

From pioneer to strawberry expert: The story of Wim de Weert

"We thought: this beautiful climate offers opportunities." That belief marked the beginning of a new chapter in Portugal for Wim de Weert. His journey into strawberry cultivation began decades ago. Along with his father and a colleague, Wim experimented with different substrates and growing techniques, always with one goal in mind: improvement. "We were constantly trying new things, always searching for the most effective way to grow," Wim recalls. This drive for innovation eventually led them to the Algarve. "We noticed that our cultivation advice wasn't always being implemented here, so we decided to take matters into our own hands."

SalicylPure gives plants the VIP treatment

Cuprum is applied according to the specific needs of plants

Portuguese challenges

The move to Portugal came with its fair share of obstacles. The climate presents unique challenges, particularly when it comes to light and temperature. "In winter, the light intensity here is nearly as strong as a Dutch summer. That takes some getting used to as a grower," Wim explains. Nevertheless, he remains undeterred. Despite occasional quality setbacks due to bad weather (rain and storms) and fierce competition from lower-cost strawberries from Spain and South Africa, Wim is unwavering in his mission: delivering premium quality. "My Favori and Florice strawberries are mainly destined for the French market. The French are discerning – they only want the best. But if you can deliver, you get a good price in return."

Operating between two worlds

Wim de Weert spends eight months of the year working among his strawberry plants in Portugal. The favourable climate allows him to grow in unheated greenhouses – without additional heating but relying solely on natural light and warmth. "It's not only more efficient, it also aligns perfectly with our sustainable philosophy," he explains. From mid-May to mid-September, Wim returns to the Netherlands. During that period, a permanent and experienced team keeps the Portuguese operation running smoothly. "They know exactly what needs to be done. We've worked together for years and that builds trust," says Wim. By mid-September, he's back in the Algarve, ready to make the most out of the next growing cycle. This flexible, seasonable approach allows him to optimise operations year-round – leveraging Portugal's climate while staying connected to the Dutch market and his broader network. "It is intensive, but it works. And when something works, you just want to keep building on it."



Innovation as the driving force

Wim's greenhouses are equipped with cutting-edge technologies, including sensors that precisely monitor how much water the plants need and when. "The roots must stay active and continue seeking water to ensure strong growth and flower development," he explains. Sustainability is another key priority. His company uses solar panels and an efficient rainwater collection system. "This year I was able to gather 99% of our water from rainfall. Sustainable practices are essential," he emphasises.

A future full of promise

Wim is optimistic about what lies ahead. With a solid network in France and ambitious plans to expand into markets like Norway, he continues to think ambitiously, with a focus on growth and innovation. "We're planning to scale up; I'm aiming for two strong harvests before Christmas," he says with a smile. What began with curiosity and experimentation has evolved into a thriving, forward-thinking business. And the Portuguese climate? It's proving to be full of potential – for those brave enough to pursue it.



>> Rei dos Morangos

Located just north of Faro, Rei dos Morangos cultivates everbearing strawberries in 2 hectares of unheated greenhouses. The goal is a yield of 6 kilograms of strawberries per linear metre of plants. Irrigation is supported by a 1,000-m² reservoir, allowing irrigation to continue uninterrupted for up to four weeks during dry winter periods. In addition to harvesting rainwater, the nursery uses reverse osmosis technology to optimise water quality. To encourage strong flower development, SalicylPure – a CE-marked biostimulant from PlantoSys, made exclusively from willow bark extract, is applied weekly.

"I try to help pick a row of strawberries every day. That way, I know exactly what's going on."

Wim de Weert | Rei dos Morangos

The strawberry plants are grown on coconut coir substrate, a light and airy growing medium that ensures a stable root environment. Moisture levels are continuously monitored via sensors, allowing irrigation to be precisely tailored to each plant's needs. This, combined with the use of Cuprum and SalicylPure, results in robust root development and consistently high fruit quality.

