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NATIONAL PUMPKIN GROWER CREATES ‘GOURD’ WAY TO GROW PLANT BUSINESS

A family-owned fruit and vegetable business that produces almost two million pumpkins a year to feed the UK’s love affair with Hallowe’en has come up with a less chilling way of growing the rest of its business - by using ‘greener’ greenhouse technology.

KJ Curson Growers from Wisbech in Cambridge which produces more than 1.7 million gourds for sale from Land’s End to John O’Groats has invested in three straw-fuelled biomass heaters to hot house the expanding fruit and plant business more cost-effectively.

The system heats three tanks, each holding 125,000 litres of water, and fed by home-grown straw that heats the greenhouse all year round.

It replaces a thirsty oil-burning system that required more than one million litres of fuel to produce the same amount of heat. The greener alternative also saves the business more than a quarter of a million pounds in fuel costs which is then fed back into the business.

The 30-year-old business, which started life as a farm, has doubled in size in the last few years. Employing up to 100 staff during peak growing season, it has been supported in its green aspirations by government funding.

Stuart Gibson of KJ Curson, said: “We have a major focus on pumpkins at this time of year, but the purpose of the biomass investment is to grow our indoor crops in a more sustainable and cost-effective way – with the incentive funding, the switch was a no-brainer!”

The company’s green credentials do not end with the biomass heaters; it also rents sustainable wooden pallets from Pooling Partners as part of its ECO-nomical circular economy model of taking fruit and vegetables to market in a way that helps reduce the carbon footprint of the business.

“Pooling Partners has been a strong partner for us and can deliver sustainable pallets to us at our different hours of need and this includes additional resources as we approach the Hallowe’en peak where we will do more than a third of our annual pumpkin business in just a few weeks,” said Stuart.

Phil Storer, director at Pooling Partners, said: “Many of our customers have adopted more green processes not only to do their bit for the planet, but on a commercial level to reduce their overall running costs.

“Cursons is a great example of innovation and green investment fuelling expansion. We work well together in managing the customer expectation as part of a circular economy model that uses, re-uses and repatriates sustainable wooden pallets,” he added.