

Conclusions

Responsive project management and the involvement of the RIG was seen to have been a critical part of the success of the project and the learning that came out of it. Monitoring and Evaluation provided strong support and provided input into reporting and management decisions. Across the three years of the project, a total of six progress reports were submitted to DAWE – one every six months (February and August). All were *accepted as meeting milestone achievements of the Work Plan*.

The quality and effectiveness of the project management was consistently highly rated over the life of the project, with the monthly meetings a key activity that kept everyone informed of progress and clear on what needed to be achieved going forward. The organisation and running of the RIG meetings were also highly praised by those involved and considered a highly successful part of the project.

This project is very rich in the quantity and types of data being collected and then utilised to make better farmer decisions. For growers and advisors understanding soil moisture, and how that relates to the soil they have can add value and confidence to decisions being made through-out the calendar year.

One of the most consistent ‘speed bumps’ discovered so far in this extension of this project is the quality of data collected from soil moisture probes and farmer yield maps. Experience in reviewing data and working with farmers improve the way they collect data is improving this.

The RIG was seen to have demonstrated its value and a similar approach has a positive role to play in future projects. Broadening extension activities beyond the validation sites was seen as a way of creating greater awareness and interest across the region.



There have been limitations and gaps identified in fully delivering on these longer-term outcomes as summarised below:

Gaps: While the project has helped to improve understanding about plant available water and soil characteristics in the region, there was still some concern about the value of moisture probes Yield Prophet tools, and weather forecasting to support decision-making.

Application: While the probes are acknowledged as providing significant data, the team is still working to understand how to apply that knowledge. There are still gaps in understanding the meaning of specific soil moisture probe readings and appropriate responses. More work is also needed to manage for variability in data across paddocks and larger areas and it was agreed “there is still a long way to go in [achieving the ultimate goal] the project [producing real time sub-paddock scale plant available water (in mm) maps].”

Limitations: There is good evidence to show that the project has had a positive impact on those directly involved, but its benefit beyond this cohort is acknowledged to have been limited to date. Stakeholders generally agreed, project impact on a broader constituency remains to be seen. Relationships have grown through working and sharing knowledge, but messages are yet to connect with wider farmer communities. Inconsistency in soil moisture probe technology in the output they provide has proved to be very challenging. This has created issues with the implementation of probes as a ‘tool’ on farm and the use of the data they provide to drive the Square V platform.

When asked towards the end of the project what the key issues were going forward, RIG members nominated: Communicating to and engaging a wider audience outside of the RIG including *getting a greater understanding of the value of the project outputs to on farm decision making; Soil water extrapolation; more work on the cumulative NDVI method of assessing plant available water across the landscape; and refining the nitrogen mineralisation calculator* were other issues identified. It was suggested the effectiveness of the project should be assessed by how well it is *seen, valued, understood and used by the farming community.*



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Project Funders



Project Proponents



Project Partners

