

25 tips for improving your bottom line

Every day you're looking for solutions and tips to help you increase your harvest and decrease your costs. Reducing the use of natural resources such as energy and water is also an important goal, so that your business will be sustainable as well as successful. We hope that this white paper will inspire you to take various measures that will make a positive contribution to your bottom line.

Crop planning is a must

Light, climate and outside conditions have an influence on the amount of work that has to be done. There are peaks and troughs, which every business owner is used to. The skill lies in the ability to take these into account in your planning. Data from previous years can help you with this.



TIPS:

1. **Make better use of your historical data** in the planning of production, labour and, for instance, when calculating the risk of infection.
2. **In particular, take account of the production conditions**, such as light, when planning the production you wish to achieve.
3. **Work with good analysis tools**. The more items of information you can combine, the more insight you will create. Automation is now an indispensable part of this.
4. **React more strongly and more immediately** to changes in the crop and to differing climate conditions by means of your climate control, harvesting frequency, water dosage and EC.
5. **Safeguard your employees' knowledge and quality**. This will, to a large extent, determine the continuity of your growing results.
6. **Ensure that there is a certain degree of mechanization**. This helps make the work easier or less monotonous. One example of this might be a weighing and sorting system.

Make a realistic plan

Planned growing is becoming increasingly important for all kinds of external and internal processes. In this connection, you have to ask yourself whether planned growing and ‘full throttle’ growing might be in conflict with each other. With proper planning, you will sometimes sacrifice some production in order to make up for it at a later time. With ‘full throttle’ growing, you are continuously demanding the most from your crop and there is no room for compensating for setbacks. In fact, the plan will be unrealistic as soon as it is made. But then what exactly is realistic planning?



TIPS:

7. **In any case, ask yourself the following questions:**
 - a. What were the results in previous years?
 - b. Can you explain the differences? Think, for instance, of factors such as climate, water dosage, EC and quantity of light.
 - c. Is last year’s production the result of specific measures or merely of an exceptionally sunny period?
 - d. Is it therefore reasonable to expect a similar production peak again?
8. **Draw up a production forecast** based on the multi-annual historical figures. Take account of the peaks and troughs. Depending on the causes, you can decide to what extent you wish to include these deviations in the forecast.
9. **Correct these figures based on any modified growing conditions** that apply to this new crop. These might include, for example, earlier or later planting, new technical systems or new varieties that grow slower or faster.

Eventually, you will come up with a production forecast based on ‘full throttle’ growing or based on 95%, with some room for absorbing setbacks.

Keep a grip on the process

During the cultivation of the crop, it is important that your plan should continuously reflect the changing conditions and the interim results. This will provide an improved foundation for implementing the crop controls and will help you better monitor their effects. In addition, your plan also represents something to hold onto; it provides resistance against ‘day-to-day issues.’ Short-term choices can often have long-term effects. A plan helps you to keep a clear focus on your goals when making choices.

In many cases, the cultivation of the crop will proceed somewhat differently in practice than in the plan you have drawn up. You will, therefore, need to make adjustments.

TIPS before making adjustments:

10. **The first step is to carry out an analysis of the crop and climate control.** The ‘three-day view’ in your climate computer is a useful tool. Advantages of the ‘**three day view**’:
 - An overview of three days makes it easier to see trends. This prevents you from making adjustments to your strategy based on just a single incident.
 - Many crops have a development rate for leaves or flowers of approximately three days. If anything is visible on the new vine, flower or leaf, it has probably emerged in the last three days.
11. **Conduct an analysis of the market.** Developments in supply and demand will obviously have an effect on the manner and extent of your adjustments.
12. **Take all the influencing factors into account.** The results of the crop counts, your labour schedule, the production and the quality of registration will also influence your decision-making.

Make timely adjustments and evaluate

If it ultimately turns out that you need to change your strategy, the best policy is to implement this clearly, consistently and decisively.

TIPS:

13. **Do not be too cautious.** If the changes are too small, the only effect will be on how you feel. In practice, these settings will have hardly any effect on the process.
14. **Evaluate at a later time.** A new strategy needs time for the effect to become visible. The best idea is to make a note of the adjustments you have made and then evaluate them at a later time.
15. **Save all your information.** This information will be very valuable for planning your next crop season. Complete and clear registration is important.



Put the plant at the center

Today’s financial institutions assess companies primarily according to their market orientation and their sustainability. This includes, for instance, factors such as aligning peak harvests with peak market demand for your products or achieving growth while using less energy, water or labour. Controlling the plant and production is becoming increasingly important.

Growing strategies vary from crop to crop. Tomato growers consciously base their controls on a specific fruit weight and on rapid ripening. Rose growers provide more lighting for greater rose production and more beautiful flower buds. The correct growing strategy ultimately results in an optimum plant with a correct distribution of assimilates, plant load and rapid ripening.

TIPS:

16. **Optimize the process of photosynthesis.** Photosynthesis is the engine of the plant and results in the growth of stems, leaves, flowers and fruit. If photosynthesis is not occurring properly, or if there is an incorrect ratio between the production and consumption of assimilates, the plant will not perform optimally. Photosynthesis can be adjusted using lighting, via SON-T lamps or LEDs.
17. **Optimize the ingress of light.** The plant's cell division is influenced by the 24h temperature. More light generally results in a higher 24h temperature and therefore increased cell division.
18. **Optimize the moisture balance.** Studies have shown that plants with higher radiation can also tolerate higher temperatures, provided that moisture balance is in order. As a result, the 24h temperatures fluctuate, but the temperatures can also fluctuate several times during the 24-hour period.
19. **A good measurement is better than an incorrect assumption.** What is the ideal climate for growth and when does the plant grow optimally? Many growers think they have a good idea of what processes are taking place in the plant. These ideas, however, are often just assumptions. Accurate measurements are still not being made often enough on the crop.
20. **Analyze your options with Next Generation Greenhouse Cultivation.** Next Generation Greenhouse Cultivation is a concept for climate control which focuses on the dehumidification of greenhouse air. Cool outside air is drawn in using air treatment units and air hoses. This reduces the greenhouse temperature and the air humidity.
21. **Take your employees' well-being into account.** At certain times of the year, high temperatures produce the ideal climate for the plant, but create a less attractive climate for the people who have to work in the greenhouse. Get the right balance. In practice, tropical work schedules are already used in order not to place an unnecessary burden on employees.

Registration is not something you can do on your own

Reliable information on costs and yields is a must for good decision-making. Automation is now an indispensable part of this. With management information and labour registration solutions, you can collect all the information about production, systems and labour in one, well-organised system. You can retrieve reports at any time of the day and you can analyse the processes. This makes it even easier to keep a close eye on what is going on in your company.

TIPS:

22. **Make clear overviews at crop, location and company level.** Using flexible reports allows you to provide a good foundation for your decisions at both operational and strategic level. Real-time information at any time of the day is essential.
 23. **Know why you have harvested more or less.**
Compare the cumulative harvest in relation to the greenhouse climate and outside conditions in order to analyze your production.
 24. **Make timely adjustments to your labour schedules** and prevent annoying errors. An insight into the quantity and quality of your employees' work forms the basis for your decisions. Working faster is not always better; errors in harvesting can increase your proportion of B-grade products.
 25. **Quickly prevent input errors.** All data is checked and validated using intelligent algorithms. An anomalous value immediately results in a warning and a proposed solution.
- Bonus tip: Optimize your energy management.** Energy will, of course, continue to be a large cost item over the next few years.



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