

# Renewed Surface Water Management Program: On-Farm Package

The on-farm package sub-program is part of the renewed Surface Water Management Program (SWMP) in the Shepparton Irrigation Region (SIR).

The 2015 SIR Drainage Strategy Review highlighted the need to develop drainage management options for catchments and sub-catchments which do not have access to primary and community surface water management schemes (SWMS).

Irrigated properties which do not have drainage are at a high risk of flooding, salinity and waterlogging. This results in associated land productivity costs and the cost of on-farm works to mitigate drainage risk.



*Irrigated paddocks with inadequate drainage after a rainfall event*

The updated SIR Drainage Strategy (the strategy) defines priority catchments for provision of drainage through Hybrid SWMS. However, there are significant areas of the SIR which are outside of these priority catchments and vulnerable to drainage risk.

The Strategy identifies the need for the SWMP to enable on-farm mitigation actions to be adopted in a coordinated way. This will ensure that improved drainage outcomes on-farm are maximised and minimise risks to third parties, public assets and the environment.

There are a number of different tools used by irrigators to mitigate on-farm drainage issues, including improvements to farm layout; maximising farm storage of water through drainage reuse; earthworks; and sacrificial areas in flood-prone paddocks.

A major issue with these on-farm actions is that they are often un-coordinated, causing social conflict, compromising the environment and creating public costs through damage to roads and infrastructure.

The on-farm package sub-program aims to provide irrigators with information, independent advice and the appropriate regulatory environment for effective management of drainage from high rainfall events on-farm.

The sub-program is being developed by Goulburn Broken CMA, Agriculture Victoria and Goulburn-Murray Water to deliver improved drainage outcomes, particularly through an updated Whole Farm Planning approach.

Agency partners will also be investigating any required changes to regulations and rules for re-use dams in irrigation areas and clear frameworks for circumstances where irrigators without drainage can pump water off-farm.

Landholders will be able to access advice and incentives through this sub-program in late 2017.

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