

Media Release

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With pix from the event



KNOWLEDGE ABOUT INNOVATIVE SOLAR / GRID POWER SUPPLY PROJECT IS SHARED

EXPERTS gathered in a Bundaberg cane field yesterday (Wednesday May 15) to share knowledge about a ground-breaking and innovative hybrid solar / grid power supply project which is reducing irrigator farmer electricity costs by 73%..

A representative from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), the General Manager of the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, the CEO of the National Irrigators Council, the CEO of the Queensland Farmers Federation, and delegates from the Local Government Association of Queensland and Ergon Energy flew in for the Field Day event, held at the project site.

"The 'Adapting Renewable Energy Project' is being funded by ARENA, with Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group (BRIG) the administrator, and the project is presenting compelling results with local, national and potentially global results," said BRIG spokesman Dale Holliss.

At the event, suppliers and enterprises providing vital components of this ground-breaking project were on hand to talk with the many farmers who also attended the Field Day. These supplies included REAQUA, Sunfam, Solardyne and Zener Electric Queensland.

"The Field Day was a chance to share information and learnings to date from the three-year project, which concludes in 2020, and to view the tailored equipment in action," said Mr Holliss.

"This step forward in irrigation and other bulk water usage has huge implications not just nationally, but globally. Any farming or other operation using megalitres of water on an ongoing basis – whether high pressure or trickle – could reap the benefits.

"Tailored technologies to reduce pumping costs for irrigating farmers are desperately needed, whether the crop be sugarcane, cotton, wheat, canola or small crops."

"Australia is already acknowledged for its world-class research, and this project is confirming that status. This knowledge will be shared across the globe to benefit the whole world."

Mr Holliss said the benefits of hybrid solar / grid power method were evident, with the project showing the costs of pumping water could be reduced by 73%, from around \$116 per megalitre to \$23 a megalitre.

"This project is in line with global thinking around sustainable production of food and fibre, and maximising use of the natural resource of sunlight, of which Australia has ample supplies," he said.

"This hybrid technology will empower irrigating farmers to water to suit their crops, not to fit in with power tariffs," he said. "It also has a major value add – it is putting long-awaited lifestyle choices into irrigated farming. The system can be operated remotely, via a mobile phone or other smart device. A farmer can be at home in their living room, or on holiday, and still be able to turn their pumps on and off."

The farm on which the solar / grid power project is being trialled just outside Bundaberg is owned by the Killer family.

Josh Killer said that the project had already delivered enormous benefits to his operations, and he would continue with it after the project finished.

"Our farm management strategy is no longer constrained by energy costs, and we are much more able and willing to irrigate according to crop need rather than worrying about the enormous expense of turning on the pumps," he said. Mr Killer also is able to be away from his farm, yet still turn on the pumps as required.

Mr Holliss said a range of ways to offer flexible, affordable options around solar / grid combos had already been identified.