



Chairman's foreword

Welcome to another edition of the IREC *Farmers' Newsletter*. Consideration should be given to changing our name from IREC to DAREC (Dry Area Research and Extension Committee)! Irrigation this season, for those with surface water allocations is looking quite bleak. This extraordinary situation is severely testing irrigation farmers' reserves. The impacts on farm and within the community are going to be significant and ongoing for many years.

The drought has also had an impact on agricultural research with a reduced capacity to function on lower levy income and government budget reductions. New South Wales is also experiencing a loss of corporate knowledge from the department which manages our water, as numerous shuffles, changes and resignations occur. Decisions which seriously affect our future risk are being made without full knowledge and understanding.

The amount of water resource available is under pressure with farm dams, minimum till, bushfire recovery, climate change, plantation timber, water trading and increased environmental concerns all having a potential impact.

In periods of time such as this it is hard to be optimistic – but optimistic we must be!


The future, if we have water is very positive. The outlook for grain prices and demand is high, ten billion dollars is about to be invested in the water industry and droughts are eventually followed by floods.

In the world context there is a number of positive drivers which suggests an increasing need for our food exports in the future. The potential world population is forecast to increase by another third, or two billion, over the next twenty or so years. Climate change effects are worldwide and impacts on glaciers affecting India and to a lesser extent China will reduce water availability. Significant

world aquifers are being depleted as the pressure to produce continues. Peak oil will occur sometime in the near future and this year is the first in the world's history of more people living in urban areas rather than rural areas. The westernisation of diets which involves greater meat consumption has a much higher need of water for production. Biofuel production is also creating an increasing major demand for grain.

Further, water productivity is a key challenge for irrigators in a period of high debt loads. The provision of ten billion dollars under the National Water Plan is an enormous opportunity if managed correctly. The risk is that much could be wasted. It is imperative that all irrigators are proactive in their commodity and irrigation organisations to support and provide ideas to those that continue to represent them in dealing with government.

IREC and ICF are currently exploring the formation of a new CRC for Wealth from Water as well as continuing to put forward research projects to funding bodies which will have direct outcomes for irrigation farmers.

I would like to thank the contributing authors and editor Lucy Kealey for another job well done. This issue has articles relating to a wide range of crops, the long running irrigated farm competition, and new inductee to the Irrigators' Hall of Fame, Clive Polkinghorne. There are also articles on soil carbon, watertable influences, salinity studies on vines, and others of general interest. 

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