

NSW SUSTAINING THE BASIN *Irrigated farm modernisation*

Tony Quigley, Nevertire

February 2014

Location: 'The Wilgas' and 'Caringa', Nevertire

Water Sources: Macquarie Regulated Water Entitlement

Soil type: Grey cracking clay soil

Enterprise: Irrigated cotton

Existing irrigation system: Lateral Move

Total area irrigated: 1200 ha

Total savings: 648 ML

"This project allows us to focus on getting an increased return on investment from our irrigated cropping enterprises."

Tony Quigley and his family have been developing their family farms 'The Wilgas' and 'Caringa' near Nevertire in NSW since 1970 to improve irrigation water use efficiency by focussing on reduced irrigation losses and increasing yields.

Mr Quigley is no stranger to Government initiatives to improve water use efficiency. He has been involved in the modernisation and lining of the Trangie-Nevertire Irrigation Scheme supply channel to reduce losses under the Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program (PIIOP) in NSW.

The Quigleys didn't hesitate in taking up the opportunity offered by STBIFM to build on what they had already achieved and access the funding while it is available to progress their business plan.



Tony and Tom Quigley with their PIIOP funded lateral move on 'The Wilgas' with the STBIFM funded laser levelled fields behind. Image: S. Quigley.

Description of the project

The Quigleys successful projects on 'The Wilgas' and 'Caringa' focused on improving the effectiveness of their existing lateral move irrigator and included:

- the design and redevelopment of the supply and drainage systems
- reshaping of fields
- decommissioning of inefficient fields
- the relocation of power lines
- earthworks and installation of all the pipes and gates
- the installation of a telemetry system.

The Quigleys are also considering bankless channel layouts for some fields not covered by the existing lateral move to try and improve the efficiency of their surface irrigation systems on their flatter country.

The benefits of the project

The Quigleys expect the water savings on 'The Wilgas' to be in the order of 232 ML and 416ML on 'Caringa'.

They also believe the improvements will provide better yields from their cotton due to less waterlogging and wilting caused by crop stress.

Tony Quigley said it is easy to understand where their emphasis is and why.

"This project allows us to focus on getting an improved return on investment from our irrigated cropping enterprises rather than spending more time to get less increase in return on our dryland grazing or dryland cropping enterprises.

"Yield, yield and more yield from better irrigation is what will generate a profit," Mr Quigley said.

Landholders experience

Mr Quigley found the opportunities provided by STBIFM for training and interaction with other irrigators and service providers very valuable for supporting good planning.

"There's nothing like getting off your own dung hill to see how other people operate.

"It is interesting to see what others are up to.

"Understanding how others manage their system, what the small differences are and how they manage to manipulate their systems to improve various aspects really helps with our own learning," Mr Quigley said.

What aspect was most challenging?

The Quigleys found the administrative processes slightly challenging at times but the support of DPI project staff was very useful.

"Our local DPI person was always there to help us," Mr Quigley said.

What advice would you give others?

Mr Quigley believes knowledge is power and it is essential to get good advice.

"I would encourage other irrigators undertaking this process to have a good look around at the variety of layouts out there and see how others make them work.

"Then get the best advice you can to improve your own system to improve yield and generate the business income needed to keep improving," Mr Quigley said.

What are your thoughts on STBIFM?

Mr Quigley says he wouldn't be able to make these improvements without the STBIFM funding.

"Most farmers don't have the capital or cash flow to make these high-cost improvements.

"Government initiatives to provide funds in return for a portion of the water saved makes it possible to undertake the infrastructure improvements needed and also provides good outcomes for both irrigators and our regions," Mr Quigley said.

This project is funded by the Australian Government's *'Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure'* Program.

© State of New South Wales through Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services 2014. You may copy, distribute and otherwise freely deal with this publication for any purpose, provided that you attribute the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services as the owner.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (February 2014). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser. Published by the Department of Primary Industries, a part of the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services. INT14/16138