

ON-FARM DROUGHT RESILIENCE GRANTS PROGRAM GUIDELINES

About the program

The Victorian Government (through Agriculture Victoria of the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions) (Agriculture Victoria) has established the On-Farm Drought Resilience Grant program (the Program) to assist eligible farm businesses to invest in on-farm drought preparedness and to seek business advice.

The program is a key component of the increased drought assistance being provided to Victorian farmers.

A grant of up to \$5,000 (GST-exclusive) per farm business is available to assist eligible farm businesses to implement on-farm infrastructure improvements and or undertake business planning and advice activities.

All grants for infrastructure investments require at least 50 per cent co-contribution. No co-contribution is required for business planning and advice activities.

The Program is available for:

Wellington and East Gippsland

Eligible farm businesses located in Wellington Shire and East Gippsland Shire.

Far North West Victoria – Millewa

Eligible dryland farm businesses located in the far north west corner of Victoria, generally known as the Millewa and surrounding areas.

This incorporates the following towns and locality areas in the Mildura Shire: Carwarp, Cullulleraine, Lindsay Point, Meringur, Merrinee, Neds Corner, Wargan and Werrimull.

Goulburn Murray Irrigation District

Eligible irrigation farm businesses, including those that have transitioned from irrigation production systems to dryland production since 1 July 2018, located in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID).

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

The On-Farm Drought Resilience Grant program will assist eligible farm businesses to invest in infrastructure and support business decision making to help farm businesses manage current drought conditions and enhance the drought preparedness and longer-term viability of the farm.

Assistance Available

The Victorian Government is providing increased support to assist farm businesses affected by drought and dry conditions.

The grants will be available from the date the Program opens until program funds are fully allocated.

Grants up to \$5,000 (GST-exclusive) are available for:

- Business decision making activities – no co-contribution required
- Infrastructure investments –with at least 50 per cent co-contribution required

Applicants can apply for a combination of infrastructure works and business activities, for a combined total of no more than \$5,000 (GST-exclusive).¹

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Business decision making (no co-contribution)

Eligible business decision making activities are those that will help farmers make decisions about how to manage drought conditions, reposition the farm business, improve on-farm practices or make a significant farm business change. The eligible activity must be purchased and undertaken on or after the 2 October 2019.

Business decision making activities include engaging professional services to:

- Prepare, review or update strategic business plans
- Undertake a whole farm plan
- Undertake business risk assessment

- Engage agronomic services for the purpose of converting the farm to be more drought resilient (e.g. pasture restoration or improvement plan, feed budgets for drought, managing soils)
- Undertake business benchmarking
- Undertake financial management assessment and planning
- Undertake a skills audit
- Undertake succession planning

Business decision making activities must be completed by a consultant who is a full member of a recognised professional body such as CPA, Chartered Accountants, Irrigation Surveyor and Designers Group, Ag Institute Australia.

Infrastructure investment (dollar for dollar co-contribution required)

Eligible infrastructure improvements are those that will improve drought preparedness and better position the farm business into the future. The eligible activity must be purchased and undertaken on or after the 2 October 2019.

Infrastructure improvements include the following:

- Items to construct a new or upgrade an existing Stock Containment Area (SCA) – such as fencing, gates, troughs, piping, tanks, pumps and livestock feeders. SCAs have specific design and siting requirements that must be met.
- Reticulated water systems using pumps, piping, tanks and troughs for livestock
- Irrigation system upgrades (e.g. automated systems, irrigation pumps)
- Drilling of new stock water bores and associated power supply such as generators or desalination plants
- Desilting works of existing stock and domestic dams
- Farm development to improve drought management efficiencies to farm production systems (e.g. soil moisture monitoring, weather stations, telemetry sensor equipment)
- Adoption of reduced tillage practices, including purchase and/or modification of equipment

¹ GST is not payable on grant payments. All invoices and payments are calculated on the basis of being GST-exclusive.

- Grain and fodder storage (e.g. silos, silage bunkers, hay sheds)
- Internal re-fencing to better match property layout with land capability
- Fencing for the exclusion of wildlife to protect and manage crops and pastures
- Pasture restoration (e.g. associated seed and fertiliser costs)
- Establishment of ground cover (e.g. fodder crops) as a remedial action before pastures can be established
- Addition of shelter belts for shade, wind breaks and erosion control
- Upgrading of areas (e.g. laneway upgrades, repairs or expansion) to deliver lasting benefits directly linked to productivity and profitability
- Feeding system upgrades (e.g. feed pads or feed troughs)
- Improving waste water and effluent management systems
- Permanent milk vat upgrades (e.g. electronics)
- Adoption of precision farming techniques (e.g. auto-steer tramlining, yield mapping and weed-seeker technology)
- Mechanical seeding (e.g. hire or purchase of seeding machines, roller).

All statutory approvals and licences must be obtained for the eligible infrastructure activities, where applicable. This is the responsibility of the farm business.

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Activities and expenses not eligible under the Program include (but are not limited to):

- Wages for your employees or your self-assessed labor or transport costs
- Management tools that are part of standard farm production and not directly contributing to drought preparedness
- Livestock electronic identification devices or equipment
- Construction of new dams
- Training costs
- Replacing agricultural machinery and equipment (e.g. tractors)
- Purchase, lease or acquisition of land
- Purchase, lease or maintenance of transportation
- Vehicles (e.g. cars, motorbikes, quad bikes, quad bike safety devices, trailers and trucks)
- Utilities and operating costs of the business (e.g. gas, electricity, rates)
- Standard variable inputs (normal operations e.g. water, grain, and fodder)
- Purchase of livestock
- Standard boundary or house fencing
- Pre-existing annual fees
- Annual business accounting costs such as tax returns, BAS statements, etc
- Administration, legal or insurance costs
- Activities completed and paid for before 2 October 2019.

ELIGIBILITY

In order to apply, applicants² must:

- a. Be the owner, operator, share farmer or lease holder of a commercial scale farm business.³
- b. Have a farm business property located in an eligible area:
 - i. East Gippsland or Wellington Shire
 - ii. If your farm property is located in the Millewa and surrounds: primarily be a dry land producer (i.e. the majority of your income is, under normal seasonal conditions, based on dryland production).
 - iii. If your farm property is located in the GMID: primarily be an irrigation farmer or have transitioned from an irrigation production system to dry-land production after the 1 July 2018.
- c. Be registered as a primary producer with the Australian Tax Office and have an Australian Business Number (ABN).
- d. Be registered for GST.
- e. Contribute a significant part of your labor and capital to the farming enterprise, and under normal business conditions, you earn more than 51 per cent of your individual income from the farming enterprise.
and/or
Have commenced your farming operation between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2019 and your intention is that more than 51 per cent of your individual income will be derived from the farming enterprise within three years of the date of your Application. Eligibility on this basis will be considered on a case-by case basis.
- f. Sign a Statutory Declaration confirming that you meet the eligibility requirements of the Program.
- g. If requested, provide further evidence in relation to any of the eligibility requirements above.

² Applicants may be an individual, company, trust or a partnership

³ As a guide it is anticipated that farm turnover would exceed \$50,000 per annum in most years to be considered a commercial scale farm business for the purpose of this program.

One grant will be offered per applicant. An applicant who operates more than one farm business or that has more than one farm property may only apply for one grant.

Except for activities and/or items funded under the On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme, activities or items that have received (or are approved to receive) funding from another Victorian Government source will be ineligible for funding under this Program.

If you have previously been provided a grant under the On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Support Grant and or Pasture Recovery and Management Grant programs, you can receive a grant under this Program, but not for the same activity or item.

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA SUPPORT

Agriculture Victoria is working with a range of partners to provide information and workshops for farmers to help them make the most of seasonal conditions.

You can indicate in your application that you would like to be contacted by Agriculture Victoria to be connected to further support.

All applicants that receive in-principle approval for items to construct a new or upgrade an existing Stock Containment Area will be contacted by Agriculture Victoria. Stock Containment Areas have specific design and siting requirements.

For more information about workshops and to register your interest refer to: agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/farmer-workshops

GUIDANCE FOR FARM BUSINESSES

Fact sheets about farm management practices in drought can be found on the Agriculture Victoria website: agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/drought/managing-resources-in-drought

This includes information on:

- Stock Containment Areas
- Drought feeding and management of livestock
- Animal health and welfare
- On-farm water management.

For more information on accessing groundwater, please contact your local water authority, or visit their website.

Goulburn-Murray Water

Email info@gmwater.com.au
or phone GMW on 1800 013 357.

gmwater.com.au/customer-services/forms

Southern Rural Water

Email srw@srw.com.au
or phone SRW on 1300 360 117

srw.com.au/customers/forms/

Grampians-Wimmera Mallee Water

Email info@gmwwater.org.au
or phone GMMWater 1300 659 961

gmwwater.org.au/

Lower Murray Water

Phone (03) 5051 3400

lmw.vic.gov.au/contact-us/

Information on emergency water supply points can be found on the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning website: water.vic.gov.au/groundwater/emergency-water-supply-points

Information on bore construction licences for stock and domestic purposes can be found on the Victorian Water Register website: waterregister.vic.gov.au/water-trading/my-water

Farmers are required to ensure that placement and design of infrastructure meet relevant Victorian laws and that best practice advice is observed, where relevant.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to use business and farm plans to inform their broader infrastructure improvements.

APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Applicants should carefully consider activities against the eligibility criteria set out in the Guidelines before submitting an Application.

To apply for a grant, the On-Farm Drought Resilience Grant – Application Form must be complete (paper copy or online).

Applicants may seek reimbursement for eligible activities or items that have been purchased and undertaken since 2 October 2019. Tax invoices and/or receipts must be provided. There is no guarantee that infrastructure already purchased will be provided the grant. All eligibility will need to be met prior to approval.

or

Applicants may seek 'in-principle approval' before expenditure is committed. Quotations must be provided.

The application must be accompanied with the following supporting documentation:

- Evidence of the Local Government Area (Shire) in which you own, operate, share or lease your farm business.
 - Lease documentation
 - Rates notices
 - Share-farming contract.
- If you are located in the GMID, evidence that you are an irrigation farmer or have transitioned from an irrigation production system to dryland production since the 1 July 2018, such as providing a copy of a Goulburn Murray Water Fixed Service Account.
- If you are seeking reimbursement for eligible activities or items that have been purchased and undertaken since 2 October 2019: tax invoices and/or receipts and photos (or other evidence of installation/completion of works).
- If you are seeking in-principle approval before expenditure is committed, quotes for the proposed work or infrastructure investment:
 - On receiving written in-principle approval, applicants are required to purchase the infrastructure or complete the work proposed within three months of the date of approval

- On completion of the project, grant recipients are required to forward paid tax invoices for all rebate claims and photos of completed works or other evidence of installation to Rural Finance.
- The grant recipient must pay for the project and/or activities initially then Rural Finance will forward payment of the grant amount on completion.

Applications will be assessed against the eligibility criteria.

Rural Finance and/or Agriculture Victoria reserves the right to request further information from you or from any business or individual you have engaged, to assist in assessing the Application and to verify any information provided in your Application.

Complete Applications will be processed in order of receipt.

By signing the application form, you are declaring that the information provided in the application form and supporting documentation is true and accurate.

Providing inaccurate, untrue or misleading information may be a breach of criminal law for which serious penalties may apply.

GST is excluded from any grant payment.

Payment of the approved amount will be arranged and processed as soon as possible, via electronic funds transfer to the applicants nominated account.

Agriculture Victoria will contact all farm businesses that receive approval for items to construct a new or upgrade an existing Stock Containment Area to discuss siting and other best practice requirements. This is for advisory purposes only and does not impact the approval of the grant.

Agriculture Victoria will contact all successful applicants that indicate in the application form that they are interested in receiving optional information about workshops and other support.

REVIEW AND AMENDMENT

The Program Guidelines are correct at the time of publishing.

Agriculture Victoria may review and amend the grants program at any time.

EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

The Victorian Government may conduct an evaluation to determine the extent to which the On-Farm Drought Resilience Grant program has contributed to Victorian Government policy objectives. Grant recipients may be requested to provide information to assist in auditing during the program or the evaluation after the program's completion.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Rural Finance

Telephone: 1800 260 425

Email: governmentservices@ruralfinance.com.au

Web: ruralfinance.com.au

Postal address: GPO Box 1313, Bendigo Central, Victoria 3552

Agriculture Victoria

For more information about other drought support being provided by the Victorian Government and Commonwealth Government, please contact Agriculture Victoria.

A range of other support is available to farmers affected by the drought and potential applicants are strongly encouraged to participate in these programs.

Telephone: 136 186

Email: drought.support@ecodev.vic.gov.au

Web: agriculture.vic.gov.au/dryseasons

Publicity

Grant recipients may be asked to assist Agriculture Victoria in promotion of the Program. This may include involvement in media releases, case studies or promotional events and activities.

Agriculture Victoria may request recipients to fact check any text and seek all relevant approvals in order for Agriculture Victoria to use any imagery provided by the recipient associated with the Program prior to the publication of any such promotional materials.

Recipients must not make any public announcement or issue any press release regarding the receipt of a grant without the prior written approval of Agriculture Victoria.

Agriculture Victoria may publicise the benefits accruing to the recipient and/or the State of Victoria associated with the provision of an On-Farm Drought Resilience Grant.

Confidentiality

Any personal information provided by the Applicant or a third party in an application will be collected by Rural Finance and Agriculture Victoria for the purpose of administration of the Program. This information may be provided to other Victorian Government bodies for the purposes of assessing On-Farm Drought Resilience Grant applications.

Data gathered through assessments may be compiled, aggregated and made anonymous by Rural Finance and Agriculture Victoria for Program reporting, evaluation and research purposes.

Any personal information collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred will be held in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and other applicable laws.

Agriculture Victoria is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. Agriculture Victoria's Privacy Policy can be found online at economicdevelopment.vic.gov.au. Enquiries about access to information should be directed to the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions' Privacy Unit by phone on (03) 9651 9749 or email privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au.