

GREENHOUSE GROWERS WORK TO MANAGE WATER:

Spring 2017

Water recycling important to third generation tomato growers

In Leamington, Ontario, Steve Enns – a third generation farmer that started farming with his father in 1993 – decided to build their first 12.5 acre greenhouse and began growing high quality grape and cocktail tomatoes. In 2012, the farm grew to 25 acres and Enns saw this as an opportunity to build a ‘State of the Art’ facility and make the greenhouse growing process as efficient as possible. The majority of greenhouses now recycle the bulk of their excess nutrient water, but for extra security against an equipment breakdown he decided to put in an additional

1,000,000 litre storage tank. Before the water goes to the tank, it passes through filters and a UV sterilization unit – all fairly common practice. The storage tank, however, can store the total volume of water for the entire farm. This means that they can do regular maintenance and repairs without having to discard any valuable nutrient water.

“It’s an A, B, and C contingency plan, where, if A goes down, we have the capacity to deal with it. At the old farm, we lost about 30 percent of water due to leaching. We recirculate basically 100 percent now and haven’t had the need to discard any nutrients in two years,” says Enns.



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The only wastewater he has to dispose of now is that used to backwash – or clean out – his micro filter system. That amount totals about 12 litres every wash, and can be managed by the farm's septic system.

"We worked very closely with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change too. They helped make sure our plan was in-line with expectations," says Enns.

When asked about future challenges, Enns explains that he

and other greenhouse growers are always looking to reduce water use, and that keeping up with "the crazy pace of technological improvement" can be challenging.

Through this farm's many contingency plans and massive reservoir, Steve Enns has made sure that his farm will never be responsible for contaminating the environment. He understands the importance of keeping water clean and is holding his facility to the highest standards to make sure water stays safe. He believes Enns Plant Farm "has it licked".

Farm & Food Care Ontario's Water Smart program is designed to help growers better understand how and where they use water. By having better information, growers are often able to reduce their water use, cut costs and generally find lower cost treatment systems. For more information visit www.FarmFoodCareON.org



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