

Economic Development,
Jobs, Transport
and Resources

On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Support Grants

Program Guidelines

ON-FARM DROUGHT INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT GRANTS PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Victorian Government has established the On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Support Grants program to assist farm businesses implement on-farm infrastructure that improves drought management and preparedness.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

A grant of up to \$5,000 (ex-GST) per farm business is available to assist eligible farm businesses implement on-farm infrastructure improvements. Eligible farm businesses are required to provide at least dollar for dollar matching funding co-contribution.

The program is now available to eligible farm businesses in the following Local Government Areas:

Wellington	Wangaratta
East Gippsland	Wodonga
Swan Hill	Indigo
Gannawarra	Alpine
Loddon	Towong
Campaspe	Mildura
Greater Bendigo	Hindmarsh
Greater Shepparton	Yarriambiack
Moira	Buloke
Strathbogie	Horsham
Benalla	Northern Grampians

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

Agriculture Victoria is offering information and workshops to assist farm businesses make the most out of the infrastructure investment.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

The On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Support Grants program will assist farmers undertake infrastructure development projects to help in the management of current drought conditions and enhance the preparedness and longer-term viability of the farm.



ELIGIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Eligible infrastructure improvements are those that will improve drought preparedness and better position the farm business into the future. Infrastructure improvements include the following (but are not limited to):

- Items to construct a new or upgrade an existing Stock Containment Area (SCA) – such as fencing, gates, troughs, piping, tanks, pumps and livestock feeders.
- Reticulated water systems using pumps, piping, tanks and troughs for livestock
- Irrigation system upgrades (e.g. automated systems)
- Permanent repairs to fixed infrastructure (e.g. irrigation pumps, repair piping, replace troughs, upgrade tanks)
- Improved water infrastructure for stock management (e.g. consolidating/ enlarging farm dams)
- Farm development to improve drought management efficiencies to farm production systems (e.g. soil moisture monitoring, weather stations, telemetry sensor equipment)
- 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
- Addition of shelter belts for shade and associated fencing
- 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)
- Adoption of precision farming techniques (e.g. auto-steer tramlining, yield mapping and weed-seeker technology).

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Activities and expenses not eligible for the grant include (but are not limited to):

- Management tools that are part of standard farm production and not directly contributing to drought preparedness
- Livestock electronic identification devices or equipment
- Training costs
- Replacing existing agricultural machinery and equipment (e.g. tractors)
- Purchase, lease or acquisition of land
- Purchase, lease or maintenance of transportation
- Vehicles (e.g. cars, motorbikes, quadbikes, quadbike 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, fertiliser, seed and fodder)
- Purchase of livestock
- Standard boundary or house fencing
- Pre-existing annual fees
- Administration, legal or insurance costs
- Breeding technologies (e.g. DNA analysis, semen purchases, Artificial Insemination, or Embryo Transplant program)
- Farm business exit strategy assistance
- Activities not ready for implementation.



WHO CAN APPLY?

Eligible participants are individuals who own, share or lease a primary production business.

Eligible participants are required to:

- Own, share or lease farm businesses located in an eligible Local Government Area
- Be registered as a primary producer with the Australian Tax Office and have an ABN and be registered for GST
- Have a right or interest in the land for the purpose of primary production
- Contribute a significant part (more than 51 per cent) of his/her labour to the farming enterprise
- Derive 51 per cent of gross annual income from the farm business OR made a minimum farm related capital investment of \$50,000 (excluding land purchase) in the farm business
- Sign a Statutory Declaration that they meet the eligibility of the program.

As a guide it is anticipated that farm turnover would exceed \$50,000 per annum under normal business conditions to be considered a bona-fide commercial scale farm business.

Normal business conditions refer to a year with no adverse climatic conditions (drought) in which average yields/productivity is achieved. Normal year income is based on this productivity and long term achievable commodity prices.

Businesses must declare they have met the relevant criteria. Businesses may be asked to produce evidence, such as financial statements, to validate eligibility.

Rural Finance, in consultation with the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) may audit successful applicants throughout the life of the program.

The minimum value of a grant to eligible applicants is \$1,000 (ex-GST). The maximum is \$5,000 (ex-GST). Eligible farm businesses are required to match the grant amount approved with at least dollar for dollar matching co-contribution.

ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- One grant will be offered per applicant. An applicant who operates more than one farm business may only apply for a grant for one of their businesses
- Infrastructure works must not be commenced prior to receiving approval to proceed. Works that have already commenced will not be eligible for funding
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to base potential infrastructure improvements on current business plans
- Applicants are encouraged to participate in an optional Agriculture Victoria infrastructure planning workshop
- Where activities can normally be funded through other Commonwealth Government and state programs they will not be funded through the On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Support Grants program
- Activities or items that have received (or are approved to receive) funding from another source will be ineligible for funding under this program. Examples include but are not limited to the Victorian Government's Dairy Development Grant, Farm Risk Management Grants, Victorian Government's Irrigation Efficiencies Incentives Program and/or the Commonwealth Government's National Landcare Program.

“The minimum value of a grant to eligible applicants is \$1,000 (ex-GST). The maximum is \$5,000 (ex-GST).”



APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Applications for the On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Support Grant will be processed in order of receipt.

<p>Step 1 Application process opens</p>	<p>Applicant to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the guidelines to establish eligibility. • Call Rural Finance for general enquiries about the application process. • Complete application form and submit to Rural Finance. • Applications must be supported by a quotation for the proposed infrastructure investment. • Applicants to indicate in their application if they are interested in receiving optional information about workshops and other support from Agriculture Victoria.
<p>Step 2a Approval and grant process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘In-principle’ approval or rejection of the proposal will be communicated to the applicant. • On receiving written ‘in-principle’ approval, applicants are required to purchase infrastructure investment within three months of the date of approval of the On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Support Grant. • Agriculture Victoria will contact all farm businesses that receive ‘in-principle’ 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.
<p>Step 2b (optional) Agriculture Victoria optional service offer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For farm businesses that receive ‘in-principle’ approval and that have indicated an interest, Agriculture Victoria will contact you about optional information, workshops, and support that may assist farm businesses implement their infrastructure investment.
<p>Step 3 Undertake Infrastructure project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment will be made only on submission of invoices and receipts. • On completion of the infrastructure project, grant recipients are required to forward paid tax invoices/s to Rural Finance. The grant recipient must pay for the project and/or activity initially and then Rural Finance will forward payment of the grant amount on completion. The grant amount will be 50 per cent of the total cost of the infrastructure investment (up to \$5,000 – ex-GST).
<p>Step 4 Payment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment will be arranged and processed as soon as possible via electronic funds transfer to the applicants nominated account.



AGRICULTURE VICTORIA SUPPORT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Agriculture Victoria is conducting workshops to support farmers make the most of their infrastructure investments. The workshops will cover:

- Decision making for dry seasonal conditions
- Best practice guidelines for infrastructure, including Stock Containment Areas
- Technical advice
- Animal Health and Welfare
- Environmental and legal responsibilities.

Participation in workshops is voluntary and will be available on demand. To register your interest in attending a grant infrastructure planning workshop please visit: agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/farmer-workshops

GUIDANCE FOR INFRASTRUCTURE DECISION MAKING

Stock Containment Areas have specific design and siting requirements. The criteria for these are outlined in the Stock Containment Area Grants – Information for Landholders document, which can be obtained from Agriculture Victoria agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/drought/managing-resources-in-drought.

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

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

FUNDING SOURCE

The Victorian Government is providing increased support to assist farmers impacted by drought and dry conditions. The Government has increased the funding available for the On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Support Grants program to \$13.2 million. The initial \$1.4 million announced for the program will be assured for eligible farmers in Wellington and East Gippsland Shires only.

DURATION OF THE PROGRAM

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

REVIEW AND AMENDMENT

DEDJTR 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 Infrastructure Support Grants 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