

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Water savings flow from efficiency project

Fruit and vegetable growers in the Stanthorpe area are amongst those to benefit from a new Rural Water Use Efficiency project in the Queensland Border Rivers and Maranoa Balonne catchments.

The project, which is run by the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee with support from the National Landcare Program, Growcom and RWUEII, has provided \$300,000 to help irrigators improve water use efficiency on-farm and reduce the effects of deep drainage.

Project coordinator, Michelle Prendergast, said with dwindling water supplies and increasing costs, many growers were looking for ways to make their production system more efficient and to produce more from each megalitre of water.

Alf and John Turrisi from Eagles Produce at Amiens grow around 350 acres of cauliflowers, lettuce, wombok, sugarloaf and red cabbage and recently converted 80 acres from overhead sprinklers to a subsurface trickle irrigation system with plastic covers.

John Turrisi said it was something they had to do.

“All the water on the place is collected in dams from overland flow and in recent years, there just hasn’t been enough water,” he said.

“It’s certainly been an expensive process. Aside from the equipment, time and labour involved, we’ve had to purchase new sand filters to prevent blockages in the trickle tape, convert machinery to suit the new system and adjust to a whole new way of growing crops.”

However the water savings and production benefits are already being seen.

“We estimate that in the cooler months we’re using 70-80% less water on a crop than we would have under the overhead sprinkler system. In the summer months it’s around 40-50% and we’ve seen a 30-40% increase in production,” Mr Turrisi said.

A total of 59 projects on 28 irrigation properties have received funding through QMDC’s Rural Water Use Efficiency project, with funding covering up to 40% of individual project costs.

These projects include installing moisture monitoring probes, undertaking EM surveys of paddocks to identify variation in infiltration and converting irrigation systems from furrow to centre pivot.

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#### Media contact/s

**Jill Heywood, Landcare Education Officer, Phone: (07) 4671 7900**

**Michelle Prendergast, RWUE Project Coordinator, Phone: (07) 4671 7900, Mb: 0428 468 865**

Caption: John Turrisi inspects a lettuce crop grown under the new subsurface drip irrigation system.

