

NETAFIM DRIP IRRIGATION SUCCESS STORY STRAWBERRIES

DAVE PECK



DAVE PECK USES NETAFIM'S SUPERNET MICRO-SPRINKLERS TO GROW THE FINEST STRAWBERRIES

Dave Peck is most comfortable walking his strawberry fields and evaluating their growth and development to send the best possible product to market. If he comes across an opportunity to improve the crop, he takes it.

With over 30 years of experience growing strawberries, Peck is considered a well-respected farmer who uses research-based information to continually improve his growing methods. He unselfishly shares what works for him so other growers can achieve greater success, which ultimately enhances this important crop to California's economy.

In 1984, Peck began growing strawberries in Oxnard. New opportunities steered him toward moving to Santa Maria in 1992 where, three years later, he established Manzanita Berry Farms to focus on growing the finest strawberries. During that time, Peck developed a relationship with Well-Pict, Inc. located in Watsonville. Their long, fruitful association continues to this day with Peck growing some of their proprietary lines on 540 acres divided between conventional and organically-grown strawberries.

"THE SPRINKLERS HAVE INCREASED OUR EFFECTIVENESS OF TWO-SPOTTED MITE CONTROL..."



Peck's success over the years is attributable to listening when other growers and experts discuss ways to improve growing methods and engaging in co-operative experimental trials on his land. After further research, he is often an early adopter to implementing beneficial ideas or products to improve his strawberry production. Finally, Peck is a willing participant in sharing his results so other growers can profit and grow a more robust bottom line.

One type of innovation Peck decided to incorporate two years ago, and that he says has yielded an array of improvements, was installing Netafim's SuperNet Micro-Sprinklers on his organic strawberry fields. Before making the switch from a conventional irrigation method, which used bulky pipes that hindered the efficiency of field workers and machinery passing through the rows, he took time to fully evaluate the micro-sprinklers. "We watched the sprinklers in operation, talked to the growers about what they liked and also talked to the pest control advisors about what they were seeing," he said of the remarkable success he witnessed on the fields he observed.

"The sprinklers have really increased our effectiveness of two-spotted mite control and dust control in the fields during harvest without interfering with the workers and tractor operations within the fields," Peck says. Other secondary outcomes, such as no longer having to move irrigation pipes, decreased labor costs and improved water savings has further increased Peck's high regard for the micro-sprinklers.



“INSTALLING NETAFIM’S SUPERNET MICRO-SPRINKLERS HAS HELPED DELIVER A VARIETY OF POSITIVE BENEFITS AND COST SAVING.”

“I think everybody can find that there’s an advantage to using this type of irrigation system to eventually persuade them to overlook the initial capital investment,” he said, which he believes will be repaid within a few years due to no longer renting pipes and reduced labor costs. While he can appreciate the advantages gained all season long using micro-sprinklers, during harvest, he says, they really distinguish their worth. “It’s extremely inconvenient to have aluminum pipes strung through the field once harvest season begins because you have pipe sitting in the very furrows harvesters are rolling their carts through and it just does not work,” he says. “The micro-sprinklers are installed completely on top of the beds and they’re small enough that they don’t bother anybody while harvesting.”

Other farm operations have also become more streamlined since Peck no longer has to move irrigation pipes. “We knew overhead irrigation had some advantages and once we tried the micro-sprinklers it got rid of a lot of the disadvantages of aluminum pipe and gave us one more really good tool to use all through the season,” Peck said. There’s labor involved with any irrigation system, Peck says, but it only took a little extra time to initially install the micro-sprinklers. “They’re very low maintenance the rest of year and with the system running at such low volume we’re not seeing runoff, which is a positive side effect,” he said, noting the micro-sprinklers are delivering a cost-saving, 10-percent water reduction. Peck is also saving on pesticide control since observing a reduction in two-spotted mites. His yearly practice is to put beneficial predatory mites in all

the conventional and organic fields. “We found we can reduce the amount we need to release and they are more effective if we can manipulate the humidity and free moisture in the field with the micro-sprinklers during the season,” he says.

SUPERNET SPRINKLER KEY BENEFITS

- ✓ IMPROVES OVERALL FARM EFFICIENCY
- ✓ IMPROVES WATER SAVINGS & RUNOFF
- ✓ SUPPRESSES TWO-SPOTTED MITE
- ✓ LOWERS PESTICIDE COST
- ✓ LOWERS LABOR COSTS

Besides being a valued farmer who is looked up to amongst his peers, Peck’s highly-regarded management style earned him a nomination for a prestigious IPM Innovator of the Year award by the California Department of Agriculture. Accolades aside, Peck continues to reach higher on his own self-imposed goals to grow the best possible strawberries while continuing to find ways to lessen his environmental footprint on his farm. Installing Netafim’s SuperNet Micro-Sprinklers, he says, has definitely helped him achieve that goal by delivering a variety of positive benefits and cost-savings.



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