

Tulare's World Ag Expo, Day 2: Water conservation for sale

By Robert
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A computer shows data readings coming from remote measuring devices made by Silicon Valley company gThrive during a demonstration at the World Ag Expo in Tulare Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2015. The company says the wireless devices will allow farmers to irrigate their crops more efficiently.

CRAIG KOHLRUSS — THE FRESNO BEE | [Buy Photo](#)

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Hours: Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Admission: \$15; children 12 and under free; Thursday Farmer's Lunch \$35

Location: International Agri-Center, 4500 S. Laspina St., just east of Highway 99 in Tulare

Details: www.worldagexpo.com

Tulare — With the demise last year of PureSense, a pioneering irrigation technology company based in Fresno, several vendors at the [World Ag Expo](#) in Tulare had no trouble capturing the interest of their former customers.

PureSense shut down abruptly several months ago. The company sold systems that measured soil-moisture levels using wireless sensors, then analyzed and presented the data to customers on a Web-based interface.

Stepping up to help fill part of that void are [Irrigation Matters](#) in Tulare and [FarmSolutions](#), a technology company based in Westlake Village. They were among several vendors who rolled out new products to help farmers use water more efficiently and manage the flow of information they have available.

In this new data-driven age, sensors are used to determine how much water a plant or tree needs or if the right amount of nutrients are being applied. Weather data is also available to give growers real-time information.

One of the tools offered by [Irrigation Matters](#) is the ability to operate irrigation pumps through wireless technology. Growers can pull up data that shows them precisely where water is needed the most, or where the plants are getting too much. Using a smartphone or tablet, a farmer or irrigator can turn off or turn on the water to the field.

“This gives the grower the ability to find out where the problem is and fix it,” said Spencer Cooper, irrigation account manager for Irrigation Matters.

For farmers with multiple sensors on multiple ranches, the task of managing all that data can be overwhelming, said Janessa Iden, marketing manager for TAP, the parent company of Irrigation Matters. One of the recent waves of technology being introduced at the World Ag Expo is data integration, Eden said.

“There can be so much data and information, growers are wanting a way to view it all in a way that makes sense,” Eden said.

A few companies have created software that allows the user to view all of the information gathered from their data sources and display it in a dashboard format on a phone or computer screen.

Irrigation Matters has Noedus software available. The software is powered by [OnFarm](#), a Fresno-based tech company.

“With one look, a grower can see what is happening in their fields and in a user-friendly way,” Eden said.

The system is being used by rice, nut and table grape growers.

FarmSolutions offers a suite of services, including soil moisture sensing, aerial imagery, weather alerts, irrigation scheduling and task management.

Rebecca Chaves, a sales and account manager for FarmSolutions, said the company has seen an uptick in customers since PureSense folded.

“There is no question that there is interest in this technology and how to manage it,” Chaves said.

Part of what FarmSolutions does is make farming easier to digest information and better communicate with employees. For example, a foreman can take a photo of a broken sprinkler emitter and send it to a worker with the exact location, using GPS technology.

“We can drop a pin on the location and it will take them right to where they need to be,” Chaves said.

Farmers say they are interested in any tool, technological or otherwise, that can help them cut costs and save time.

“We have so much coming at us that these are the types of things we can really use,” said Gilbert Jones, a grain farmer from Arizona.

Still, despite the advances in technology one of the vendors drawing the most attention was the [Simple Pump](#) company from Nevada. The small company’s booth was swarmed Wednesday afternoon. The company sells a

hand-powered water pump. An electric or solar-powered pump is also available.

Marcus Wittig, a company representative, said the product was attracting homeowners, farmers, and survivalists.

“We are getting all sorts of people interested in the pumps from those whose home systems have gone out to people who are afraid the power grid may go down some day,” Wittig said. “Preppers are some of our biggest customers.”

Carr promotes healthy eating, exercise at ag show

Oakland Raiders quarterback and former Fresno State standout Derek Carr was at the [World Ag Expo](#) in Tulare on Wednesday to promote healthy eating and exercise.

Joining Carr were Kendall Reyes, a San Diego Chargers defensive end. The two players met fans and helped announce plans for the expansion of the [Fuel Up to Play 60](#) in-school physical activity and nutrition program, created by the National Dairy Council in collaboration with the National Football League. The program was launched in California by the California Milk Advisory Board.

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