

Growing Peppers in the Desert Lands of Arizona

UNDER A ZIMMATIC® PIVOT IRRIGATION SYSTEM

Whether you like them hot or mild, chances are, you've had chiles developed by fourth-generation farmer Ed Curry. On his farm outside Cochise, Arizona, he farms 1,200 acres (485 ha), with much of that land dedicated to breeding many different kinds of peppers. In fact, Curry's operation provides about 80 percent of the world's green chile seeds.

Keeping enough water on his plants in the desert lands of Arizona can be challenging. How does he do it? Primarily with Zimmatic pivots. Curry has used Zimmatic to irrigate his land for nearly 30 years.

"I love our pivots," Curry says. "I just feel so blessed that we live in a country that helps us with better water technology. Greg, our Zimmatic dealer, is awesome. He's very knowledgeable, and he's really good with technology."

Greg Sweatt of Whitewater Irrigation in Cochise, is Curry's Zimmatic dealer. He says the correct spray package under the pivot is essential in proper chile irrigation. "It shouldn't be too

aggressive because the stream is hitting the dirt," Sweatt explains.



"It can't splash onto the plant, as that can cause problems."

As enthusiastic as he is about his pivots, Curry hasn't used them exclusively. After using pivots for many years, he went back to drip irrigation in some of his fields. That lasted only about a year. He then installed five new pivots, bringing the total to 10 pivots irrigating his chiles, with only a few drip systems still in the mix.

So why did he return to pivots? In a word: labor.

Labor is a bigger factor than ever in Arizona, where immigration issues are prevalent. It's difficult to find enough people who are legally able to work in the fields.

Plus, repairing drip is very labor intensive. Curry says his pivots don't require nearly the maintenance of his old drip system.

Curry uses 30-inch drop technology with soft, flat, smooth pads to irrigate. His pivots also deliver fungicides and chemicals directly to his crops – another distinct advantage over drip irrigation.

"With drip, we had to go out and spray our plants all the time," Curry says. "That requires a lot of time and labor."



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– Ed Curry

BENEFITS OF PIVOT IRRIGATION VS DRIP IRRIGATION

- Best for fields larger than 65 acres (26 ha) with special models for smaller fields
- Low investment cost per acre/hectare
- 20+ year life
- No flushing
- Low maintenance costs, easy to maintain
- No salt buildup at irrigation zone
- No filtration required
- Efficient water use (90-95%)
- FieldNET™ allows full remote control monitoring via Internet with text message alerts

Curry spends much of his time working on new varieties of chiles with New Mexico State University and the University of Arizona.

He also processes and sells his own chiles, as well as providing chiles for brands such as Ortega® and Old El Paso®. That means he can't spend a lot of time out in the fields.

Using FieldNET has made multi-tasking possible, requiring less labor while increasing control. Curry checks his pivots on his laptop every night. "I need to travel a little for my business, but as long as I have phone service, I can check my pivots so I know what's going on."



Arizona pepper grower Ed Curry uses FieldNET Web-based irrigation management system by GrowSmart™ to monitor his Zimmatic pivots.



www.zimmatic.com/keycrops

Zimmatic is a leader in showing growers how to profitably raise peppers and other high-value crops under pivot irrigation. Visit www.zimmatic.com/keycrops to download crop-specific brochures for alfalfa, beans, corn, cotton, peanuts, vegetables, wheat and more.



For more information about Zimmatic and Lindsay irrigation solutions, visit www.zimmatic.com or talk to your Lindsay dealer.

SOURCE: Ed Curry and Lindsay.

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