



CASE IN POINT

- LOCATION:** Peterson Farms
Near Funk, Neb.
- SITUATION:**
 - Father/son family farm
 - 1,200 irrigated acres
 - All Valley® pivots of varying ages
- CHALLENGE:**
 - Improving operations by upgrading to new technology
 - Scheduling irrigation to match plant needs
- DEPLOYMENT:**
 - Implementing new control and management with the Valley ICON5
 - Replacing older panels with new technology
 - Transitioning to AgSense®
- EFFECT:**
 - Improve pivot management
 - Simple, easy-to-use control
 - Less time spent controlling pivots

Nebraska grower gains new level of control with cutting-edge technology

In South Central Nebraska, water is plentiful and farms are everywhere you look. It's the perfect place to use new technology to make the most of that water, using it effectively, and finding new ways to become more efficient while maximizing yields.

Michael Peterson and his dad, Roger, farm 1,200 irrigated acres of corn and soybeans. They run nine Valley® pivots, varying in age from 26 years to brand new, and with control panels ranging from the older Valley Classic Plus to a new Valley ICON5.

“Like most people, we’re interested in anything that can help us make money while taking some of the burden off our shoulders,” Peterson says. “That’s why I like new technology like what’s found in the ICON5. It’s a great management tool, and it makes life easier.”

The ICON5 is one of the latest smart panels from Valley Irrigation. It provides simple, intuitive menu functions on the full-color, five-inch touchscreen interface at the pivot point. It also features soft-touch buttons for another control option. The ICON5 comes equipped with Valley ICON Link, which allows growers to manage the pivot remotely from a smart phone, tablet or desktop computer using AgSense or BaseStation3™, smart irrigation solutions from Valley.

An easy technology transition

Jeremiah Johnson, Project Manager for Central Valley Irrigation in Holdrege, Neb., says he was excited to provide Peterson one of the first ICON panels to try.

“I was testing another ICON panel on my family’s farm, so I knew Michael would take to it quickly, and that it would help him with efficiency and control,” Johnson says. “It’s updated and upgradable, and it helps use water to its greatest potential.”

Peterson did take to it quickly, with virtually no instructions.



“We installed the ICON5 on a pivot we purchased in 2013,” he says. “I was excited to try it, because new technology intrigues me. Jeremiah installed it, and we started using it with no instruction manual. It turned out we didn’t need one. I never even had to call Jeremiah with questions.

“It was installed later in the season so I used it only at the pump,” he says. “I found it to be completely intuitive, like using a smart phone. It was even easier to use than my Valley Pro2 panel.”

Peterson adds, “I could navigate it easily to set application depth, end guns and revolution time. It was really easy.”

While Michael is generally very comfortable using this new technology, his father, who is in his 70s and still using a flip phone, didn’t miss a beat. The type of technology found in the ICON smart panel didn’t slow him down, either.

“My dad prefers to control our pivots right from the panel,” says Peterson, “but he was comfortable with the ICON5 and liked it right away.

“He went out and started using the soft touch buttons, which I didn’t even realize were there for a long time,” he laughs. “I went straight to the screen. We look at technology differently, but we could both use it easily.”

Bringing in remote management and more control

Although Peterson hasn’t had a chance to use remote telemetry through his ICON5 yet, he does plan to start implementing that feature through ICON Link during the next growing season. He is already familiar with the benefits of remote management, as he has an AgSense license on his newest pivot that’s equipped with a Pro2 control panel.

“AgSense provides another whole level of control,” Peterson says. “I can do a rough set to my end gun, and then go out to the road and tweak it. Also, if we get a good rain, I can shut down my pivot from my phone. I don’t have to drive out on a muddy road at midnight to shut it down. It just makes life a little easier.”

Controlling everything from one place

Most of the wells on the Peterson farm are right by the pivots, making pump control relatively simple. They also use their pivots to fertigate, which adds another step to the process.

Johnson says with Valley ICON Link, the Petersons will be able to control both either from the pivot or remotely.

“The ICON5 gives growers the ability to control pumps, fertigation pumps and the pivot, all from the panel or remotely from a smart phone,” says Johnson.

Peterson adds, “I’m looking forward to putting it all together in this upcoming growing season. It will be a big time saver for us.”



Future growth

Peterson says he plans to start replacing his older panels one at a time, starting with the ones farthest away, so he can begin controlling them remotely.

“A lot of those are older panels, and I’d like to have the ability to put AgSense on them,” he says. “I’d love to retrofit those with a Valley ICON10 or ICON5. Otherwise, I may bypass them with a Valley ICONX, which would save us money, too.”

The ICON10 is the premier panel in the ICON line, with all of the capabilities of the ICON5 and more, including a 10-inch touchscreen at the panel and optional Wi-Fi Access.

ICONX brings any control panel – including all major brand pivots – into the AgSense or BaseStation3 network. It takes control of the existing panel and uses that panel’s circuits to deliver full ICON panel control.

“No matter how we go, I will be investing in something that I know will have a good return,” says Peterson. “ICON smart panels are valuable tools.”