

On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Grants

Program Guidelines



RURAL FINANCE

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

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ON-FARM DROUGHT INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS PROGRAM GUIDELINES

1. ABOUT THE PROGRAM

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

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

The program is available to eligible primary production businesses located in the following Local Government Areas (LGA).

Ararat	Moyne
Colac Otway	Pyrenees
Corangamite	Southern Grampians
Glenelg	Surf Coast
Golden Plains	Warrnambool
City of Greater Geelong	West Wimmera* <i>(*only primary production enterprises located in postcodes 3312, 3317, 3318 and 3319 are eligible to apply)</i>

2. PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

Drought is one of a number of business risks that farmers should actively prepare for and adapt to. Primary production businesses are encouraged to have drought management plans or business plans to support their drought preparedness.

The On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Grants program will help primary producers in south west Victoria undertake infrastructure development projects to help in the management of current drought conditions and enhance the preparedness and longer-term viability of their businesses in a changing climate.



3. ELIGIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Eligible infrastructure improvements are those that will improve drought preparedness and better position the primary production business into the future. A dollar for dollar co-contribution is required. 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 and pumps
- Reticulated water systems using pumps, piping, tanks and troughs for livestock
- Irrigation system upgrades (e.g. automated systems)
- Purchase or repair of fixed infrastructure (e.g. irrigation pumps, repair piping, replace troughs, upgrade tanks)
- Improved on-farm water infrastructure for stock management (e.g. consolidating / enlarging / desilting farm dams)
- Technologies 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 fencing to better match property layout with land capability or improve management
- Fencing for the exclusion of wildlife to protect and manage crops and pastures
- Addition of shelter belts for shade, wind breaks and erosion control
- Drilling of new stock water bores and associated power supply such as generators
- Improving waste water and effluent management systems
- 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)

All appropriate statutory approvals and licenses must be obtained for the eligible infrastructure activities, where applicable. This is the responsibility of the applicant.

4. INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

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

- Fodder and/or water carting expenses
- Management tools that are part of standard farm production and not directly contributing to drought preparedness e.g. finance software
- Wages for employees, self-assessed labor or transport costs
- Livestock electronic identification devices or equipment
- Training costs
- Replacing existing agricultural machinery and equipment (e.g. tractors and trailers)
- Purchase, lease or acquisition of land
- Purchase, lease or maintenance of vehicles (e.g. tractors, cars, motorbikes, quadbikes, quadbike safety devices 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
- Any infrastructure works completed and paid for prior to the announcement of this grant program on 30 September 2024.



5. WHO CAN APPLY?

A grant of up to \$5,000 (excluding GST) is available per eligible primary production business.

Eligible applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Own, share or lease a primary production business located in an eligible LGA or post code in the West Wimmera LGA.
- Hold a current Australian Business Number (ABN) and have held that ABN at the time of the program announcement (30 September 2024).
- Devote part of their labour to the primary production business.
- Derive more than 50% of gross income from the primary production business in an average year OR generate more than \$75,000 gross income from the primary production business in an average year.

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

The minimum grant amount available to eligible applicants is \$1,000 (excluding GST). The maximum is \$5,000 (excluding GST). Eligible primary production businesses must provide a matching co-contribution equal to or greater than the approved grant amount.

6. ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- One grant will be offered per applicant.
- An applicant who operates more than one primary production business may only apply for a grant for one of their businesses.
- Infrastructure works that have been completed and paid for prior to the announcement of this grant program on 30 September 2024 will not be eligible for funding.
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to base potential infrastructure improvements on current business plans.
- Where activities can be funded through other Commonwealth Government and state programs they will not be funded through the On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Grants program.

7. ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS AVAILABLE

In addition to the grant program, a range of support programs are available. This includes Agriculture Victoria's technical decision making support, the Rural Financial Counselling Service, the National Centre for Farmer Health, Commonwealth Government support such as the Farm Household Allowance and drought loans provided by the Regional Investment Corporation.

For more information visit agriculture.vic.gov.au/dryseasons or by calling 136 186 during business hours.



8. APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The program will be administered by Rural Finance on behalf of the Victorian Government. All assessments of applications and payments will be managed in accordance with these Guidelines.

Applications for the On-Farm Drought Infrastructure 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"> • Review the guidelines to confirm eligibility. • Contact Rural Finance for general enquiries about the application process. • Complete an online application via the On Farm Drought Infrastructure Grants webpage on the Rural Finance website: www.ruralfinance.com.au OR • Complete the application form and submit it to Rural Finance via email or mail. The application form can be obtained from the Rural Finance website: www.ruralfinance.com.au • Include a quotation for the proposed infrastructure investment with the application.
<p>Step 2 'In-principle' approval</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application will be assessed by Rural Finance who will notify the applicant of either in-principle approval or rejection of their proposal.
<p>Step 3 Undertake Infrastructure project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon receiving written 'in-principle' approval, applicants must purchase the infrastructure investment within three months of the date of the in-principle approval.
<p>Step 4 Payment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon completion of the infrastructure project, applicants must submit evidence of payment, which includes tax invoices and official receipts or bank statements, to Rural Finance. • Applicants are required to cover the initial cost of the project and/or activity, after which Rural Finance will reimburse the grant amount. The grant will cover 50% of the total cost of the infrastructure investment (up to \$5,000 excluding GST). • Upon receipt of evidence of payment for infrastructure, Rural Finance will arrange for payment of the grant funds via electronic funds transfer to the applicant's nominated account. • Applicants can submit up to two claims for reimbursement of funds, up to the maximum of \$5,000. Any additional claims will be considered by Rural Finance on a case-by-case basis.



Applicants must declare they have met the relevant criteria and will be expected to provide documentation to demonstrate the eligibility criteria have been met. This will include the following documentation:

- Proof of property location – e.g. copy of latest Council Rates notice, lease agreement or share farming agreement that confirms the place where the Primary Production Business is operating.
- Proof of Income – latest available Tax Return and Financial Statements for the Primary Production Business.
- Proof of ID – such as valid Drivers Licence
- Quotation and any supporting documentation for the proposed infrastructure investment

All costs in connection with this application are the responsibility of the applicant.

Rural Finance reserves the right to request further information from you or from any business or individual you have engaged, to assist in assessing your application and to verify any information provided in your application. Failure to provide such information may result in Rural Finance refusing your application.

Rural Finance reserves the right to refuse an application where eligibility criteria are not met, or where the applicant does not or cannot provide sufficient information for Rural Finance to assess whether eligibility criteria have been met.

GST is excluded from the grant payment.

Grants under this program may result in financial, taxation, legal or other implications for the applicant. It is strongly recommended applicants seek independent financial advice regarding these possible impacts. Applicants may also seek advice from the Australian Tax Office on 1800 806 218 if they have further questions about their individual situation.

Rural Finance is contracted to administer this program on behalf of the Victorian Government and has absolute discretion in relation to the awarding of grants in accordance with these guidelines. In the case of dispute, Agriculture Victoria may review the application and provide a final determination. Agriculture Victoria has absolute discretion in the awarding or refusal of a grant.

In exceptional circumstances, consideration may be given to applicants who do not meet the eligibility criteria, upon agreement between Rural Finance, Agriculture Victoria and other relevant Victorian Government Departments. The applicant will be responsible for providing sufficient reasons or evidence for being considered as an exceptional case. The decision of Rural Finance and Agriculture Victoria will be final.

9. REQUIREMENTS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE SITING, CONSTRUCTION AND/OR INSTALLATION

Primary producers are required to ensure that siting, construction and/or installation of on-farm drought infrastructure meets relevant Victorian laws and that best practice advice is observed, where relevant. A permit is required to construct permanent or fixed feeding infrastructure for seasonal or supplementary feeding for grazing animal production constructed within 100 metres of:

- A waterway, wetland or designated flood plain
- A dwelling or small second dwelling not in the same ownership
- A residential or urban growth zone.

Further information on stock containment area siting, design and management can be found at agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/land-and-pasture-management/stock-containment-areas-for-emergencies

Further information about farm management practices in dry seasons can be found on the Agriculture Victoria website: agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/dry-seasons-and-drought-support.



10. FUNDING SOURCE

The Victorian Government is providing increased support to assist farmers impacted by drought conditions. The Government has provided funding of \$12.1 million (including administration costs) for the On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Grants program.

11. DURATION OF THE PROGRAM

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

12. DEFINITIONS

Evidence of payment means:

- a. Tax invoice(s) showing full details of the goods or services provided. The goods and services described on each invoice must be clearly identifiable. Invoices must include the seller's identity and ABN, the date the invoice was issued, and the GST amount (if any).

AND

- b. A copy must be provided of official receipt(s) from suppliers or contractors and/or a copy of an applicant's bank transfer(s) or bank statements.

Primary Production Business means:

- a. A business that involves primary production, as listed under the Australian New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification 2006 (ANZSIC) 1292.0 Codes 01-05, including the agricultural, apicultural, aquacultural, forestry, grazing and horticulture industries.
- b. For which an entity holds an Australian Business Number (ABN)

13. EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

The Victorian Government may conduct an evaluation to determine the extent to which the On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Grants program has contributed to Victorian Government policy objectives. Grant recipients may be requested to provide information to assist in auditing or evaluation of the program after the program's completion.

14. 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

15. PUBLICITY

Grant recipients may be asked to assist Agriculture Victoria in promotion of the Program. This may include involvement in media releases, case studies or promotional events and activities.

Agriculture Victoria may request recipients to fact check any text and seek all relevant approvals in order for Agriculture Victoria to use any imagery provided by the recipient associated with the Program prior to the publication of any such promotional materials.

Recipients must not make any public announcement or issue any press release regarding the receipt of a grant without the prior written approval of Agriculture Victoria.

Agriculture Victoria may publicise the benefits accruing to the recipient and/or the State of Victoria associated with the provision of an On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Grant.

16. PRIVACY

Any personal information provided by the Applicant or a third party in an application will be collected by Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Ltd (using the brand name of Rural Finance) on behalf of Agriculture Victoria (the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action) for the purpose of administration of the Program. This information may be provided to Agriculture Victoria and other Victorian Government bodies for the purposes of assessing On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Grant applications. Agriculture Victoria and Rural Finance will be auditing and monitoring applications and may contact you for clarification, program review and evaluation.



Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Ltd complete a range of eligibility assessments and identity validation processes. By choosing to apply for the On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Grants program you are granting permission for:

- Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Ltd to confirm your identity and eligibility by verifying the information you provide in your application.
- Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Ltd to verify your identity and eligibility through mechanisms such as your ABN, driver's licence, or date of birth, including providing consent for Bendigo and Adelaide Bank to have your information checked with the document issuer or official record holder via third party systems.

By choosing to submit an application for the On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Grants program, you are acknowledging that parts of the information you have provided may be sent to a third party for verification purposes. No personally identifiable information will be retained by those parties, and your information will not be used by those parties to contact you at any time, nor will your information be shared by those parties, to any other parties.

Data gathered through assessments may be compiled, aggregated and made anonymous by Rural Finance and Agriculture Victoria (DEECA) for Program reporting, evaluation and research purposes.

Any personal information collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred will be held in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and other applicable laws.

If there is an intention to include personal information about third parties in the application, please ensure they are aware of and consent to the contents of this privacy statement.

Rural Finance is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. Enquiries about access to personal information, or for other concerns regarding the privacy of personal information, can be emailed to Rural Finance at admin@ruralfinance.com.au. Rural Finance's privacy policy is also available by emailing admin@ruralfinance.com.au

17. FRAUDULENT CLAIMS

By signing the application form, you are declaring that the information provided in the application form and supporting documentation is true, accurate and not misleading about a material fact.

Providing inaccurate, untrue, or misleading information may result in an offence being committed and serious penalties may apply.

If any information provided in an application or supporting documentation is found to be inaccurate, untrue, or misleading, legal action may be taken against the applicant, including action to recover the funds.

18. DISCLAIMER

This publication may be of assistance to you but Rural Finance and the Victorian Government and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

Rural Finance and the Victorian Government reserve the right in their absolute discretion to amend the guidelines without notice or discontinue the program or approve amendments to administration arrangements.

Accessibility

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