

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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A New Dutch Greenhouse Business

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Wilbert de Rijke, a second-generation grower, just built his own greenhouse in 's-Gravenzande, which is in the famous Westland region of the Netherlands. Kwekerij Wilbert de Rijke is the name of the business (kwekerij means nursery).

We learned about Wilbert's business from an ErfGoed press release. ErfGoed makes gravel-based flood floors and supplied one for the greenhouse business Wilbert just acquired. ErfGoed said Wilbert worked for his father's nursery for 15 years, then started his own business in a rented property three years ago in the town of Monster. Now he's got his own space, which gives him the power to invest.



"In a rented greenhouse, you can't make significant improvements easily," he told ErfGoed. "You lack the freedom to upgrade. When the opportunity arose to buy this greenhouse, it was a great chance to take the next step."

The new location has 7.5 acres of greenhouse space, plus an additional 60,000 sq. ft. for a future outdoor field. The transition from the old site to the new one is happening in phases. The previous grower is still using part of the greenhouse until the current harvest is complete, so Wilbert is operating with only half the space for now. This presents logistical challenges, but also allows him to optimize the layout step by step.

His first investment is an ebb-and-flood ErfGoed Floor and the ErfGoed WaterSystem, which has made a significant difference in the quality of Wilbert's plants. One of the key benefits is the even water distribution. Thanks to the floor's design, all plants receive the exact amount of water they need, preventing issues with pots being too wet or too dry.

"This directly contributes to uniform plant growth," he said. Additionally, the quick drainage of excess water prevents overwatering and keeps the plant roots in an optimal environment. "At my old location, water and nutrients were wasted, but here everything is captured and reused. This saves a lot on costs."

What's interesting, however, is his crop mix. What does a new business grow to compete in the world's most

competitive plant market? Wilbert has chosen blooming specialty potted plants, including 6.5-in. cyclamen and 4.5-in. hebe, lavender, ranunculus, schizanthus and *Viola cornuta*. **GT**