

AROUND TOWN

Irrigation company Netafim addresses water challenges

By Claire Halliburton
Staff Writer

Netafim, the world's largest irrigation company and leader in agriculture solutions, recently published a press release expressing its concerns with the region's current water challenges.

According to the press release, Netafim announced the launch of an online resource hub in south-central Arizona to connect farmers and growers to solutions that can help them thrive amid the region's current water challenges. "As water scarcity increasingly threatens agriculture operations, Netafim is committed to supporting farmers in overcoming these obstacles by connecting them to available funding and incentive programs that provide access to capital for on-farm efficiency and modernization," stated the release.

According to the press release, Netafim, founded in 1965, "pioneered the drip revolution, creating a paradigm shift toward precision irrigation." Currently, the company "specializes in end-to-end solutions from the water source to the root zone (and) delivers irrigation and greenhouse projects, as well as landscape and mining irrigation solutions supported by engineering, project management, and financing services," according to the release.

"Farmers are the foundation of a more sustainable, prosperous, and profitable world," said Netafim Global Director of Government Relations Aubrey Bettencourt.

"Their success is all our success. With increased regulatory, natural, and economic challenges, our initiative aims to provide practical solutions to ensure they can keep farming. Netafim aims to connect South-central Arizona farmers to the many available opportunities specific to their operations and walk them through the application process for state and federal funding and any grants for which they are eligible."

According to Bettencourt, South-central Arizona is currently being impacted by several water resources in the area. "The Colorado River basin, which supplies drinking and irrigation water for seven western states, including Arizona, is predicted to be depleted within the next decade unless drastic measures are taken," said Bettencourt. "Agriculture in the region depends on the Colorado River and groundwater aquifers used in Arizona. Prolonged droughts and increased regulatory pressure have impacted the availability of this vital resource."

With regards to possible solutions regarding water sustainability, Netafim stated in its release, "To address these challenges, Netafim's newly deployed online resource will connect farmers to the available opportunities specific to their operations while walking them through the application process for state and federal funding and any grants for which they are eligible."

According to Bettencourt, the new Netafim program will be a one-stop-shop for

farmers who want to access resources and tools to make "on-farm investment and improvements to irrigation efficiency, nutrient management, and more."

"Netafim was started by farmers, for farmers, so we have a deep understanding of the many challenges they face," said Netafim President (North America) Mike Hemman. "The launch of the resource portal and the coalition are designed to get water to people who need it and to take care of the resources that take care of us."

Bettencourt mentioned several ways in which farmers can decrease the amount of water that is used on a daily basis. "There are numerous programs available to support Arizona farmers' transition to more efficient water technology that helps them do more with less," she said. "For example, farmers looking to switch from pivot to drip irrigation and incorporating a renewable energy or energy efficiency component can access low-interest loans from the USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). The USDA NRCS also offers Conservation Innovation Grants, and the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Grants can provide up to 50% cost share. Our Resource Hub has more details and links to apply for these and other programs."

For more information, go to <https://www.netafimusa.com/contact-us/> or visit the Resource Hub at <https://www.netafimusa.com/resourceaz/>.

THE OPINION PAGE

Long time HS teacher addresses college prices

I earned a B.A. and M.A. at NAU (1968, 1972). Then as now a B.A. required about 120 semester credit hours. As a long time high school teacher, I believe in education.

But the above requirements made a lot more sense in the sixties, when the total cost of attending my state university at resident rates was about \$1,000 yearly—including everything. That is about \$9,000 today with inflation. Today, that same school costs over \$30,000 per year! And it is cheaper than most schools!

Graduates today carry an average student loan debt of \$40,000, with many owing much more. Student loans are both good and bad. They allow many students to attend college who might otherwise not be able to do so. However, the existence and prevalence of student loans allow and even encourage universities to charge often outrageous prices! A vicious circle. At \$1,000 per year, that wasn't so bad, but at \$30,000 per year that is a hardship. The bottom line is that students should

not have to attend college for four years or more—not at the high prices charged. Students should be required only to take a major, a minor, and perhaps a few practical courses, e.g. writing, foreign language—two years. For those who bemoan the loss of diversity training, etc. to produce a "well-rounded" person, I argue that this streamlined plan is better than graduating with a "well-rounded" student loan debt!

Fred Stehr

Retired veteran concerned about Air Force proposal

A Public Notice was placed in the newspaper about proposed changes to the overflight areas used by U.S. Air Forces in/near our communities. The full Air Force's 212-page proposal can be viewed at https://www.arizonaregionalairspaceis.com/media/5zuprqlw/public-draft-eis_main-document.pdf. As a retired CMSgt with over 30 years' service and having dealt with the issues involved in similar proposals, I fear there is lack of concern over the affects/effects of the proposed changes because the public doesn't clearly understand the long-term impacts/consequences of the implementation of changes in the local area for our communities. The Proposed Action addresses training deficiencies due to insufficient airspace at several bases in Arizona. They want to change flight levels to lower

altitudes to include supersonic speeds, authorize chaff use and lowering minimum altitude for flares as well as increasing the number of overflights by adding more various aircraft from more bases, and they want to increase the number hours for flight times to midnight! Why is this so important to attend the meetings and discuss? Because you will be subjected to more noise (including sonic booms) that can lead to property damage, increase the number sortie (fly overs) at lower altitudes, potential for fires from flares, higher potential for air mishaps, impact to rodeo competitions/training from spooked horses, loss of property value due to noise, and changes to the natural peaceful environment of our pristine landscape/nature. I feel the issues need to be brought out and confronted between the

community, State, County, and U.S. Air Force so everyone can clearly understand the impacts! I also believe there are alternatives to the proposal that have not been considered that need to be addressed without making the full changes. Please, I implore you to attend at least one of the meetings!

For Wickenburg, the proposed meeting date is Aug. 29, from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Wickenburg Community Center, 160 N. Valentine St.

For Bagdad, the proposed meeting date is Aug. 28, from 5:00-8:00 p.m. at Bagdad High School, 500 Sultan Way.

All public meeting times/ places for interaction can be found at: <https://www.arizonaregionalairspaceis.com/attend-a-meeting/>

CMSgt (RET)
Ken Chandler



180 N. Washington St., Wickenburg, AZ 85390 • (928) 684-5454
WickenburgSun.com

Elizabeth Wagner	General Manager	advertisingworks@wickenburgsun.com
Kirk McKnight	Editor	editor@wickenburgsun.com
Claire Halliburton	Staff Writer	challiburton@wickenburgsun.com
Billie Jo Spillane	Advertising Specialist	billie@wickenburgsun.com
Aerial Bright	Real Estate	
	Online Customer Service	aerial@wickenburgsun.com
Amanda Trochmann	Business Office Associate	classifieds@wickenburgsun.com
David Coyle	Graphic Artist	graphics@wickenburgsun.com

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