Pivot Irrigation is Key to Strong Sugar Beet Germination

Proper pivot irrigation management is critical to profitably growing sugar beets. Just ask Bridgeport, Nebraska, sugar beet grower Kevin Hall, who grows approximately 1,214 ha (3,000 acres) of sugar beets with pivots. Hall is also chairman of The Western Sugar Cooperative, which processes 54,632 ha (135,000 acres) of sugar beets in Colorado, Montana, Nebraska and Wyoming into pure granulated sugar that is sold throughout the United States (see “Fast Facts” on reverse).

“Pivot irrigation is absolutely critical during germination and emergence of the sugar beets,” Hall says. “Our Zimmatic pivots work great in helping the sugar beets to germinate properly and break up any crust that may be preventing emergence. You can’t do that with furrow irrigation.”

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Bill Pierce, owner of Midwest Farm Service, Hall’s local Zimmatic dealer, says sugar beet growers in western Nebraska and eastern Wyoming have come to rely on pivot irrigation to successfully manage their sugar beet crops.

“One big advantage of center pivot irrigation over furrow irrigation is the ability to germinate the sugar beet crop in a dry spring,” Pierce says.

Hall also uses his Zimmatic pivots to apply fertilizer and some fungicides to his sugar beets.

Because his land is spread over several miles in several counties in western Nebraska, Hall makes maximum use of his FieldNET web-based irrigation management and control system.

“We have some pivots that are under electric load management and FieldNET™ works great when we have to stop and re-start the pivots. It saves a lot on labor costs,” Hall says. “We are in a water control area and the Zimmatic pivots help us conserve water.”

With the recent introduction of Genuity® Roundup Ready® sugar beets and new traits in sugar beet seeds, yields have increased substantially, according to Hall.

Hall says sugar beet prices have been good to firm in recent years, making sugar beet production profitable.

In addition to sugar beets, Hall raises corn, wheat, alfalfa and dry beans.

SOURCE: Kevin Hall and Lindsay Corp.

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