GROWER PROFILE

AgSense®

Super-Sod simplifies data gathering and irrigating

LOCATION:

Super-Sod®, a division of Patten Seed Company
Georgia operation located near Cartersville, GA
Brandon Chambley, Farm Manager

SITUATION:

- Part of the South's largest suppliers of turf grass sod and seed
- Use cutting-edge seed technology
- 900 acres under 20 pivots

CHALLENGE:

- Integrate irrigation data into company database
- Ensure correct irrigation over sensitive plants
- Increase irrigation precision
- Control pumps and pivots remotely

DEPLOYMENT:

- Installed ICONX smart panels on all pivots
- Use Valley® ICON Link to allow control and monitoring with AgSense®
- Incorporate data from AgSense, which is compatible with farm database
- Gain information through Valley Weather Station for added precision
- Install Crop Link® on pumps for two farms

EFFECT:

- All information in one database
- Save time and gain more control using AgSense app
- Continue movement toward complete precision irrigation
- Improved efficiency and control of pumps

Super-Sod is one of the largest turf producers in the South, with farms and retail locations in Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina. It's a subsidiary of Patten Seed Company and is a family- and employee-owned business that's been supplying seed and sod for more than 100 years.

One of their turf farms lies in northwest Georgia, where Brandon Chambley manages 900 acres on four farms. He is involved in everything from sales to planting, mowing and cultivating, and he is also in charge of operating 20 pivots.

Super-Sod uses all three major brands of pivots. At Chambley's two farms, they have one Valley pivot and the remaining are Reinke®, all of which now feature Valley ICONX panels with ICON Link. They recently made the change primarily because AgSense was compatible with their farm database, but found that it did much more than that, making irrigating simpler from the pump to the pivot.

VALLEY

GROWER PROFILE

AgSense

Bringing all information into one database

Previously, Super-Sod used FieldNet® to control and manage their pivots; however, the data from FieldNet wouldn't integrate into Super-Sod's software. Chambley's farm handles much of the research and development for the entire operation, so they decided to try an ICONX panel and utilize AgSense to determine if its software would be compatible.

Chambley stated, "Once we tried it on one, we immediately ordered ICONX panels for all of our pivots. API allows us to integrate our irrigation data into AgChimp.com which aggregates all of our inputs to see real time, accurate costs of our operation. It was definitely an investment, and we replaced panels that weren't very old, but we are very confident in its stability, and AgSense always works on my mobile device."

Super-Sod is developing this database to take the guesswork out of the equation.

"We are working toward seeing how much it costs to grow our sod per square inch, from irrigation to mowing," he says. "No one who grows sod knows that right now. Once we can determine the cost, we will have a formula for selling it, too. It may even change the varieties we grow."

Standout data, control and precision

Sod and seed require precise amounts of water – on average about 0.15 to 0.25 inches per day, which Chambley says is approximately one pass per pivot every day. Younger plants tend to need more attention, and during the hot summer season, pivots may have to run up to four times per day to keep the surface wet until grass sprouts.

"With AgSense, I don't have to go out to the field to start and stop my pivots multiple times per day, so I can spend more time at home," he says. "We also have rain buckets (weather stations) recording rainfall at each pivot point, so I can see what's happening in every field right on my AgSense app through ICON Link."

Chambley also takes advantage of Crop Link on two of the Super-Sod farm locations to control pumps. One farm uses two tandem pumps, and there's a single well at the other location. He says the main advantage of using Crop Link is that he doesn't have to drive out to the pumps to turn them on and off, because it's controlled by the panel at the pivot point.

"If there's a problem with a pivot, it turns the pump off automatically and lets me know through my app," he says. "That's a huge benefit, especially when I'm irrigating at night. I don't have to worry that I'm going to go out to the field to see a flood in the morning."

One primary benefit can be summed up by not having to hire someone to stop and start pumps and pivots all day and night. "I can just do it from my phone," Chambley says. "No one has to babysit the pivots."

Chambley's goal is to have a fully automated irrigation system.

"That will be a real game changer," he says. "If I can automate my irrigation so the pivot can do everything on its own, I'll be able to provide very specific amounts of water whenever it's needed. For example, if I have three pivots on one farm, I want to set a prescription to start one pivot at a certain time, and when it stops, turn off that valve at the water source, which is the river in our case. Then, the prescription will automatically turn open the next valve to start another pivot right away. Once we get that going, I'll be able to irrigate at night and save even more time and money."