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# Sustainable water use makes business sense for Flavorite

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In a quiet little corner of Warragal, Victoria, you'll find Australia's largest glasshouse grower who's spearheading sustainable horticulture. Flavorite is achieving some seriously impressive water savings and showing how technology, innovation and environmental responsibility make great business sense.

With 1,200 square metres of greenhouses, founders, Warren Nichol and Mark Millis started Flavorite in 1993 and set out to produce the best-tasting Australian grown tomatoes 12 months of the year.

Today, they operate six facilities across regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne that allow them to grow, pack and distribute their delicious produce. They specialise in growing tomatoes, capsicums, cucumbers, eggplant, and blueberries and sell produce all over Australia and overseas.

A pioneering spirit and sustainable production practices underpin Flavorite's success, and it started with investing in glasshouse production rather than traditional field farming.

Mike Nichol, Flavorite CEO, said their glasshouse production enables them to control all aspects of the growing environment.

"Glasshouse and protected cropping are the benchmark of sustainable growing systems. They allow us to drive greater efficiencies, reuse resources, produce less waste and save more water in our operations," he said.

"For example, tomato production in the glasshouse yields 80kg per square meter of land compared to just 6.9kg per square meter in a typical field system."

Water is one of their most important resources and they've invested in technology that result is some impressive water savings. We're talking about a whopping 95 percent-plus of their irrigation water getting either absorbed by the plant or captured and recycled.

Mike said thanks to the advanced technology used for measuring, monitoring, and delivering water, they can grow 1kg of tomatoes using five times less water than traditional farming techniques.

"Producing 1kg of glasshouse grown tomatoes requires 22 litres of water compared to 116 litres of water in field farming," he said.

The question is, how do they do it?

They collect rain from the roofs of their glasshouses, which is supplemented with groundwater, and then pumped into their storage dams.

Inside the glasshouse, state-of-the-art technology allows them to monitor and measure water use, with each plant getting exactly the right hydration and nutrients through a drip irrigation system.

Any runoff is then collected through their gutter system and sent to a storage tank before undergoing ultraviolet sterilization.

The ultraviolet light penetrates though the water, killing any pesky microbes or bacteria so it can be recycled back to the crops.

Mike said conserving water is just one part of their commitment to sustainability and they're doing great things across many other areas.

"In 2020, we established a formal Sustainability Team to advance our sustainability commitments and govern our impacts.

"We have developed targets and goals that are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and we're making good progress to becoming a more sustainable business," he said.

Some of their achievements include reducing food waste to less than 2 percent of total production, ensuring 98 percent of their packaging can be reused or recycled, getting a 62 percent energy saving by upgrading their chiller units at Warragal, using integrated pest management to reduce pesticide use and donating enough produce to Foodbank and Second Bite that has helped provide over 39,000 meals to vulnerable Australians.

Mike believes environmental stewardship, ethical conduct and social responsibility not only contributes to the well-being of communities and the planet, but it also leads to long-term business success and resilience.

"We're proud to be leaders in this space and confident our sustainable farming approach positions us to be able to feed our growing population in the years to come," he said.

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