

PRESS RELEASE



Increasing production for UK winter tomatoes

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For immediate release

The Thanet Earth 100 hectare site near Birchington in Kent has made further strides towards completion this year. Construction is complete on the sixth greenhouse, a dedicated facility approaching 7 hectares in size for growing speciality tomatoes all year round.

The new greenhouse is now fully operational, planted with four different varieties of speciality tomato, including the signature Thanet Earth Piccolo variety. Heated by Combined Heat & Power technology, the greenhouse is fitted throughout with High Pressure Sodium (HPS) growlights, the secret to ensuring year round production.

Thanet Earth now accounts for 15% of the planted area for tomatoes in the UK. In reality, the hyper-efficiency of the growing system and the 12-month harvest capability mean that the percentage of UK tomatoes grown at Thanet Earth is approaching 25%. At other UK grower sites we estimate that there are some 10ha of tomato production lit by LEDs or HPS growlights. Therefore during the winter months, the 31 hectares of lit production at Thanet Earth is representing 75% of the UK's total capacity of lit tomatoes.

It's not just tomatoes at Thanet Earth that now benefit from winter light. In what we believe to be a first for the UK, we have installed sodium growlights in a cucumber greenhouse too. This greenhouse was constructed in 2016 and has hosted a crop of tomatoes through the 2017 season. It will switch to cucumber production for 2018 with the young plants assisted through the winter months by supplementary lighting. This is the first UK high wire, light-assisted cucumber crop. The system will allow Thanet Earth to increase its cucumber yield further by hosting a higher density of planting and will bring forward the harvest window, with the first cucumbers harvested in January 2018.

Des Kingsley is Managing Director at Thanet Earth. Getting the fifth and sixth greenhouses constructed and operational has been a key part of his strategy for business growth. Speaking of the demand for home-grown product Des said "There's an enormous uncertainty around the future for imported trade at the moment, and it's widely acknowledged that the UK has to improve its self-sufficiency in food production. We're working as hard as we can to add more top quality home-grown volumes to the market but there's still a huge gap between the demand for British tomatoes all year round and the available supply volumes." He went on to praise the team behind the build. "Once again this greenhouse has been constructed on schedule and on budget. We've been able to use many local contractors and we've created ongoing work for a further 130 people in the care and management of the greenhouse and in the packing of its crops. My thanks goes out to everyone involved."

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For further information, please email enquiries to press@thanetearth.com





Thanet Earth is the UK's largest single producer of speciality tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers on a 95 hectare site near Birchington in Kent. When the planned seven greenhouses are all constructed there will be 55 hectares of production under glass.

The fresh produce grown at Thanet Earth is primarily for supply to the UK retail sector but the company has a fast-growing own brand offer for local, independent retail supply too.

The very latest in technology is employed across the Thanet Earth site, along with a commitment to the most environmentally-friendly methods of commercial production.

For more information, see www.thanetearth.com