

Introduction

Water is a vital commodity for Queensland communities and natural ecosystems. The state's water resources are under enormous pressure, so making the best use of available supplies is essential. Through the Rural Water Use Efficiency Initiative (RWUEI) irrigators are addressing water and energy efficiency measures to meet this challenge and those of climate change.

RWUEI is a partnership between rural industries and the Queensland Government to improve the on-farm use and management of irrigation water. It seeks to improve the competitiveness, profitability and environmental sustainability of these industries.

RWUEI commenced in 1999 working with irrigators from the sugar, cotton, dairy and fruit and vegetable industries. Achievements of the initial work included:

- a high level of farmer involvement and participation in rural water use efficiency activities
- recognition of the benefits of water use efficiency at the farm level
- adoption of best practices for on-farm irrigation management
- real water use efficiency improvements, water savings and improved productivity
- creation and retention of related rural jobs.

Phases 2 and 3 of the initiative built on these achievements and started to address the issues of farm management systems and off-farm impacts of irrigated farming activities, such as nutrient control. The initiative has now moved into its fourth stage, Rural Water Use Efficiency 4 (RWUE4).

RWUE4 applies across the state except for the south east region which has a separate initiative called South East Queensland Irrigation Futures.

Industry participation

RWUE4 involves seven industry groups, including:

- Queensland Cane Growers' Organisation
- Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation
- Cotton Catchment Communities CRC
- Growcom
- Queensland Turf Producers' Association
- Flower Association of Queensland
- Nursery and Garden Industry Queensland.

Only the production sectors of the turf, flower and nursery industries are involved in RWUE4.

What is the main aim?

RWUE4 is focused on both water use efficiency gains and energy savings. This will improve the productivity of irrigation enterprises and help irrigators meet the challenges of water reforms and climate change.

The Queensland Government through the Queensland Climate Change Fund, is investing \$4.5million over four years from July 2009 to support the initiative.

Program delivery

The industry groups will deliver the initiative through their respective industry-based programs. Specifically:

- The sugar industry is targeting water and energy savings in the lower Burdekin region through an automated furrow irrigation system, and elsewhere through financial incentives for change to low-pressure irrigation systems.
- The horticulture industry is focusing primarily on irrigation system energy and water consumption. Irrigation system assessments and cost benefit analysis of alternative energy sources are being conducted to provide horticulture growers with decision making information.
- The dairy industry is targeting irrigation system change through an existing performance-based financial incentive scheme.
- The cotton and grains industries are assessing the water use and energy performance of irrigation systems in central Queensland and developing information products on how to improve these systems.
- The nursery industry is assisting and guiding growers in changing irrigation system design, adopting new technology—such as irrigation scheduling, sprinklers and pumps—and implementing on-farm water recycling.
- The turf and flower industries are targeting growers through workshops and on-farm irrigation and pump system assessments.



Find out more

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Updates on the Rural Water Use Efficiency Initiative are available at www.derm.qld.gov.au/rwue



Improving irrigation management
for a profitable and sustainable future

