



## ULRICH OSTERLOH OF ERDBEERHOF OSTERLOH ABOUT WATER MANAGEMENT



**“USE WATER EFFICIENTLY, IT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT RAW MATERIAL ON EARTH”** ”

Strawberry producer Ulrich Osterloh

His passion is clear: he wants to be the best strawberry producer in Germany, or better still, in all of Europe. Ulrich Osterloh is not merely an expert in his field; he genuinely lives and breathes strawberries. His business, Erdbeerhof Osterloh, grows strawberries on more than 250 ha of land. The large number of new polytunnels is striking, a sign of the transition to covered crops. They reduce the risks that reoccur each year with outdoor cultivation. “Last winter, for example, we were very lucky with the frost, and hail is also a constant threat.” Covered cultivation provides protection and offers the possibility of heating the greenhouses. “And, very important, we can regulate the dosage of water and fertilizers much better”.

### **Most important raw material**

He can hardly wait to start using the new 10 ha tunnels, but even with his large-scale outdoor cultivation of strawberries Ulrich Osterloh does everything to ensure that water is used as efficiently as possible. His reasons for this are concise and clear: “Water is the most important raw material on earth. So we must exploit all the technical possibilities available to use it as efficiently as

possible.”

For over 20 years, Erdbeerhof Osterloh has used drip irrigation instead of sprayers on its more than 200 hectares of strawberry fields in and around the German village of Visbek. “This means the plants get exactly what they need; no more and no less.” Of course, with outdoor crops a lot of rain water is lost in this way. “That’s one of the reasons we are increasingly opting for polytunnels and investing in high-quality Priva systems, which make it possible to reuse water. This will enable us to achieve significant savings. We are building a basin to store the drain water from the gutters in the tunnels.”

### **Water footprint**

The strawberry farm has purchased a recirculation system that recycles the collected drain water and makes it suitable for reuse. Osterloh has opted for the NutriFlex, which enables him to give the strawberry plants the right amount of water and fertilizers at the right time, controlled by his Priva Connex computer.

“It is becoming increasingly important to use our global water resources wisely. End customers are demanding that more and more from their producers. They can certainly expect that from us too; sustainability is an important element of our business operations and our ‘water footprint’ is something we pay attention to every day. It’s about my children’s future too,” emphasizes Ulrich Osterloh.



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**Priva Horticulture team**



+ 31 (0) 174 522620

## MORE TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR WATER MANAGEMENT?

Read the Best Practice Guidelines for Greenhouse Water Management

### **Erdbeerhof Osterloh**

With crops covering more than 250 ha, [Erdbeerhof Osterloh](#) is amongst the largest strawberry growers in Europe. Quality and reliability are the main principles that drive Ulrich Osterloh's business, and those are the reasons he is making the switch from outdoor crops to high-quality production in tunnels. Even though he has been in the strawberry business for almost 35 years, Osterloh has described this switch as an exciting and challenging project for his business, which is situated in Visbek, Germany (between Osnabrück and Bremen). "This switch will take us one step further into the future, and provides a foundation for my children, Alicia and Alexander, to build on."

### **Osterloh opts for Priva**

Erdbeerhof Osterloh is in the middle of a transition process from outdoor crops to covered crops in greenhouses, but mainly in modern tunnels. To help realize this process, Ulrich Osterloh, the innovative, driven entrepreneur behind the business, has enlisted Jan Robben, the well-known Dutch strawberry grower, as well as Priva. To automate water dosage and fertilization, Priva has supplied Osterloh with a [Connex process computer](#). Account Manager Chris Reeskamp provides the necessary guidance to the strawberry grower on behalf of Priva, and Priva Partner Andreas Geiger takes care of the installations.

### **The Grower Files**

In late 2015, Priva launched a video section under the intriguing title 'The Grower Files', in which notable national and international growers outline their vision of topical issues in the (greenhouse) horticulture industry. In these video messages 'by growers for growers', the entrepreneurs will also give an interesting insight into their business philosophy. Following in the footsteps of [tomato grower Frank van Kleef](#), [gerbera grower Marius Mans](#) and [potted plant specialist Frans Bunnik](#), the next installment features German strawberry giant Ulrich Osterloh.