

NETAFIM DRIP IRRIGATION SUCCESS STORY

CORN

KURT GRIMM

SUBSURFACE DRIP IRRIGATION YIELDS MORE BUSHELS OF CORN PER ACRE

For someone as calm and collected as Kurt Grimm, there's still a noticeable excitement in his voice when he starts talking about yielding 70-80 more bushels of corn per acre by using subsurface drip irrigation.

Grimm, a grower in Hiawatha, Kansas, has been through numerous ebbs and flows while using center pivot irrigation, or depending on the weather with dryland farming, but says his crops have never had a bad day with drip irrigation.

"Drip just makes sense - it's extremely efficient, with very little labor, it switches zones automatically and the best part is, you can run it from your living room," notes Grimm with a sly smirk as he holds up his cell phone, noting the ease of drip's remote access systems.

For Grimm, the installation of subsurface drip irrigation came initially as a necessity to get water onto oddly shaped fields that a center pivot system couldn't navigate. However, years later, Grimm claims it's the economics and other benefits that make drip irrigation the frontrunner choice over center pivot irrigation and dryland farming. "With drip, the farmer is in control," says Grimm. "You can irrigate and fertigate in a matter of a day - you don't have to wait a week for a center pivot to make its loop or for mother nature to send you water - it's real time farming."

Additionally, Grimm notes that drip is able to function in any almost any situation. Waiting for near-perfect weather to sidedress a dryland field with nitrogen is no longer an issue. And, since the drip system is installed below the surface, rain doesn't deter him from injecting nitrogen into the driplines and getting plants the nutrients they might otherwise lose from leaching. Moreover, fertilizer is applied much more efficiently with a drip irrigation system.

"The old rule of thumb was that a grower needed 1.1 to 1.2 pounds of nitrogen to produce a bushel of corn," says Grimm. "With drip, we're seeing that number fall to .7 to .8 pounds per bushel."

Aside from its ease of use, Grimm points out that drip irrigation is adding value to his land - so instead of purchasing more ground, he's simply getting more out of what he already has. Fields that were once on the brink of being barren have had new life breathed, or in this case dripped, into them. "We took our worst field, our absolute worst field that was highly eroded with very little topsoil and made the investment in drip," says Grimm. "Today what was junk dirt is our highest producing field."

Grimm goes on to say that even with the recent lower pricing for corn, the return on his drip system investments still ranges from 7-15%, increasing exponentially as the price of corn goes up. In some instances, Grimm has been able to recoup the system cost within just two years. Though Grimm offers up a lighthearted warning: drip is great but there's a learning curve.

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"Farmers are so used to having a physical element in the field that they can see working," notes Grimm. "Drip systems are in the ground so you're learning to farm through gauges and monitors, not what you see right in front of you."

Grimm's take on the learning experience is it's about navigating ways to farm smarter, not harder, but given his experience as a Netafim Dealer, he knows the company stands behind their systems and offers unprecedented support and education.

"The reason I sell Netafim systems is that their team just understands drip," says Grimm. "I can get the support I need and their manufacturing process is tracked so thoroughly, even the smallest problem can be discovered and fixed quickly."

As a Dealer, Grimm conveys to his customers the concept that Netafim sells a complete system - from the front-end design support to ongoing maintenance, the company isn't selling piecemeal products, they're selling an inclusive package that really differentiates them from their competitors.

"What I tell my customers is that you have to approach drip irrigation as a system - something that works together and has the support to back it up," says Grimm. "Drip really isn't about price differentiation between suppliers, it's about who can give you the most support before, during and after the install."

Grimm plans to continue to update his operation with more installs of drip irrigation systems because he truly believes that the future of agriculture lies in the implementation of technology systems that make farmers and the resources they utilize more efficient.

**"DRIP JUST
MAKES SENSE"**



NETAFIM USA
5470 E. Home Ave.
Fresno, CA 93727
CS 888 638 2346
www.netafimusa.com