

Extra funding for farmers to tackle drought

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Water Resources Minister John Kobelke said farmers had a million reasons to combat drought, with the Department of Water's next Farm Water Grants Scheme round now open.

Broadacre farmers can share \$1million of grants for on-farm water supply improvements.

The grants scheme has been boosted by \$700,000 to \$1.9million in 2005-06. Grants amounting to \$900,000 have already been given.

Mr Kobelke said broadacre farmers could apply for up to \$15,000 through the grants scheme to minimise the effect of drought conditions and avoid the need to cart water.

"On-farm water shortages can have a severe impact on farming families, business operations, and local communities," he said.

"Despite the recent floods, many broadacre farmers are located in areas which often experience extended periods of low rainfall and serious water deficiency.

"Now is the time to plan for drought and put systems in place to better manage our water resources.

"Farmers can apply to fund up to 50 per cent of the cost of planning and installing additional water supplies for domestic, livestock and crop spraying uses.

"The Government is committed to programs which directly help farmers and their families prepare more effectively for droughts, especially those living in priority zones of the eastern Wheatbelt and south coast sand-plains."

More than 900 grants have been awarded to commercial broadacre farming businesses in Western Australia since March 2001, with a combined value of more than \$9.6million.

Previous farm water grant recipients have reduced their reliance on emergency water from public supplies outside the farm gate, improved their quality of life and helped protect the commercial interests of many farming businesses.

Mr Kobelke said the scheme was one of several initiatives addressing extensive water deficiency in dryland areas which operated under the State's Rural Water Plan.

The grants are available to farmers not connected to piped scheme water services. Applications for this round of funding closes on April 30.

More information on the Rural Water Plan and the Farm Water Grants Scheme is available at <http://www.water.wa.gov.au> or on free call number 1800 780 300.