WATER FOR FOOD

February 2015
Water For Food

*Water for Food* is a four-year, $40 million Royalties for Regions funded program to accelerate water investigations and optimise pastoral land tenure across the State. It will create the potential for new irrigation precincts and the expansion of agricultural and pastoral opportunities in existing districts across the State.

The primary objective of the *Water for Food* program is to identify water and land resources, as well as irrigation technologies, that can enable Western Australia’s fresh food and animal protein production to increase its contribution to regional economies by at least 50 per cent by 2025 and twofold by 2050.

Western Australia’s population is forecast to increase from its 2012 level of 2.4 million to 6.4 million by 2061, making it the fastest growing State in the country. Over the same period, the Australian population is forecast to increase to 48.3 million people, while the global population is projected to reach nine billion people (UN 2009). This growth will increase world food demand by 70 per cent by 2050.

These are powerful demand drivers that represent a major strategic opportunity for Western Australian food producers.

Water for Growth

In May 2014 the State Government, keen to share the extent of the Department of Water’s knowledge of WA’s water resources, published *Water for Growth*.

*Water for Growth* is the result of extensive water investigation and research by the Department of Water to define Western Australia’s water resources and develop a strategic vision for water supply/demand planning that will secure the State’s water future.

"Water is a key enabler for almost every economic activity in the State"

This work has resulted in an inventory of the State’s water resources, including water quality and availability.

The development of Western Australian Agriculture

1828
Syndicate formed in London to colonise the Swan River

1830
Experimental farm established at York and settlement started at Augusta

1831
Agricultural Society established

1834
WA exports its first wool shipment

1879
Alexander Forrest leads expedition to Kimberley

1883
Carnarvon founded
1898
Land Act divides WA into six regions

1899
CY O’Connor pipeline begins construction

1903
Goldfields water scheme opens

1914
Wesfarmers Co-op established

1963
Ord River Irrigation Scheme opens

1999
WA becomes Australia’s biggest canola producer
**Land tenure**

Currently there are 452 pastoral stations in Western Australia made up of 507 pastoral leases, which are defined for pastoral purposes only and cover nearly 87 million hectares or 34.4 per cent of the State.

“Ideally, the pastoral lease of the future will not only run stock, but contain commercial-scale irrigation islands where a diverse range of cash crops and high value food products can be grown, alongside fodder.” *

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**Key aims**

The *Water for Food* program is built around 14 diverse projects across the State.

Projects previously initiated by the Department of Agriculture and Food WA have shown the value of intensified, localised investment and the downstream social and economic benefits to regional communities.

1. **Regional economic growth**

The increased certainty of sustainable water supplies will provide new opportunities for businesses and boost the State’s regional communities.

2. **Employment growth**

*Water for Food* is a catalyst for increased agricultural and pastoral activity, which offer an increased capacity for local employment.

3. **Growing diversification**

Water certainty underpins confidence in the pastoral and agricultural industries to diversify and increase the scale and range of crops through irrigation.

“This is a new frontier for irrigated agriculture” *

4. **Growing markets**

*Water for Food* will enable industry to meet demand for produce in China, South East Asia, the Middle East and other emerging markets.

Western Australia’s geographic location, climatic diversity and established freight transport corridors provide the State with the opportunity to become a major, high quality food supplier for this market growth.

5. **Aboriginal engagement**

Aboriginal business partnerships are a key component to *Water for Food* and are considered essential to the government’s plan to lift food production, particularly in the north of the State.

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**2012**

KAI starts development of 13,400 hectares into irrigated farmland in the Ord-East Kimberley Expansion Project

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**2014**

*Water for Food* launched
**Water for Food**

*Water for Food* is a key component of the State Government’s broader Seizing the Opportunity Agriculture initiative which provides a boost to regional Western Australian communities through the development and diversification of the WA agriculture and food sector.

The initiative targets the delivery of the Liberal-National Government election commitments to increase the economic value of regional primary industries.

New groundwater discoveries by the Department of Water will support the development, growth and expansion of exciting agricultural and pastoral projects across the State as part of the Western Australian Government’s *Water for Food* program.

"*Water for Food* will bring more water to the irrigated agriculture sector in Western Australia’s regional areas and expand its productive and export potential."

"Clearly one of our greatest opportunities to create new food production centres is the under-developed rangelands where 452 pastoral stations cover nearly 87 million hectares, or 34.4 per cent of the State."

"*Water for Food* will seek to unlock the potential for intensive agriculture by identifying the most appropriate forms of land tenure to promote agricultural investment in Western Australia’s rangelands.

“The objective is to potentially provide existing pastoral lease holders with priority access to secure an alternative land tenure that attracts capital into higher-value activities, such as irrigation."

"Western Australia’s world-class agrifood industry is well placed to offer premium products to the world. The *Water for Food* initiative will increase opportunities to expand and diversify this rapidly developing sector of the State’s economy."

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**HON Mia Davies MLA**
Minister for Water; Forestry

**HON Terry Redman MLA**
Minister for Regional Development; Lands; Minister Assisting the Minister for State Development

**HON Ken Baston MLC**
Minister for Agriculture and Food; Fisheries