

Valley Insights®

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LOCATION:

Hirai Farms
Near Wendell in South Central Idaho

PROFILE:

Approximately 6,000 acres
Grows mostly silage corn and corn crops for dairies, along with small grains, alfalfa, and potatoes

EQUIPMENT:

- Approximately 100 pivots, mostly half and quarter pivots
- Valley 365° for telemetry
- Valley Insights®

VISUAL DETECTION:

- Unusual patterns in fields
- Over-watering and under-watering

ACTION TAKEN:

- Changed sprinkler packages
- Replaced aging pressure regulators
- Prevented water issues and crop stress

ADVANTAGES OF VALLEY INSIGHTS:

- Timely detection and notification of irrigation issues
- Discovered issues before visible to the naked eye
- Artificial intelligence learns field patterns to better find anomalies
- 24/7 observation in the fields
- Allows for quick action and less downtime
- Time and money savings
- Higher quality crops

Valley Insights® Helps Hirai Farms Save Time and Improve Crop Quality

Third-generation farmer Greg Hirai doesn't believe in technology for its own sake. But he knows and embraces good tech when it comes his way.

Hirai farms approximately 6,000 acres under pivots in South Central Idaho. He grows corn and alfalfa for dairy silage as well as potatoes and small grains. He has used infrared imagery on his potatoes for a long time, as those are the most time comprehensive crop, but he says that technology didn't work well for his other crops, like corn.

The Sprinkler Shop, his Valley dealer, introduced him to Valley Insights about a year ago, and he decided to give it a try. His skepticism turned into excitement in short order.

"Our operation is not generally early adopters of technology," Hirai explains. "I think it's easy to be a little bit hesitant to look at technologies like this. A lot of farmers feel like our boots on the ground are definitely the best way to find issues. However, this gives you a different perspective, an ability to see things in ways you didn't before. Its predictive capabilities are really appealing; to see things before they develop – not just as they develop – can be a huge benefit."

Valley Insights uses imagery to determine crop health concerns related to irrigation and other factors. It feeds the imagery into algorithms employing artificial intelligence technology to detect anomalies, and notifies the grower so they can take proper action, saving time, resources, and increasing profitability.

Hirai explains Valley Insights as "The ability to see how things are developing in the field through artificial intelligence. Valley Insights is superior as it's able to recognize patterns that, if we were to look at the imagery on our own, it wouldn't make sense to us."



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Greg Hirai



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Greg Hirai

There are a couple of features that he especially appreciates: “It allows us to look at a wide variety of crops rather than just certain ones that are helped by infrared imagery. We like the use of thermal imagery to see deficiencies in other crops than potatoes, like corn. The other is the insights themselves, which are the alerts you get, that tell you when you’ve got issues in the fields.”

Better Use of Time, Improved Crops

Because Valley Insights alerts the grower on their mobile devices, Hirai doesn’t have to sit at a computer for hours at a time, attempting to analyze images and data. He can use his time more productively, relying on the ability of Valley Insights to recognize patterns through AI that he couldn’t see with the naked eye.

“If you can shorten the amount of time you spend in places that don’t need attention and focus on places that you do, it’s a great time-saver, and therefore it saves you a lot of money as well,” he explains.

Hirai says Valley Insights has helped his operation prevent crop stress by making changes to sprinkler packages and pressure regulators that were causing over- or under-watering.

“When we get these insights and see these patterns in the field, we can get out there ahead of the actual plants showing distress,” he says. “We can replace those items or change the (sprinkler) package in a way that saves a lot of acres in the fields where we otherwise would have had moisture issues. Valley Insights has proven itself to us that it’s a great partner in growing a healthy crop.”

Technology Creates Excitement

Hirai looks forward to the future of farming and plans to continue to use technology that makes sense and helps his operation through time savings and improved crop quality.

“It’s an exciting time to be in agriculture,” Hirai says, “and a lot of technology is finally available at our level. When I get to see products like Valley Insights, it makes me understand that we’re only limited by our imagination as to where it all might end. It’s hard to imagine how we’ll work 10 years from now. These things are transformational, and they make it easier to do our job as a farmer.”

