

# POTATO *Grower*



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APPLYING POWERFUL PRODUCTS

# Gro-Point Takes Guess Work out of Precision Irrigation

System stands up to specific circumstances

If there is one thing that is impossible to argue in the world of agriculture and turf, it is the need for water during the growing season. But there is some disagreement about how much water is optimal, when to apply it and how to monitor water application efforts.

While there are many different ways to model water use and innovative ways to look at conservation, there is a method that allows efficient watering for high yield and quality. That's high-quality, soil-moisture based-precision irrigation as offered through systems like Gro-Point by ESI.

Having cut its teeth for the past two decades serving soil scientists, researchers and academics, ESI has along the way refined soil moisture sensors. ESI has more recently designed an entire system that enables precision irrigation with frost protection alarms that is easy to install and better yet, easy to use. The technology is similar to radar and offers reliability and accuracy not available in traditional soil sensors.

The system sensors themselves are small—about the size of a butter knife—so that soil disruption is minimized on

installation. In addition, the sensors can stand up to variable field conditions.

Gro-Point can be used with a simple handheld reader, datalogger or connected to a wireless delivery system that provides information directly to the user's desktop.

The information enables the user to make decisions like when to irrigate and how much water to apply. There is even an option to add an override to time-set irrigation based on prevailing soil moisture levels, ensuring water is only applied when needed.

The entire system is configurable, allowing users to set thresholds for watering and override based on their specific soil conditions and crop's requirements.

The sensors come in two different models: Lite and Pro. While they look similar, they offer varying levels of functionality.

The Gro-Point Lite provides a single reading for the percentage of moisture in the soil. This can be used to set lower and upper limits for soil moisture and provide irrigation information to optimize crop health and for efficient water use.

The Pro model combines a soil moisture reading with three additional readings from one sensor, including bulk conductivity (salinity), temperature and wetting front. It is the only sensor of its kind to offer four powerful readings from one sensor.

This sensor not only indicates when to start irrigation (low soil moisture levels), but also precisely when to stop (when the wetting front reaches the wetting front sensor). Additionally, the Gro-Point Pro compensates automatically for salinity and temperature, allowing for increased accuracy in challenging conditions. The system also has a built-in temperature-based alarm mode that will alert users when their frost protection system is needed or if heat stress is likely to occur.

The entire system operates with little to no maintenance and requires no technical capability for installation outside of basic desktop computer skills.

*Editor's note: David Porter is vice president of sales and marketing, ESI - Environmental Sensors Inc. Visit [www.esica.com](http://www.esica.com), call 800-799-6324 or send a fax to 250-479-1412.*

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