

# SHADE NET STRUCTURES

## – SHELTERING THE FUTURE OF A HUNGRY WORLD

Clive Rudman | *Farm Tech Magazine* - March 2017

Poor and seasonal production of crops has been a problem in South Africa, leading to a dependency of imported fruits and vegetables. Among others, damage caused by sunburn, hail, insects, and our latest record in drought also add to the problem.

“If agriculture is to continue to feed the world, it needs to become more like manufacturing,” says Geoffrey Carr. Fortunately, that is already beginning to happen.

To fight back and increase crop production, yield and income - shade net was found to be a suitable champion for the job. More and more farmers are erecting large shade net structures and reaping the benefits from it, by being able to create an ideal and manageable environment for their crops to flourish in.

In hot climates around the world, vegetables and cut flowers are grown under shade cloth to reduce heat and light intensity. With the help of science, innovative light manipulation and UV management, results show that photo-selective colour nets create an environment that can be managed and turned into an optimal growing condition that allows the farmer to produce crops, sometimes even during off-season, with better growth, development and higher yield.

In the short run, shade net structures will boost farmers' profits, by cutting costs and increasing quality of yields, and should also benefit the consumer's pocket. In the longer run though, it may add to the solution to an increasingly urgent concern - Between now and 2050 the planet's population is likely to rise to 9.7 billion, from 7.3 billion now. Those people will not only need to eat, they will want to eat better than people do now.

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