

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 1471
Asked on 8 October 2009

MR RYAN asked the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland (MR MULHERIN)—

QUESTION:

With reference to climate changing conditions across the state which are affecting primary production in various ways—

What programs has Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries developed to support efficient use of water in the dairy industry?

ANSWER:

Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries supports the efficient use of water in the dairy industry through an integrated approach in a number of areas.

The department is a partner both in the Rural Water Use Efficiency Initiative (Mark III) Project and the South East Queensland Irrigation Futures Project. These projects continue to provide the platform for the “Dairy and Fodder Water for Profit” Program to deliver major outcomes for the industry and improve irrigation management and water use efficiency for a profitable and sustainable future in Queensland.

These projects are co-funded and in partnership with the Department of Environment and Resource Management and Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation. These projects have led to an estimated \$300 million of water efficiency savings and productivity increases over the last decade. Water savings in some cases of up to 20% per area of application have resulted in savings of up to \$70 million from upgrading irrigation systems.

Productivity gains include increases in fodder production due to the improved ability to apply the correct amount of water according to crop requirements and to achieve a more even distribution pattern. These efficiencies have resulted in up to 5 tonnes Dry Matter / per hectare additional forage production, with resultant increases in milk production and reduced costs of production per litre of milk. Further productivity increases result from lower maintenance, repairs and running costs, with reduced energy consumption of more than 30% in most instances. Furthermore, there are additional savings from reduced labour, as well as improved effluent management and reuse.

In addition, improvements to the quality of water leaving the farm contribute to benefits to the environment and community.

The Rural Water Use Efficiency Initiative is now in its third stage. The vast majority of dairy farmers have a keen awareness of the program, with 63% of Queensland’s dairy farms and 67% of south east Queensland’s dairy farms directly involved in the program.

The department further supports the efficient use of water in the dairy industry through conducting research, development and extension into forage production and

utilisation that is both water and cost efficient. This is supported by farmer group discussion meetings to optimise feedbase use for milk production, and incorporating business analysis of improved irrigation and forage production systems. This work is conducted through the Forage, Nutrition and Business Plus projects conducted by the department and co-funded by Dairy Australia.