

## La maitrise de la nutrition des plantes permet une meilleure production de fraises

As the season really starts to get a move on Solufeed's Managing Director and industry expert Dick Holden considers the importance of correct strawberry nutrition. High yielding crops, grown for supermarket distribution using protected "table-top" production systems for example, require accurate nutrition. The start of any programme is to analyse the input irrigation water.

The interpretation of this analysis will determine the requirement for pH correction, and the requirement for calcium to be added (providing the feeding system is equipped with the necessary tanks and dosing equipment).

Solufeed can assist with the analysis of the irrigation water and the interpretation of the results to build a feed programme. The programme is designed to fit target levels of nutrition.

Since the addition of calcium as calcium nitrate, and/or acid as nitric acid, will bring associated nitrogen fertilizer into the irrigation water, this has to be allowed for in the choice of N:P:K fertilizer that is used. Excess nitrogen is to be avoided as it promotes excess vegetative growth, and soft, acidic fruit. High rates of inclusion of calcium nitrate and nitric acid require a fertilizer like Strawberry Special - with very low levels of nitrogen in the blend. Conversely, low rates of addition of calcium nitrate and nitric acid will require the use of fertilizers like Strawberry Starter with a higher rate of nitrogen included.

Everbearers, or crops grown in Coir can require a modified feed regime, and of course it is always important to keep the feed regime within tolerance on the EC ("saltiness") level and accommodate any nutrient imbalances in the irrigation water.

Up to flowering, the crop is making vegetative growth. Once fruit begins to form, the nutrition programme needs higher levels of potassium (K) to ensure firm and sweet fruit. This is most effectively, economically and simply achieved by maintaining the original feed programme but boosting K levels by adding in Solupotasse. This extra soluble form of potassium sulphate has the lowest "saltiness" of any potassium fertilizer, and has the best ability to raise yields, create firm fruit and improve brix levels (a measure of sweetness).

Whilst many growers value the certainty of complete, accurately blended strawberry feeds, others choose to mix their own feed from "straight" soluble fertilizers. Those who mix straight feeds can sometimes struggle to stock and accurately measure the many essential trace elements, or micronutrients that are needed by the crop. Chelated micronutrients remain fully

available to the crop and are the most efficient means of providing these reactive elements. Solufeed offer a very wide range of chelated micronutrients available from stock, and in Solufeed TEC and Solufeed Coir TEC provide the simplicity of single product to add to the mix, made of a balanced blend of all the micronutrients with reactive metals chelated.