “From harvesting robotics to consumer trends to production research, the program features a variety of topics with tangible takeaways to bring back to businesses.”

Among issues to be discussed will be labor in mushroom harvesting. Like all agriculture, the mushroom industry faces a labor shortage. Mushroom growing is highly labor intensive, and action is needed at the national level to address the issue.

Wesley Van Camp, Tanimura & Antle, Craig Regelbrugge, AmericanHort, and Samantha Speck, University of Delaware will participate on a panel discussion on research, legal and legislative perspectives on the labor issue. Additionally, Dr. Mehrdad Kermani, Western University and Mycionics will present research on a new robotic system for automated harvesting and Bart Driessen, Mycosupport, will provide an overview of global harvesting innovations.

On the production side, mushroom growing substrate is a vital element in the growing process. This includes peat moss, and attendees will hear presentations on responsible peatland management from Paul Short of the Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss Association and Julien Boijmans of BVB Substrates. Dr. Michael Kertesz of the University of Sydney will also discuss compost microbes and nitrogen supply in mushroom production.

Consumer demand for mushrooms has continued to increase over the past few years. A key driver (and indicator) of this demand is the growing positive sentiment around mushrooms’ nutrition, sustainability and flavor benefits.
Colleen McClellan, director at Datassential, a leading food market research firm, will speak on two consumer-themed topics. The first will deal with the social pressures and what consumers value and what they will pay for and the second presentation will look to the future and explore what to expect consumers to be eating next.

In some early nutrition studies, mushrooms have been identified as a food that might provide superior health benefits, making it a sought-after food. Dr. John Richie of Penn State University will speak about the micronutrients and bioactive compounds in mushrooms and how they play into health. Plant breeding is a topic that is gaining attention with consumers, and Bethany Shivley from the U.S. Seed Trade Association will discuss plant breeding innovations and communications and stakeholder engagements.

Finally, everyone is pulled in multiple directions and have to-do lists a mile long in business and personal lives. Andy Core of Core Wellness will inspire the industry’s busy professionals to thrive in today’s hectic society.

The NAMC occurs every 18 months and alternates between a destination in the U.S. and Canada. AMI is hosting this year’s event. The next NAMC will be hosted by Mushrooms Canada, May 30 – June 3, 2021, in Vancouver, Canada.

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About AMI
The American Mushroom Institute (AMI), headquartered in Avondale, Pennsylvania, is a national voluntary trade association representing the growers, processors and marketers of cultivated mushrooms in the United States and industry suppliers worldwide. For more information, visit www.americanmushroom.org.