



Left to right: Trandos Farms Managing Directors Arthur Trandos, Jim Trandos and Michael Trandos.

Solar power: helping veggie farmers grow their business

THE SUN'S ENERGY CAN BE USED FOR MORE THAN JUST VEGETABLE GROWTH – IT CAN ALSO BE USED TO POWER THE ENTIRE FARM. MANY VEGETABLE GROWERS ARE NOW DISCOVERING HOW THE BENEFITS OF SOLAR ENERGY CAN EXTEND TO REDUCING OVERHEADS AND PROMOTING A CLEAN, GREEN IMAGE TO CLIENTS.

While the sun is essential for growing vegetables, it can also be harnessed to reduce growers' operating costs.

The agricultural industry is a particularly good candidate for the use of solar energy. Most growers require constant electricity, operate directly under the sun and have more than enough space for solar power equipment. These factors are inspiring more growers to use renewable energy, which is allowing them to enjoy benefits such as lower overheads and increased profits.

Making the switch

Eight months ago, Trandos Farms contacted Solargain – the largest consolidated solar power and hot water company in Australia – after hearing that other growers had found success with solar energy. As the largest grower of sweet corn and beans in Western Australia, supplying both national and international customers, Trandos Farms wanted to find a way to counteract its significant energy costs, which were largely due to ongoing cold storage and irrigation pumping.

By installing a 100kW solar power system and using energy-saving strategies such as load shifting (transferring more energy usage to daylight hours) the owners of Trandos Farms said that switching to solar made a big difference to their bottom line.

Solar saves money

The Loose Leaf Lettuce Company, a family-run business north of Perth, also installed a 100kW solar power system with Solargain to combat the costs of running machinery. The company uses large amounts of electricity to harvest, pick and mix lettuce varieties into salad packs.

A total of 400 solar panels were required as part of the installation. The panels were split and installed in different locations around the farm using multiple roof spaces and inverters.

Maureen Dobra, co-owner of the Loose Leaf Lettuce Company, saw an immediate impact.

"Our energy bills have gone from \$14,000 per month down to \$7,000," she said.

With a focus on the future, Maureen believes that making the switch to solar energy is a profitable move for vegetable growers.

"The way I see it, I buy a car on hire purchase for five years and in five years' time it is worth half the value. With the solar panels, we expect that in three to five years' time I will have paid for it and after that it is making me money," she said.

The green appeal

While the money-saving benefits are certainly attractive, many businesses are also installing

solar power to reduce their environmental impact. The system installed at the Loose Leaf Lettuce Company will prevent approximately 147.75 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions every year. This is the equivalent of removing 31 cars from the road annually.

Growers may find that an added benefit of solar energy is that the clean, green image is attractive to potential clients.



For more information, please contact Solargain on 1300 73 93 55 or visit solargain.com.au.



Loose Leaf Lettuce Company Co-owner Maureen Dobra.