



Case Study

Good Management Practices improve environmental outcomes

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CATEGORY: NEWS | Land Use | Zones | Environment | Water

ZONE(S): ASHBURTON

Barrhill farmer Malcolm Cairns says the Farm Environment Plan (FEP) process provides farmers with practical tools to improve both environmental and economic outcomes.

“It triggers a thought process and makes you think about the impact your operation is having on the environment. I have made started making changes which will make a difference to my farm over the long term.”

Malcolm has purchased soil moisture monitors to help him make better decisions about when to irrigate and has also started using Production Wise – a free online crop management system provided by FAR.

“After going through the FEP process I saw that I needed to do more to measure moisture levels in the soil and this is something that wouldn’t have happened without the FEP.

“Applying the right amount of water in the right place and at the right time is really important for farmers. Given that we’re paying a charge for water delivery any amount that we don’t use is a saving for us and for the environment.”

After completing two FEPs and going through the auditing process Malcolm says the most important advice he can offer farmers is to make sure their records are up-to-date.

“It takes a while to get your records organised but if you’re using a good system then you should have everything you need.”

Aqualinc soil scientist Glen Treweek says the FEP audit process assesses whether farmers are on track with good management practices.

“Initially most farmers feel apprehensive but it’s really just a chat around the kitchen table. I look at their records and systems then we go for a walk around the farm to see how they’re doing.”

For those farmers who are shareholders in irrigation schemes there is often help available to make the FEP and audit process easier.

Irrigo Centre environmental manager Eva Harris has assisted 171 Barrhill-Chertsey Irrigation Limited (BCIL) and Acton Farmer’s Irrigation Co-operative (AFIC) shareholders to complete FEPs.

Eva says the majority of farmers see completing FEPs and audits are part of an overall continuous improvement programme.

“Most farmers see environmental sustainability as essential to passing on a solid business to the next generation.”