



Delivering a healthy working Basin for Australia Border Rivers Gwydir, New South Wales

A Moree based pecan producer is the driving force behind a water saving plan to return more water to the environment and increase productivity on his farm by 30 per cent.

Program: On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program
Funding recipient: Border Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority
Water for the Future funding: \$2,997,500
Project commencement: 2009
Project completed: May 2011

Managing Director of Stahmann Farms, Matthew Durack, said a \$2.9 million Australian Government *On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency* grant in conjunction with their water recovery program has helped convert some of their surface irrigation to drip irrigation.

Matthew said an assessment of flood irrigation activities on the 2000 acre pecan operation four years ago, identified specific areas which were less efficient and these have been targeted for conversion.

“There were 700 acres of land we just couldn’t improve. Soil was lighter and the capacity to optimise flood irrigation water was very limited,” Matthew said.

“We investigated a variety of options and decided sub-surface drip irrigation was the most appropriate system given our management and soil type.”

He said they initially put in a 25 acre trial and converted 40 year old trees from flood to drip irrigation.

“It was a scary thought as the trees might not have agreed. But two years on and the data has shown the conversion was successful,” he said.

From this point on Matthew was convinced that he should convert the balance of the 700 acres, which had been identified as low efficiency flood irrigation country.

“Rather than simply selling the water on the open market we thought we would upgrade our irrigation,” he said.

“We investigated a variety of options and decided sub-surface drip irrigation was the most appropriate system given our management and soil type.”

*Matthew Durack
Managing Director of
Stahmann Farms.*



Filter shed with irrigation pumps and equipment

“The grant paid for the installation of all the hardware for the pumps, filters, mainline, drip tape and control systems. All up there were around 27,000 connections.”

The infrastructure upgrade is expected to generate a minimum of 750 megalitres in water savings. Half of which will be transferred to the Commonwealth.

While saving water was their primary motivator, Matthew said they were also keen to improve and increase yields.

“The trees have responded well. Our productivity has risen by 30 per cent.”

“By investing in efficiency upgrades and converting from flood to drip, irrigation communities are benefiting socially, economically and environmentally.”

With 120 people permanently employed by Stahmann Farms

Enterprises in their farming, processing and marketing divisions, Matthew said the project has given them the confidence to look toward expanding their operations further using more sustainable technologies.

“We’re a relatively big employer in the local community. We now have the confidence to plant even more pecans on the understanding that there’s a better way to do this,” he said.

“I hope that by showing other producers in the wider Moree area that this new technology can work, and will inspire them to not only look toward irrigation system upgrades but also diversify into other forms of agriculture and horticulture.”

Governments at all levels are working with Basin communities to achieve a healthy river system that supports strong and viable communities. Central to this is the strengthened involvement of local communities in

the design and roll out of government programs.

The Australian Government is also committed to ‘bridging the gap’ between current water diversions and any final sustainable diversion limits in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, through water savings generated by infrastructure investments and voluntary water purchases.

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For further information www.environment.gov.au/water or 1800 218 478.



Filter shed at the Moree farm