Use of fabric mulch in veg production

Recall the problem
Drought periods present hard challenges to successful production of most vegetable cultivars. As water scarcity increases, plants will suffer from water stress and other associated factors as a result of insufficient irrigation / rainfall.

Background
Synthetic mulch is an interwoven type of fabric material which will conserve soil moisture for long periods after rain so that less irrigation is required. The field is kept totally weed free. The mulch will last for about 6 years.

Management
- Vegetable beds are created with the usual cultivation practices
- The mulch is rolled out and pegged down with metal U-shaped pegs. Laying out this mulch requires a few labourers who peg it to the ground so that it stays in place
- Plant holes are cut into the mulch with heavy duty scissors or methane torch burner or branding iron, which will burn holes
- The mulch must be on top of the drip-lines
- Plants are cultivated in the usual way

Note: use of synthetic mulch is unsuitable for root crops

Synthetic fabric mulch with cross melted into it with a branding iron. The hot iron is pressed against the fabric melting it and sealing the edges. (Photo by Phil Taylor)

U-shaped pegs should be inserted at 12 inch intervals with a fabric overlap of 3 inches. Photo shows inserted peg and one yet to be used. (Photo by Phil Taylor)