

A fourth greenhouse at Thanet



Since it opened in 2009 with three greenhouses constructed and operational, Thanet Earth has managed to negotiate its way through difficult times in the industry and in the economy at large.

It has made great progress financially, moving from large losses in year one towards a modest profit in year three. The future's looking even brighter now as the development's partners are able to announce that construction and planting have been completed on the long-awaited fourth greenhouse. Its young tomato plants will be bearing fruit by Easter.

The growers at Thanet Earth produce consistently great quality tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers for the UK's best-known retail shelves. The site has proven its ability to grow tomatoes 52 weeks of the year and boasts the longest UK seasons on cucumbers and peppers. This is all credit to the original vision of the project partners, their state of the art greenhouses and the expertise in every function. It's all supported one of the most efficient packhouses in operation in the UK.

The demand for crops grown at Thanet Earth is huge. The site's partners know their product excels in quality against every competitor in benchmarking samples. Through the winter in particular, to be able to offer UK-grown tomatoes which far exceed the quality that the finest growers in 'seasonal' areas of Europe can offer (and which carry a lower carbon footprint than all other international sources) makes the Thanet Earth proposition unique. The UK's shoppers want locally grown food. They care about what's written on the label, and the Thanet Earth crops are fulfilling a very real demand.

The fourth greenhouse covers approximately 8 hectares, and will be dedicated to tomato production. The cost of construction (including its Combined Heat & Power infrastructure and its link to the site electrical substation) has been some £17 million. The greenhouse is owned jointly by the project partners (Fresca Group, Rainbow UK, A&A Growers and Kaaij UK), and will be managed on a day-to-day basis by Gert van Straalen of tomato specialist Kaaij UK.

This exciting development phase is important not only to the Thanet Earth site but to the local economy and community. Since its inception the site has provided an important source of work and has become a notable local landmark that represents significant inward investment in an area with an identified need for regeneration and new industry. Since 2009 the site has paid over £28 million in wages alone with over 71% remaining in the immediate Thanet area. The new greenhouse now provides employment and seasonal work opportunities for approximately 100 more people, bringing the total to 600 people at the height of the season.

As with the original three greenhouses, this new production facility will make use of rainwater capture and biological pest control to maintain the site's top tier environmental credentials. It will also increase the

electricity generating capacity of the site overall to 20MW from the 15MW it is able to generate today using its CHP technology.



Gert van Straalen, the grower who'll be looking after the crops in the new greenhouse, is proud to see years of planning come to fruition.

"We know from experience that this site is very special and has all the qualities we look for in greenhouse food production. It's a great landmark for us and for Thanet to have driven our plans forward to this point. We can't wait to begin harvesting!"

Gert van Straalen, managing director of Kaaij UK Ltd

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For further information about the Thanet Earth site and background about the project partners, please see www.thanetearth.com

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