

AUGUST | AGOSTO 2026

VIVE MICHIGAN

**GRACELAND FRUIT:
MICHIGAN INNOVATION
WITH GLOBAL REACH**

GRACELAND FRUIT:
INNOVACIÓN DE MICHIGAN
CON ALCANCE GLOBAL

**MICHIGAN'S FOOD
MANUFACTURING
INDUSTRY
SUPPORTS MORE
THAN 44,000 JOBS**

INDUSTRIA ALIMENTARIA
SOSTIENE MÁS DE 44,000
EMPLEOS EN MICHIGAN

**UNIVERSITY OF
MICHIGAN MARKS
BREAKTHROUGH IN
BRAIN-COMPUTER
TECHNOLOGY**

UNIVERSIDAD DE
MICHIGAN MARCA UN
AVANCE EN TECNOLOGÍA
CEREBRO-COMPUTADORA



FROM MICHIGAN TO THE NATIONAL STAGE

**BLU TECHNOLOGY RANKS
AMONG AMERICA'S FASTEST
GROWING COMPANIES**

Upcoming Events

HealthFair West Michigan

September 13th 2026
11:30 am

The West Michigan Health Fair is a community-driven event dedicated to promoting health and wellness across the region. Guided by the theme “Healthy Families. **September 13**, CALDER PLAZA 320 Ottawa Ave NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503, Strong Communities.”, the fair empowers individuals and families through access to resources, education, and connections that inspire healthier lifestyles and strengthen the well-being of our communities.



Our 25 Most Influential Latinos in West Michigan is coming back this fall. **October 1, 2026**. We will be recognizing some of our West Michigan Latinos who are making an impact in our community. The celebration will take place during Hispanic Heritage Month.



The Entrepreneuers Summit is designed to help you understand entrepreneurship in its entirety and avoid common mistakes, gather practical and objective information, expert advice and guidance, accelerate your growth and achieve your business goals, explore emerging trends, accelerate learning and guide short-term decisions. The event will take place on **November, 2026**.



The Latina conference is a new event focused on Building on this legacy, we are proud to introduce the West Michigan Latina Conference. This conference is designed to focus specifically on Latinas, offering a curated agenda that addresses both the professional and personal growth needs of this vibrant demographic. The event will take place on **April 2027**. It is the month in which we celebrate women.

MON: CLOSED
TUE - SAT:
09:00AM - 09:00PM
SUNDAY:
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Blu Technology Ranks Among **FASTEST-GROWING COMPANIES**



ong America's COMPANIES



→ FROM MICHIGAN TO THE NATIONAL STAGE, BLU TECHNOLOGY RECORDS 719% GROWTH AND EARNS A PLACE AMONG AMERICA'S FASTEST-GROWING PRIVATE COMPANIES

A Michigan company built around a simple but ambitious mission — providing safer, cleaner water from virtually any source — is gaining national recognition for turning innovation into remarkable business growth.

Blu Technology, a veteran family-owned water filtration and purification company based in Kalamazoo, has been ranked No. 476 on the 2026 Inc. 5000 list, which recognizes the fastest-growing private companies in the United States. The achievement follows an impressive 719% increase in revenue over three years, placing Blu among a select group of independent businesses demonstrating exceptional growth nationwide.

For Blu Technology, the milestone represents more than financial success. The company has built its business around improving water quality while helping reduce dependence on single-use plastic water bottles.

“Reaching this milestone meant holding everything we build to a standard people can actually count on, without exception,” said Corbin Collet, founder and CEO of Blu Technology. “Every system we ship keeps another family off bottled water and keeps those bottles out of the landfill for good.”

Collet describes the company’s mission as delivering “certainty from source to sip.”

Inspired in part by its founder’s military background and firsthand experience with global water quality challenges, Blu Technology has developed filtration solutions designed for individuals, families, recreational vehicles, marine applications and other mobile environ-

ments.

Its portfolio includes NSF/ANSI 61-certified multi-stage filtration systems, UVC LED purification technology, water softeners and a complete filter line. The products combine innovative engineering, durability and ease of maintenance, with systems built using stainless steel components and environmentally conscious materials.

Innovation has also become a defining part of Blu’s identity. The company holds multiple U.S. patents across the water and automotive sectors and was previously recognized as a 2025 Boating Industry Top Products award recipient and 2026 SBDC Best Small Business.

Its Inc. 5000 ranking now brings another major national achievement to that trajectory.

Companies appearing on the 2026 Inc. 5000 were ranked according to percentage revenue growth from 2022 through 2025. Collectively, this year’s 5,000 honorees added more than 627,000 jobs to the U.S. economy during the three-year period, according to Inc.

As Blu Technology expands distribution across the RV and marine markets, its success offers an example of how a Michigan-based company can combine entrepreneurship, technological innovation and environmental responsibility to build a rapidly growing national business.

From its Michigan roots to the national stage, Blu Technology’s 719% growth demonstrates that solving an everyday need — access to cleaner, safer water — can also become the foundation for an impressive American business success story.

Blu Technology se posiciona entre las EMPRESAS DE MAYOR CRECIMIENTO

→ DE MICHIGAN AL ESCENARIO NACIONAL, BLU TECHNOLOGY REGISTRA UN CRECIMIENTO DEL 719% Y SE POSICIONA ENTRE LAS EMPRESAS PRIVADAS DE MAYOR EXPANSIÓN EN ESTADOS UNIDOS.

Una empresa de Michigan creada alrededor de una misión sencilla pero ambiciosa — ofrecer agua más limpia y segura desde prácticamente cualquier fuente — está obteniendo reconocimiento nacional al convertir la innovación en un extraordinario crecimiento empresarial.

Blu Technology, compañía familiar propiedad de veteranos y especializada en sistemas de filtración y purificación de agua, alcanzó el puesto No. 476 en la lista Inc. 5000 de 2026, que reconoce a las empresas privadas de mayor crecimiento en Estados Unidos.

El logro llega después de registrar un impresionante crecimiento de ingresos del 719% en tres años.

Para Blu Technology, este reconocimiento representa mucho más que resultados financieros.

La compañía ha desarrollado su modelo de negocio con el objetivo de mejorar la calidad del agua y, al mismo tiempo, reducir la dependencia de las botellas plásticas de un solo uso.

“Alcanzar este logro significó mantener todo lo que fabricamos bajo un estándar en el que las personas realmente puedan confiar, sin excepciones”, señaló Corbin

Collet, fundador y CEO de Blu Technology. Según Collet, cada sistema enviado ayuda a que otra familia reduzca su dependencia del agua embotellada y evita que más botellas terminen en los vertederos.

El empresario resume la filosofía de Blu con una idea clara: ofrecer “certeza desde la fuente hasta el primer sorbo”.

Inspirada en parte por la experiencia militar de su fundador y por el conocimiento directo de los desafíos relacionados con la calidad del agua, Blu Technology ha desarrollado soluciones para individuos, familias, vehículos recreativos, embarcaciones y otros entornos móviles.

Su portafolio incluye sistemas de filtración de múltiples etapas certificados bajo NSF/ANSI 61, tecnología de purificación UVC LED, suavizadores de agua y una línea completa de filtros.

Sus productos combinan innovación, durabilidad y facilidad de mantenimiento, utilizando componentes de acero inoxidable y materiales con un enfoque ambiental.

La innovación también forma parte central de la identidad de la empresa. Blu posee varias patentes estadounidenses en los sectores del agua y automotriz,

además de haber recibido el reconocimiento 2025 Boating Industry Top Products y ser nombrada 2026 SBDC Best Small Business.

Ahora, su posición en Inc. 5000 lleva esa trayectoria a un escenario nacional.

Las empresas incluidas en la lista Inc. 5000 de 2026 fueron clasificadas según su crecimiento porcentual de ingresos entre 2022 y 2025.

En conjunto, las 5,000 compañías reconocidas este año agregaron más de 627,000 empleos a la economía estadounidense durante ese período, según Inc.

Mientras Blu Technology continúa ampliando su distribución en los mercados de vehículos recreativos y embarcaciones, su trayectoria demuestra cómo una compañía de Michigan puede combinar emprendimiento, tecnología y responsabilidad ambiental para construir un negocio de rápido crecimiento.

Desde sus raíces en Michigan hasta el escenario nacional, el crecimiento del 719% de Blu Technology demuestra que resolver una necesidad cotidiana — el acceso a agua más limpia y segura — también puede convertirse en la base de una notable historia de éxito empresarial estadounidense.





Michigan's Food Manufacturing Industry SUPPORTS MORE THAN 44,000 JOBS

By Mike Lafirenza

→ NEW ANALYSIS SHOWS MICHIGAN HAS 10.1 FOOD MANUFACTURING WORKERS PER 1,000 EMPLOYEES, HIGHLIGHTING THE INDUSTRY'S IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE STATE'S ECONOMY.

Recent disruptions in the nation's food supply chain are drawing renewed attention not only to food safety, but also to the economic importance of the workers and communities behind the products Americans consume every day.

Against that backdrop, a new analysis from Trace One provides a closer look at where food manufacturing has the greatest impact on local economies. Using data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, researchers ranked states and metropolitan areas based on the number of food manufacturing employees per 1,000 workers.

For Michigan, the findings reveal an industry that remains an important source of employment.

The state ranks No. 28 nationally for food manufacturing employment concentration, with approximately 10.1 food manufacturing workers for every 1,000 employees. Overall, the sector supports 44,404 jobs across Michigan, according to the analysis.

The numbers illustrate how food production reaches far beyond supermarket shelves. Manufacturing facilities create jobs while supporting transportation, agriculture, packaging, distribution and other businesses connected to the broader food supply chain.

Nationally, food manufacturing employment reached a record 1,774,702 workers in 2025, representing an 11% increase from 1,600,921 workers in 2020.

Despite that growth, the industry represents a smaller portion of the overall U.S. workforce than it did several decades ago.

In 1990, there were approximately 14 food manufacturing workers for every 1,000 U.S. employees. By 2025, that figure had declined to 11.4 per 1,000, reflecting the expansion and transformation of other sectors of the economy.

The economic importance of food manufacturing has received additional attention amid the 2026 Cyclospora outbreak. Taylor Farms de Mexico initiated a voluntary recall of iceberg lettuce sourced from central Mexico last month as the outbreak grew to nearly 9,500 reported illnesses across 17 states.

The situation demonstrates how quickly disruptions at one point in the food production system can affect consumers hundreds or thousands of miles away. For communities heavily dependent on food manufacturing, however, interruptions can also have broader economic consequences.

Trace One's report examines all 50 states and more than 600 metropolitan areas, measuring total food manufacturing employment as well as the industry's concentration within local workforces.

For Michigan, more than 44,000 jobs demonstrate the scale of an industry operating largely behind the scenes but remaining closely connected to the state's economic health.

As food safety and supply-chain resilience continue to command national attention, the data provides another perspective: protecting America's food system also means recognizing the communities and workers whose livelihoods depend on keeping it moving.

La industria alimentaria sostiene más DE 44,000 EMPLEOS EN MICHIGAN

By Mike Lafirenza

→ UN NUEVO ANÁLISIS REVELA QUE MICHIGAN CUENTA CON 10.1 TRABAJADORES DE MANUFACTURA DE ALIMENTOS POR CADA 1,000 EMPLEADOS, DESTACANDO LA IMPORTANCIA DE ESTA INDUSTRIA PARA LA ECONOMÍA ESTATAL.

Las recientes interrupciones en la cadena de suministro de alimentos en Estados Unidos están poniendo nuevamente bajo la lupa no solo la seguridad alimentaria, sino también la importancia económica de los trabajadores y las comunidades detrás de los productos que llegan diariamente a millones de hogares.

En este contexto, un nuevo análisis de Trace One, basado en datos de la Oficina de Estadísticas Laborales de Estados Unidos (BLS), revela cuáles son los estados y áreas metropolitanas donde la manufactura de alimentos tiene mayor peso dentro de la economía local.

Para Michigan, los resultados muestran una industria que continúa siendo una importante fuente de empleo.

El estado ocupa el puesto No. 28 a nivel nacional en concentración de empleos de manufactura de alimentos, con aproximadamente 10.1 trabajadores del sector por cada 1,000 empleados. En total, la industria emplea a 44,404 personas en Michigan, según el estudio.

Las cifras demuestran que la producción de alimentos tiene un impacto que va mucho más allá de los supermercados. Las plantas procesadoras y manufactureras generan empleos directos y también respaldan actividades relacionadas con agricultura, transporte, empaques, logística y distribución.

A nivel nacional, el empleo en manufactura de alimentos alcanzó un récord de 1,774,702 traba-

jadores en 2025, un aumento del 11% frente a los 1,600,921 registrados en 2020.

Sin embargo, aunque el número total de trabajadores ha crecido, la industria representa actualmente una proporción menor de la fuerza laboral estadounidense. En 1990 existían aproximadamente 14 trabajadores de manufactura de alimentos por cada 1,000 empleados; para 2025, esa cifra disminuyó a 11.4.

La importancia de la cadena alimentaria ha recibido mayor atención durante el brote de Cyclospora de 2026. Taylor Farms de México inició el mes pasado un retiro voluntario de lechuga iceberg procedente del centro de México, mientras el brote alcanzaba cerca de 9,500 casos reportados en 17 estados.

La situación demuestra cómo una interrupción en un punto de la cadena de producción puede extender rápidamente sus efectos a consumidores ubicados a cientos o miles de millas.

Para las comunidades donde la manufactura de alimentos representa una parte importante del empleo, estos problemas también pueden generar consecuencias económicas.

El informe de Trace One analiza los 50 estados y más de 600 áreas metropolitanas. En Michigan, los más de 44,000 empleos vinculados directamente a esta industria reflejan la dimensión de un sector que opera muchas veces detrás de escena, pero continúa siendo fundamental para la economía estatal y para mantener en movimiento la cadena alimentaria del país.





Michigan Sees Sharp DECLINE IN INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

By Mike Lafirenza

International tourism remains an important economic engine for the United States, but a new analysis shows that the recovery is not progressing evenly across the country. In Michigan, the latest figures reveal a significant decline in overseas visitors during 2025.

According to a study by Luxury Link, based on data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Michigan welcomed approximately 281,000 international visitors in 2025, ranking No. 23 in the nation for international tourism. That represents about 28 overseas visitors for every 1,000 Michigan residents.

The most striking figure, however, is the year-over-year trend. International visitation to Michigan fell 32.8% from 2024 to 2025, a considerably steeper decline than the national rate. Across the United States, overseas visitation decreased by 2.5% during the same period.

The decline presents a challenge for an industry whose economic impact extends far beyond hotels and tourist attractions. International travelers generate revenue for restaurants, retailers, airlines, museums, transportation companies and numerous other businesses connected to tourism and hospitality.

Nationally, the picture also remains mixed. U.S. travel and tourism-related exports reached \$20.9 billion in May 2026, exceeding the \$20.3 billion recorded in May 2019 before the pandemic. But after adjusting for inflation, current tourism exports remain approximately 21% below their pre-pandemic level, suggesting the industry's recovery is less complete than the headline numbers indicate.

International tourism also remains heavily concentrated in a handful of destinations. Florida led the country with 9.3 million overseas visitors, followed by New York with 9.1 million and California with 6.6 million. Together, those three states attracted more than 25 million international travelers.

For Michigan, its 281,000 visitors accounted for approximately 0.8% of all overseas travelers to the United States in 2025. The sharp annual decline raises questions about how the state can strengthen its international appeal and better promote its cities, natural attractions, cultural destinations and tourism experiences.

The findings show that America's international tourism recovery remains uneven. For Michigan, attracting overseas visitors could mean more than improving tourism statistics—it could bring additional spending to local businesses and communities throughout the state.

Michigan registra fuerte CAÍDA DEL TURISMO INTERNACIONAL

By Mike Lafirenza

El turismo internacional continúa siendo una importante fuente de actividad económica para Estados Unidos, pero un nuevo análisis muestra que la recuperación no avanza al mismo ritmo en todos los estados. En Michigan, las cifras más recientes revelan una marcada disminución de visitantes extranjeros durante 2025.

De acuerdo con un estudio de Luxury Link, basado en datos del Departamento de Comercio de Estados Unidos, Michigan recibió aproximadamente 281,000 visitantes internacionales en 2025, ubicándose en el puesto No. 23 del país por volumen de turismo internacional. La cifra equivale a unos 28 visitantes extranjeros por cada 1,000 residentes.

El dato que más llama la atención, sin embargo, es la tendencia anual. La llegada de turistas internacionales a Michigan cayó 32.8% entre 2024 y 2025, una reducción considerablemente mayor que la registrada a nivel nacional. En todo Estados Unidos, las visitas procedentes del extranjero disminuyeron 2.5% durante el mismo período.

La caída representa un desafío para un sector cuyo impacto se extiende mucho más allá de hoteles y atracciones. Los viajeros internacionales generan ingresos para restaurantes, comercios, aerolíneas, museos, empresas de transporte y otros negocios vinculados a la industria turística.

A nivel nacional, el panorama también muestra señales mixtas. Las exportaciones relacionadas con viajes y turismo alcanzaron \$20.9 mil millones en mayo de 2026, superando nominalmente los \$20.3 mil millones registrados en mayo de 2019. Sin embargo, al ajustar las cifras por inflación, el nivel actual permanece aproximadamente 21% por debajo del período previo a la pandemia.

El turismo internacional también se mantiene concentrado en pocos destinos. Florida lideró el país con 9.3 millones de visitantes extranjeros, seguida por Nueva York con 9.1 millones y California con 6.6 millones. En conjunto, esos tres estados recibieron más de 25 millones de viajeros internacionales.

Para Michigan, los 281,000 visitantes representan aproximadamente 0.8% de todos los turistas extranjeros que llegaron a Estados Unidos en 2025. La pronunciada caída anual plantea una oportunidad para analizar cómo el estado puede fortalecer su promoción internacional y aprovechar mejor sus ciudades, naturaleza, cultura y oferta turística.

Los datos de Luxury Link muestran que la recuperación del turismo estadounidense sigue siendo desigual. Para Michigan, recuperar visitantes internacionales podría significar no solamente atraer más viajeros, sino impulsar nuevamente el gasto que beneficia a negocios y comunidades locales en todo el estado.



GRAND RAPIDS
PUBLIC MUSEUM

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- Latino Community Coalition Steering committee member



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- Grand Rapids Community Foundation Latinx Advisory Committee

- Ferris State University Latinx Leadership Advisory Board,

- Kent County Welcome Plan for New Americans Steering Committee

- Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives Membership Division Board

- Grand Rapids Promise Zone Authority Board



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- Heart of WM United Way

Rough Draft

Welcome to Michigan

Detroit Metropolitan Airport



All Gates



Checkpoint



TSA Pre✓

Expedited
Screening
in This Lane



TSA Pre✓

Keep
Moving
Forward

Thank You

Please
Wait
Here

TSA

Michigan Airports Show Resilience DURING TSA FUNDING CRISIS

By Mike Lafirenza

Michigan airports showed notable resilience during the 2026 TSA funding lapse, experiencing only a slight decline in passenger screening activity while airports across the country faced staffing shortages and significant operational disruptions.

A new analysis by Upgraded Points, based on Transportation Security Administration checkpoint data, found that average daily TSA throughput at Michigan airports decreased just 0.6% between March and May 2026 compared with the same period in 2025. Michigan ranked No. 18 nationally based on changes in screening activity during the disruption.

The relatively small decline stands in sharp contrast to the national picture. Across the United States, average daily TSA screenings fell 6.7%, from approximately 2.43 million passengers per day during the March-May period in 2025 to about 2.27 million in 2026.

The funding lapse created a difficult situation for TSA employees. Frontline transportation security officers were considered essential and required to continue working without pay. As the disruption extended for more than two months, financial pressure contributed to unscheduled absences and resignations, creating uneven staffing shortages at airports nationwide.

Michigan, however, largely avoided the dramatic declines reported at several major U.S. airports. The sta-

te's airports processed an average of 46,206 passengers per day between March and May 2026, compared with 46,476 during the same period one year earlier. In May alone, average daily screenings stood at 44,646.

Elsewhere, the impact was far more severe. Among major airports, Atlanta recorded the largest reported decline at 76.9%. Boston fell 29.1%, while Miami International Airport declined 26.2% and Orlando International Airport dropped 22.2%. Researchers noted that some extreme declines may also reflect challenges with data collection and reporting during the disruption.

The findings are particularly relevant as summer travel remains busy and airports continue navigating growing passenger volumes, staffing demands and efforts to modernize security operations.

Researchers caution that TSA throughput should not be interpreted solely as a measure of passenger demand. Airline schedules, ticket prices, route changes, weather, economic conditions and airport operations can also influence checkpoint numbers.

Still, Michigan's performance provides an important snapshot of resilience during a challenging period for U.S. aviation. While the national system experienced substantial disruption, airports across the state maintained screening activity close to the previous year's levels, helping keep travelers moving during a period of unusual uncertainty.

Aeropuertos de Michigan muestran **RESILIENCIA ANTE CRISIS DE LA TSA**

Por Mike Lafirenza

Los aeropuertos de Michigan demostraron una notable capacidad de resistencia durante la interrupción de fondos de la Administración de Seguridad en el Transporte (TSA) en 2026, registrando apenas una ligera disminución en la actividad de pasajeros mientras otros aeropuertos del país enfrentaban escasez de personal y serios problemas operativos.

Un nuevo análisis de Upgraded Points, basado en datos de los puntos de control de la TSA, encontró que el promedio diario de pasajeros procesados en los aeropuertos de Michigan disminuyó solamente 0.6% entre marzo y mayo de 2026, en comparación con el mismo período de 2025. Michigan ocupó el puesto No. 18 a nivel nacional según los cambios registrados durante la interrupción.

La pequeña caída contrasta con el panorama nacional. En todo Estados Unidos, el promedio diario de pasajeros procesados por la TSA disminuyó 6.7%, pasando de aproximadamente 2.43 millones por día entre marzo y mayo de 2025 a cerca de 2.27 millones durante el mismo período de 2026.

La falta de fondos creó una situación especialmente difícil para los empleados de la TSA. Los agentes de seguridad fueron considerados trabajadores esenciales y debieron continuar presentándose a sus puestos sin recibir salario. A medida que la crisis se extendió por más de dos meses, las dificultades financieras contribuyeron a ausencias imprevistas y renuncias, provocando escasez

de personal en diferentes aeropuertos.

Michigan, sin embargo, evitó en gran medida las fuertes caídas observadas en otros centros de aviación. Los aeropuertos del estado procesaron un promedio de 46,206 pasajeros diarios entre marzo y mayo de 2026, frente a 46,476 durante el mismo período del año anterior. En mayo, el promedio fue de 44,646 pasajeros diarios.

En otros lugares, el impacto fue considerablemente mayor. Atlanta registró la caída más pronunciada entre los grandes aeropuertos, con 76.9%. Boston disminuyó 29.1%, mientras que Miami International Airport cayó 26.2% y Orlando International Airport registró una reducción de 22.2%. Los investigadores advierten que algunas variaciones extremas también pudieron estar relacionadas con problemas en la recopilación y reporte de datos.

El estudio también señala que las cifras de la TSA no deben interpretarse exclusivamente como una medida de la demanda de viajes. Horarios de aerolíneas, cambios de rutas, precios, clima y condiciones económicas también pueden influir en los resultados.

Aun así, el desempeño de Michigan ofrece una señal positiva. En medio de una crisis que afectó significativamente al sistema aéreo nacional, sus aeropuertos lograron mantener la actividad de seguridad muy cerca de los niveles del año anterior, ayudando a mantener en movimiento a miles de viajeros.



DETROIT METROPOLITAN

DTW

WAYNE COUNTY AIRPORT AUTHORITY



TSA CHECKPOINT STATUS



NORMAL OPERATIONS

Thank you for your patience
and cooperation.

TRAVEL TIPS



Arrive Early

Give yourself extra time.



Have ID Ready

Keep your ID out and
easily accessible.



Prepare for Security

Follow the 3-1-1 rule for
liquids and remove shoes,
laptops, and belts.



GRACELAND FRUIT

REAL INGREDIENT INNOVATORS
SINCE 1973

Our Story

ESTABLISHED BY
MICHIGAN TART CHERRY
GROWERS IN 1973



OVER 50 YEARS OF
INNOVATION, QUALITY &
COMMITMENT TO OUR
GROWERS AND
COMMUNITIES

FROM MICHIGAN
TO THE WORLD



GRACELAND FRUIT:

Michigan Innovation With Global Reach

What began more than five decades ago as an effort by Michigan cherry growers to create new opportunities for their harvest has evolved into a company whose dried fruit ingredients reach food manufacturers and consumers around the world.

Graceland Fruit, Inc., based in Frankfort, Michigan, has built its reputation as a leading producer and global distributor of premium dried fruit ingredients, combining agricultural heritage, innovation and a commitment to supporting the communities behind the crops it processes.

The company was established in 1973 by Michigan tart cherry growers as an agricultural cooperative focused on processing and marketing their annual harvest. From the beginning, its mission was tied to two ideas: making nutritious fruit available year-round and helping ensure the long-term economic, environmental and social sustainability of agricultural communities.

A defining moment came through the vision of orchardist Don Nugent, one of the driving forces behind Graceland Fruit's creation and later its president and CEO.

At the time, tart cherries were used primarily for pie filling. In 1976, Nugent pioneered research into the infused dried fruit process, eventually helping bring the first infused dried cherry to market. The innovation opened entirely new applications for tart cherries and expanded opportunities for growers beyond their traditional seasonal market.

Following that success, Graceland Fruit expan-

ded into dried cranberries, blueberries, apples and other fruits.

Today, its ingredients are used by some of the world's largest food companies to add flavor, texture, visual appeal and nutritional value to a broad range of consumer products.

The company's growth also reflects changing consumer interest in convenient foods that provide nutritional benefits. Research cited by the National Institutes of Health has associated dried fruit consumption with increased intake of several micronutrients, while dried fruits can also provide concentrated sources of fiber and antioxidants.

For Graceland Fruit, however, the story extends beyond nutrition.

Its Michigan roots remain central to a business that has transformed a regional agricultural product into an ingredient with global reach. The company emphasizes premium quality, reliable supply, customer service and collaborative product innovation as key parts of its strategy.

More than 50 years after its founding, Graceland Fruit represents an example of Michigan agricultural innovation evolving into international industry leadership.

From pioneering infused dried cherries to supplying ingredients used in modern food products worldwide, the company has continued the vision established by its growers: creating greater possibilities for fruit while supporting a more sustainable future for the agricultural communities that produce it.

GRACELAND FRUIT:

innovación de Michigan con alcance global

Lo que comenzó hace más de cinco décadas como un esfuerzo de productores de cerezas de Michigan para crear nuevas oportunidades para sus cosechas se ha convertido en una compañía cuyos ingredientes de frutas deshidratadas llegan a fabricantes de alimentos y consumidores alrededor del mundo.

Graceland Fruit, Inc., con sede en Frankfort, Michigan, ha construido su reputación como uno de los principales productores y distribuidores globales de frutas deshidratadas premium, combinando tradición agrícola, innovación y un compromiso con las comunidades que producen sus materias primas.

La compañía fue fundada en 1973 por productores de cerezas ácidas de Michigan como una cooperativa agrícola destinada a facilitar el procesamiento y comercialización de sus cosechas. Desde sus inicios, su visión estuvo basada en dos objetivos: permitir que las personas pudieran disfrutar de los beneficios de la fruta durante todo el año y contribuir a la sostenibilidad económica, ambiental y social de las comunidades agrícolas.

Uno de los momentos que marcaron la historia de Graceland Fruit estuvo impulsado por Don Nugent, productor agrícola, figura clave en la creación de la empresa y posteriormente su presidente y CEO.

En aquella época, las cerezas ácidas eran utilizadas principalmente como relleno para pasteles. En 1976, Nugent fue pionero en el estudio del proceso de infusión de frutas deshidratadas, una innovación que posteriormente permitió llevar al mercado la primera cereza deshidratada infundada.

El desarrollo abrió nuevas posibilidades para las cerezas de Michigan, ampliando su utilización más allá de una temporada específica y creando nuevas oportunidades comerciales para los productores.

Tras el éxito de las cerezas, Graceland Fruit expandió su portafolio para incluir arándanos rojos, arándanos azules, manzanas y otras frutas. Actualmente, sus ingredientes son utilizados por algunas de las principales compañías de alimentos del mundo para aportar sabor, textura, atractivo visual y valor nutricional a una amplia variedad de productos.

El crecimiento de la compañía coincide además con un mayor interés de los consumidores por alimentos convenientes con beneficios nutricionales. Investigaciones citadas por los Institutos Nacionales de Salud han relacionado el consumo de frutas deshidratadas con una mayor ingesta de varios micronutrientes. Estas frutas también pueden aportar cantidades concentradas de fibra y antioxidantes.

Pero la historia de Graceland Fruit va más allá de la nutrición.

Más de 50 años después de su fundación, la compañía representa un ejemplo de cómo la innovación agrícola de Michigan puede alcanzar mercados internacionales.

Desde ser pionera en las cerezas deshidratadas infundadas hasta convertirse en proveedora de ingredientes para la industria alimentaria mundial, Graceland Fruit continúa transformando una tradición agrícola de Michigan en una historia de innovación, crecimiento y alcance global.



GRACELAND FRUIT

REAL INGREDIENT INNOVATORS
SINCE 1973

PREMIUM DRIED FRUIT INGREDIENTS
FROM MICHIGAN TO THE WORLD





**ADVANCING
BRAIN-COMPUTER
INTERFACE
TECHNOLOGY**

Restoring Communication.
Transforming Lives.



MICHIGAN MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Paradromics
Connexus® Brain-Computer Interface

University of Michigan Marks Breakthrough in **BRAIN-COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY**

The University of Michigan has reached a significant milestone in neurological research after its surgeons completed the first human implant of a new fully implantable wireless brain-computer interface designed to potentially restore communication for people who have lost the ability to speak.

Neurosurgeons at University of Michigan Health implanted Paradromics Inc.'s Connexus Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) in a Michigan woman with difficulty speaking due to motor neuron disease. The procedure was performed by Matthew Willsey, M.D., Ph.D., a neurosurgeon and biomedical engineer, and Aditya S. Pandey, M.D., Chair of the U-M Health Department of Neurosurgery.

The historic procedure is part of the Connect-One Early Feasibility Study, a national clinical trial evaluating the device's long-term safety. Researchers will also examine whether the technology can translate brain activity into synthesized text and speech and allow the participant to control a computer using her thoughts.

"We are incredibly excited to investigate the potential of this wireless BCI to restore communication for people who have lost the ability to speak due to neurological disease or injury," Willsey said.

The Connexus system contains 421 microelectrodes capable of capturing signals from individual neurons.

Those signals are transmitted to a small device implanted in the chest, which communicates wirelessly with an external receiver.

The achievement builds on years of research at Michigan Medicine. In June 2025, Willsey and Oren

Sagher, M.D., Director of Functional Neurosurgery at U-M Health, temporarily implanted the Connexus device in a patient during epilepsy research, demonstrating that it could be safely placed in the brain and record neurological signals.

The FDA granted Paradromics an Investigational Device Exemption in November 2025, allowing the Connect-One study to move forward. Michigan Medicine is one of only three sites enrolling participants in the trial.

The first participant will now be followed for six years while continuing care through U-M Health's Stanford Morris ALS Clinic.

The milestone also reflects a broader investment by the university in next-generation neuroscience. Willsey leads the Brain-Computer Interface Clinic, which opened at U-M Health in 2025, while his laboratory is separately investigating another experimental BCI aimed at restoring movement and communication.

Michigan Medicine's research enterprise receives more than \$800 million in total research funding, supporting work across numerous biomedical fields.

For the University of Michigan, the first-in-human Connexus implant places the institution at the forefront of a rapidly developing area of neuroscience — one that could eventually transform how people living with paralysis and motor neuron diseases communicate.

As these technologies advance from laboratories into clinical studies, U-M researchers are helping define what the next generation of neurological care could look like.

Universidad de Michigan marca un avance en TECNOLOGÍA CEREBRO-COMPUTADORA

La Universidad de Michigan alcanzó un importante hito en la investigación neurológica después de que sus neurocirujanos realizaran el primer implante en un ser humano de una nueva interfaz cerebro-computadora inalámbrica y totalmente implantable, diseñada para potencialmente devolver la capacidad de comunicación a personas que han perdido el habla.

Especialistas de University of Michigan Health implantaron la interfaz Connexus BCI, desarrollada por Paradromics Inc., en una mujer de Michigan que presenta dificultades para hablar debido a una enfermedad de las neuronas motoras. El procedimiento fue realizado por Matthew Willsey, M.D., Ph.D., neurocirujano e ingeniero biomédico, y Aditya S. Pandey, M.D., presidente del Departamento de Neurocirugía de U-M Health.

El histórico procedimiento forma parte del estudio clínico nacional Connect-One Early Feasibility Study, enfocado principalmente en evaluar la seguridad del dispositivo a largo plazo. Los investigadores también estudiarán si la tecnología puede transformar la actividad cerebral en texto y voz sintetizada, además de permitir que la participante controle una computadora mediante sus pensamientos.

“Estamos increíblemente entusiasmados de investigar el potencial de esta BCI inalámbrica para restaurar la comunicación de personas que han perdido la capacidad de hablar debido a una enfermedad o lesión neurológica”, señaló Willsey.

El sistema Connexus incorpora 421 microelectrodos capaces de captar señales cerebrales de neuronas individuales. La información viaja hacia un pequeño transmisor implantado en el pecho, que posteriormente envía los datos de manera inalámbrica a un re-

ceptor externo.

Este avance es resultado de años de investigación en Michigan Medicine. En junio de 2025, Willsey y Oren Sagher, M.D., director de Neurocirugía Funcional de U-M Health, implantaron temporalmente el dispositivo Connexus en un paciente como parte de una investigación sobre epilepsia. Ese trabajo confirmó que podía colocarse de manera segura en el cerebro y registrar señales.

En noviembre de 2025, la FDA otorgó a Paradromics una autorización de dispositivo en investigación que permitió avanzar con el estudio Connect-One. Michigan Medicine es uno de solo tres centros que están inscribiendo participantes para este ensayo.

La primera participante será monitoreada durante seis años y continuará recibiendo atención especializada en la Stanford Morris ALS Clinic de U-M Health.

El logro también refleja una apuesta más amplia de la Universidad de Michigan por el futuro de la neurociencia. Willsey dirige la Brain-Computer Interface Clinic, inaugurada en U-M Health en 2025, mientras su laboratorio desarrolla investigaciones adicionales sobre tecnologías destinadas a recuperar movimiento y comunicación.

Con más de \$800 millones en fondos totales para investigación, Michigan Medicine se mantiene como una de las instituciones biomédicas más importantes del país.

Este primer implante coloca a la Universidad de Michigan a la vanguardia de una tecnología que podría transformar la vida de personas con parálisis y enfermedades de las neuronas motoras, mientras sus investigadores ayudan a definir el futuro de la neurociencia y la atención neurológica.



MICHIGAN MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Paradromics
Connexus BCI System

Neural Signal

Signal Quality

✓ Good

Device Status

Connected

Free trial alert

**Get 30 days
of free shipping**



amazon



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to download the
Amazon App



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