

Irrigators Support Need for Climate Modelling

The National Irrigators' Council says [that projected shortages of climate modellers raised last week by the Australian Academy of Science](#) are a concern.

NIC CEO, Steve Whan said “irrigators, like all Australian primary producers, are at the mercy of our variable climate and our industry benefits if we are able to get quality projections.

“Australia’s farmers have always dealt with living in one of the world’s most variable climates.

“Water storage and irrigation are one of the key ways we have been able to ensure that even with widely varying conditions year on year we can still produce the food and natural fibre Australians consume and also enough to earn the nation income and generate jobs through exports.

“Over the last couple of decades Australia’s irrigators have made massive improvements in water efficiency, producing more using far less water – that maximises the use of stored water as well as leaving more for the environment.

“But even with greater efficiency there is a strong need for climatic projections to be as accurate as possible. Modelling is needed regardless of the Government of the day’s position on climate change.

“In many respects, irrigation self-adjusts to climate variation – in dry years allocations of go down and in wet years they go up. And in a year where allocations are low and rainfall projections are low many annual crops will not be planted.

“That’s why we would join in being concerned about a conclusion that suggests that Australia will fall behind other major agricultural producers in the quality of projections available to agriculture.

“NIC notes that the Academy of Science report says ‘*accurate climate information is of critical importance to the agricultural sector. Improving the accuracy of seasonal forecasting has been estimated to be worth over \$1.5 billion per annum to the agricultural sector (CIE, 2014). At longer time scales, improvements to climate projections (for example, 10–30 year predictions of drought frequency) could represent a distinct competitive advantage for Australian farmers and primary producers.*’

“NIC looks forward to a positive response to this report from the Government.”

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Friday 11 August 2017