

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF REALISING A GREENHOUSE PROJECT

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Worldwide protected cultivation can offer sustainable solutions that are suitable for 'local for local production'. Successfully realising a new greenhouse horticulture project involves several steps. Practical examples at Rijk Zwaan and Olij Rozen illustrate the main factors for success: A clear definition of the goals of the project and adapting the system to individual demands and local preconditions.

A growing global population and the effects of urbanisation demand efficient local production of sufficient food. Protected cultivation can play an important part in this process, and the Netherlands has all the required knowledge in-house. Greenport Holland International (GHI) serves as a business portal for the Dutch horticulture sector in the international market.

Adapt to local conditions

Many recent international greenhouse horticulture projects have been unsuccessful. "The cause can often be found in insufficient preparation and the application of Dutch technology in an environment that is very different to that in the Netherlands," Harm Maters of GHI explained. Martin Steentjes of Van der Hoeven, Horticultural Projects, and Frans van de Sande of Rijk Zwaan agree. They have learned in practice that adapting to local conditions is a key condition for the successful application of Dutch horticultural knowledge and technology.

Clear wishes

The basis for realising a successful greenhouse horticulture project anywhere in the world is a well-defined starting point: What does one want to produce and for whom? The answer will help determine the preconditions of the location regarding climate, infrastructure and the availability of factors such as energy, water and labour.

Once the preconditions have been determined, the plan should be further refined; from country to region and finally to the exact location. Using the networks of the Dutch embassy and working with reliable local partners are essential factors for acquiring the necessary licenses. After all, a good starting position determines the chance of success.

Realising turnkey solutions

When all choices have been defined, it is recommended to work with a turnkey builder and jointly design a development plan. It is also important to call in specialist cultivation knowledge from the start of the design process and when determining how to technically realise the greenhouse and work space. A specific project manager and technical expert on-site will ensure that everything goes according to plan.

A major pitfall in many previous projects was the assumption that the planned project would automatically run without any problems from the outset. It is therefore important to ensure that a local maintenance crew is present from the delivery to the end of the entire project. Following these best practices will increase the chance of Dutch horticulture projects succeeding.

Partners in this HortiSeminar: Greenport Holland International, Van der Hoeven Horticultural Projects, Rijk Zwaan