

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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A Pair of Environmental Control Acquisitions

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Lots of activity lately in the otherwise-quiet greenhouse environmental control category.

Micro Grow buys QCOM

First, back in February, Micro Grow Greenhouse Systems purchased QCOM, another maker of greenhouse controls. Micro Grow, based in Temecula, California, will be taking over the manufacturing and customer support for the entire QCOM product line. They've also retained all the key QCOM employees.

Micro Grow president and CEO Tom Piini told GrowerTalks the two product lines are similar; however, QCOM offers some integrated water conditioning capabilities that Micro Grow doesn't have, as well as a larger system that can operate numerous zones simultaneously, which will help round out their line. Also, Micro Grow primarily sells directly to greenhouse builders, while QCOM has a more direct line to growers. Tom says he'll maintain QCOM's relationships with current customers while offering the line to his distribution network.

For a bit of history, Tom said he got his start in greenhouses 38 years ago, with IBG International, running their Southern California electrical division. At that time, Wadsworth Controls was part of the IBG family, under the Roper Corporation, says Tom. But, "When Wadsworth and IBG went their separate ways, IBG spearheaded the development of a new company to provide their control needs. That company was QCOM. QCOM grew into a very large player in our industry with the development of some innovative controls for the industry."

Convion buys Argus

In similar news, but a bit further north (Canada), earlier this month Controlled Environments (Convion) announced the acquisition of Argus Control Systems. Convion, based in Winnipeg, is the world's largest designer and supplier of plant growth chambers and rooms for institutional, government and commercial research. They've got offices in the US, Europe and China.

Argus, of White Rock, British Columbia, designs advanced control systems for greenhouses and other horticultural applications. In fact, quite often the purchaser of a Convion growth chamber will spec Argus

controls. With the acquisition, Conviron will be able to truly integrate the two systems.

“With our new relationship, we will be able to supply integrated control systems that will enable clients to manage their entire facility—from tissue culture and plant growth chambers to greenhouses and building systems—all on a single platform,” says Bill Mukanik, Vice President of Client Services at Conviron.

It also gives Conviron an entry into the commercial hort sector, where they think the opportunity for growth is “significant.”

Argus will function as an independent business unit maintaining its distinct brand and continuing operations at its current location. Alec and Marlene Mackenzie, founders of Argus, will continue in advisory roles to ensure a smooth transition for Argus employees and clients.

“We’ve known Conviron for many years and we recognized long ago a similar passion and dedication to serving our clients,” says Alec. “Our business values are similar and our clients overlap. Both Argus and Conviron clients will benefit from the synergies of this deal.” **GT**