



November 2013

On-farm irrigation upgrades a win for irrigators, the community and environment

Water and labour savings, improved property values, jobs, and renewed confidence in the future of agriculture in Northern Victoria are some of the benefits of on-farm works completed through Round 1 of the Commonwealth Government's On Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program (OFIEP).

The 76 Round 1 OFIEP projects delivered by the Farm Water Program, a consortium of Northern Victorian agencies led by the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (CMA), are now finished.

The Farm Water Program secured funding under the OFIEP in 2010 to assist irrigators to achieve water savings by improving on-farm irrigation systems. At least half the water saved has been transferred to the Commonwealth Government for environmental purposes.

Goulburn Broken CMA CEO Chris Norman said the Commonwealth Government investment benefited the entire region.

"The consistent message from irrigators, once they complete the works, is that water efficiency and labour savings, in particular, surpassed their expectations," Mr Norman said.

Round 1 OFIEP outcomes	
Total no. of projects	76
Total value funded (\$ million)	20.6
Total water savings (gigalitres)	9.33
Total water savings transferred (gigalitres)	4.87
Project by industry type:	
– dairy	44
– grains	12
– beef	8
– sheep & beef	8
– fodder	2
– horse stud	2
Project by Goulburn-Murray Water Water Service Area:	
– Central Goulburn	23
– Murray Valley	18
– Rochester/Campaspe	5
– Shepparton	14
– Torrumbarry	15
– Other	1
Lasering (hectares)	2083
Reuse (hectares)	999
Pipe and riser systems (hectares)	2636
Fast flow systems (hectares)	1891
Farm channel upgrade (kilometres)	6.1

Continued

FarmWater



“Processes that took several days, such as getting water on to paddocks, now take hours, and producers are finding they can be more strategic about what crops they plant, when they irrigate and how much water they use, leading to a higher value of production per megalitre used.”

Mr Norman said local communities had also benefited from the Commonwealth Government’s investment.

“Hundreds of jobs have been created: local fencing and earthmoving contractors put on extra staff as have other irrigation-related businesses such as designers and manufacturers,” Mr Norman said.

“Landholders have told us that the on-farm works, along with the upgrade to the irrigation delivery network, have improved the value of their property and stimulated renewed confidence in the agriculture sector after years of drought and then floods.

“This has boosted industry confidence and attracted investment, which all help build the region’s resilience in the face of changes in climate, water policy reform and global market factors.”

As well as making more water available for the environment and contributing to Victoria’s share of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan’s water recovery targets, the on-farm irrigation improvements help control water issues that affect farm productivity.

“More efficient water delivery systems reduce groundwater accessions and nutrient run-off, helping address the re-emerging salinity and watertable issues we’re facing as a result of recent flooding across this region,” Mr Norman said.

“The Commonwealth Government’s investment in the irrigation industry through the OFIEP is a win for all – irrigators, the community and the environment.”

For more information about the Farm Water Program visit: www.gbcma.vic.gov.au

For more information about the On Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program visit:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/rural-water/sustainable-rural-water-use-and-infrastructure/farm-irrigation-efficiency>