

2014 Regional Snapshot

Is irrigation efficiency improving in agricultural areas?

South Australia's irrigated crops and livestock products, worth about \$1.4 billion in 2012, use about 60 per cent of the water we use in the state. About 57 per cent of the farmers in the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM region rely on irrigation to grow pastures for livestock, grapes, fruit or vegetables. Efficient irrigation reduces fertiliser and sediment runoff, soil salinity impacts, production costs and provides more flexibility to rotate crops.

The amount of water applied to crops is influenced by soil type, irrigation method, and the timing of irrigation. By matching these to the needs of each crop, farmers maximise production and apply less water. For example, upgrading from sprinkler to drip irrigation can save about 2.5 million litres per hectare of grapevines or citrus trees. Our [State NRM Act](#) and [water allocation plans](#) allow farmers to sell their water; this market based system helps to ensure that the most efficient farmers use more water.

This report tracks the amount of water applied per hectare, and trends in methods of irrigation.



Trends in water application rates in irrigation areas



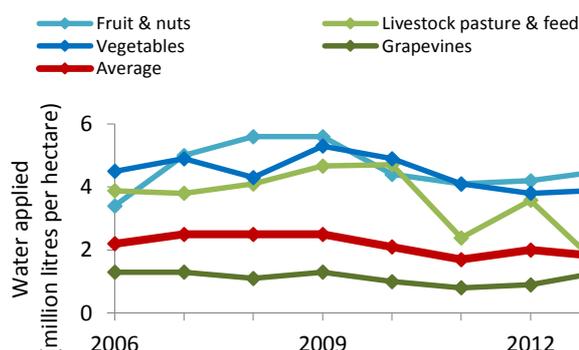
State target
Maintain the productive capacity of our natural resources

Trend (2006-13) Getting better Water applied per hectare decreased by 4 per cent each year

Different crop types have different water needs and these vary depending on the soil type and rainfall (see graph on right).

In 2013, over 29,600 hectares were irrigated in the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM region. The average irrigation rate was about 1.8 million litres per hectare (see graph on right, red line). The amount of water applied per hectare decreased by over 4 per cent each year between 2006-13.

The greatest improvement has been for irrigated livestock pasture – water applied per hectare decreased by about 10 per cent each year since 2006. Over the same period, water applied per hectare to fruit and nut crops was stable.



Where we are at (2013) Good Irrigation efficiency improved in 2013

Energy, labour and set up costs influence the irrigation options available to farmers, but irrigation efficiency continues to improve.

Trends in irrigation methods show how our farmers are improving the efficiency of water application. A breakdown of irrigation methods is not available for the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM region, but statewide information shows that drip irrigation, which is typically the most water efficient, is the most common method and its use has been increasing.

Governments and NRM boards work with farmers to improve irrigation efficiency by demonstrating land management benefits and providing financial [incentives](#) to make it increasingly attractive.

Reliability of information ★★★★★ Very Good

Further information:
[Technical information for this report](#)
[Water use in the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM region](#)