

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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AgriNomix, Zwart Systems Now Part of AdeptAg

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There's a new player in the greenhouse equipment, irrigation, technology and automation market: AdeptAg, a startup by Rick Parod, an executive with years of experience in agriculture and especially irrigation. Rick retired as CEO from Lindsay Corporation of Omaha, Nebraska, prior to launching AdeptAg. Lindsay provides water management and road infrastructure products and services. Before that, he was VP of Irrigation for Toro and President of James Hardie Irrigation.

Rick explained that he recognized the need to offer the North American controlled environment agriculture industry a consolidated platform of technologies, which is what led him to make his first acquisitions, AgriNomix and Zwart Systems.

AgriNomix, based in Oberlin, Ohio, is a top supplier of greenhouse automation, internal logistics and robotic solutions. Beamsville, Ontario-based Zwart supplies a full line of irrigation, water recycling and treatment systems to controlled environment growers.

AdeptAg will simply be the umbrella company under which AgriNomix and Zwart (and any other acquisitions) operate. Rick says his company's mission is to "design and provide controlled-environment growers a suite of complete solutions that enhance their productivity and yield." Both companies are good at this, he says, but they had only a small percentage of overlapping customers.

"This allows us to bring Zwart's irrigation products into AgriNomix's customers and to give AgriNomix a bigger reach into Canada, as well."

They plan to be "structure-agnostic"—meaning they don't care whether they're serving a traditional greenhouse operation or an indoor vertical farm. It's about "what's inside that will enhance yield and productivity." They'll service all markets—flowers, vegetables and hemp/cannabis.

Will there be other technology companies added to the platform? Yes, says Rick, but nothing specific to talk about yet. They'll be focused on integrating the two companies.

Rob Lando, co-founder of AgriNomix, said that he certainly wasn't looking for a partner or buyer, but an email three years ago prompted him to talk to Rick. He was impressed by Rick's vision for building a consolidated North American-based technology provider to the CEA world.

Rob's role? "In short, anything Rick asks me to do," he said. He's not retiring, and no AgriNomix or Zwart people are

leaving. He hopes to do more R&D (one of his favorite areas) and continue to build customer relationships.

What will customers notice? Nothing at first, Rick says. The two companies will continue to operate separately in their current locations, and customers and suppliers shouldn't expect any significant changes other than increased investments. AdeptAg will be exploring additional investment opportunities to support the growth and development of the new platform.

As for Rick's long-range goal, he wants to keep building and strengthening the business, and also building a management team to run the organization. At some point he may step back from the CEO role and bring in someone else. "But I have a lot of work to do before we get to that point." **GT**