

Roadside Billboard in Peru Doubles as Thriving Lettuce Farm

Source: mnn.com

Published: April 1, 2015



Roadside salad greens, anyone? Air Orchard produces 2,800 heads of lettuce per week. (Video screenshot: FCB Mayo Peru/YouTube)

[Matt Hickman](#)

[Bird feeders](#). [Homeless shelters](#). [Air purifiers](#). What could possibly come next in the world of next-level billboards that do *a lot* more than just push products and services on passing motorists?

Try a hydroponic lettuce farm.

From the University of Engineering & Technology (UTEC) in Lima, Peru, and the Peruvian arm of advertising behemoth FCB Mayo — the same award-winning team that introduced us to the aforementioned air-purifying billboard — comes a not-so-ordinary roadside advert that yields thousands of organically grown heads of lettuce per week. The veg is given away to local residents and those traveling along the Peruvian section of the Pan-American Highway — the bustling *Carreterra Panamericana*.

Wizardry you say?

Not quit. Harnessing similar technology that was incorporated into [another innovative billboard project](#) from 2013 that produced portable water out of thin air, UTEC and FCB Mayo have once

again outfitted an oversized sign with large dehumidifiers. Hidden behind the front panel of the billboard, the dehumidifiers — 10 in total — draw moisture out of the oppressively sultry air that hangs over the region. That air-harvested water travels down a series of nutrient-coated PVC tubes as part of a drip irrigation system that feeds into the soil-less, highway-side lettuce farm.

Click here to watch ""Air Orchard" - UTEC (inglés)":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lud8caZEX-A>

In addition to the water used for the hydroponic growing operations, the multitasking billboard — dubbed "[Air Orchard](#)" — also produces roughly 96 liters of clean drinking water per day.

UTEC and FCB Mayo conceived this latest bit of ingenious billboard magic in direct response to the fact that the river-drawn water used to irrigate crops in Bujama, a farming community located just south of Lima, is heavily polluted with toxins such as arsenic, lead and cadmium. As a result, these pollutants often find their way into salad bowls — and human mouths — across the Lima region. While lettuce grown in plastic tubing alongside a busy roadway may not at first seem all that appealing, the bounty of (free) leafy greens produced at Air Orchard is viewed as a safer — and considerably more nutritious — alternative to the soil-grown standard.

Remarks Ignacio Montero, director of business innovation at UTEC:

“UTEC is a university that was founded with the mission of developing applied research that provides practical solutions to the challenges of society and industry. These principles are proven through innovative initiatives like the ‘Air Orchard.’ We improved on our first panel that generated water from moisture in the air for human consumption and increased the production of water to grow healthy food. We have found a practical solution to a real problem, and through creativity and innovation we developed solutions to the challenges of our country and the world.”

It's worth noting that Air Orchard also serves a more traditional, advertising-based purpose: to grab the attention of potential UTEC students during the school's 2015's open enrollment period.
