



PROTECTING THE FUTURE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

H.S. Packing has been farming in California's San Joaquin River Delta region, one of the most fertile and productive agricultural areas in the world, for three generations. During that time H.S. Packing has employed many of the same families throughout those generations. And H.S. Packing is working hard to keep their farming operation healthy and sustainable for future generations of farmers and farm employees.

"We know it is our responsibility to continue to improve every aspect of the environment on our farms and in our community," says Kent Kiefer, owner of H.S. Packing.

To ensure a viable future, H.S. Packing is actively involved in developing new and better ways to farm. "We truly believe that we must be adaptable and innovative to keep our company healthy," says Kiefer. "We have worked with the University of California extensions in many experimental trials over the years and those outcomes have shaped some of our farming practices. We also work with various seed companies to help establish new varieties that result in better yields without increased inputs, like water and crop protection tools."

Protecting valuable resources, like water, is an important component in protecting the future of H.S. Packing. In order to use water most efficiently, H.S. Packing uses the California Irrigation Management System website (CIMIS) and their weather stations to help determine when it's the optimal time to irrigate their tomatoes. CIMIS helps determine things like evapotranspiration rates, which is the amount of water that evaporates out of the soil and the amount of water that transpires from the plant. "By knowing the evapotranspiration rate, we can tell how much water per acre needs to be replaced for the plants to thrive," Kiefer says. Other devices used are tensiometers which are placed at different levels in the root zone to determine the water in the soil that is available to the plant.

Being a Delta farmer also offers a unique way to irrigate. "We siphon water for irrigation," Kiefer says. "The ability to siphon means we don't use electric or diesel energy to pump our irrigation water."



While protecting available resources is important, reducing inputs is also a focus in the Kiefers' farming operations. "We want to make sure that we have the least impact on the environment as possible which is why integrated pest management strategies are so important to us."

H.S. Packing uses an outside company to help monitor pest populations and determine the best method to get rid of those pests or diseases. They also use spot treatments whenever possible, instead of treating the entire field to reduce the amount of pest control tools used. To help protect the California Delta, H.S. Packing also has a policy of leaving a 25 foot buffer zone by every waterway where no pest control materials will be used.

But Kiefer readily admits that their company's biggest asset is the people. "Seventy five percent of our employees return to work for us every year and of the 25 percent of new employees most will be related to a current employee. We're very proud of that and hope it shows that we work hard to provide a positive working environment."

And Kiefer says it is the people that reinforce their sustainability efforts every day. "We all live, eat, drink, and breath the same food, water, and air. It is so important to be sustainable because our actions on the farm and in the workplace not only affect us as a company but the community as a whole."