



Review helps veggie grower get the best deal on electricity tariff

Electricity use on farm

A vegetable grower in Nobby, a fertile cropping district south of Toowoomba, in Queensland had an energy audit conducted to look at the farm energy usage and the current electricity tariffs.

The farm produces vegetables according to a seasonal crop rotation regime and irrigate daily depending on the variety of vegetable crop being grown.

The farm currently grows silverbeet which needs to be irrigated during the day - the peak time in term of electricity costs.

Silverbeet is a summer crop and needs more water due to higher daily evaporation levels, accordingly more irrigation equates to higher electricity usage.

The amount of irrigation required also varies according to climatic conditions and the farmer is able to make use of off-peak rates for irrigation purposes at other times when vegetable crops require evening and night time irrigation.

The farmer currently accesses a 'Farm Time of Use' tariff (Tariff 62) which means they pay a cheaper rate for electricity of 14c kWh during off peak hours (9pm and 7am) and 39c per kWh for electricity used during peak time (7am to 9pm).

As the silverbeet needs to be irrigated during the day, they are paying a peak rate of 39c kWh.

The opportunity

Even though Tariff 62 is a 'Farm Time of Use' tariff designed to help irrigators/farmers reduce electricity bills, its rate is not always the best option when operational practices require irrigation to occur during peak times.

In this case, the farmer could achieve a significant cost saving if they chose to switch to Tariff 22 - a general supply time of use tariff.



The pricing structure of Tariff 22 allows for peak time usage of electricity at a reduced rate of 28c kWh – a significant cut from 39c kWh. The other alternative would be to grow crops which only required irrigation at night during off peak hours

Recommendation

An energy audit was conducted on the farm and it was found that there would be a significant cost saving (based on current peak time usage) of \$1304 per annum should the grower switch from Tariff 62 to Tariff 22.

Outcome

The producers' electricity provider Ergon Energy allows for one change of tariff per year without charge if the metering system allows.

The recommendation was made for the producer to investigate this option.

Publication date: July 2013

This activity received funding from the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism as part of the Energy Efficiency Information Grants Program. The views expressed herein are not necessarily the views of the Commonwealth of Australia, and the Commonwealth does not accept responsibility for any information or advice contained herein.



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