

Controlling Mother Nature

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Monsanto rain-out shelter will have world-class automation.

Rising above a sea of corn stalks south of Gothenburg is a one-of-a-kind structure.

Chan Mazour, manager of the Gothenburg Water Utilization Learning Center, likened the rain-out shelter under construction to a greenhouse without the glass.

Once completed next spring, sensors in the 80 x 160-foot shelter can detect rain and move the structure over plots to create a controlled environment.

“It’s designed so we can monitor the exact amount of moisture the plants receive so we can design drought-tolerant products and systems to help farmers manage drought,” Mazour said.

Constructed on rails that move the shelter on and off corn, Mazour said the high level of automation is a first for Monsanto.

“It’s also a higher level of automation than anything else out there today,” he explained.

The shelter was designed within Monsanto, based on similar structures in use around the world.

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When the California State Water Resources Control Board announced its plan to build a \$1.5-billion water treatment plant in the Central Valley, it was a sign that the state was taking a big step toward controlling Mother Nature.