



Ray Thornton expects to water his faba beans in the next fortnight.

Many positives from upgrade

Crop farmer Ray Thornton sees nothing but positives from two irrigation upgrades to his 240 ha Yalca property, and faster watering is not even at the top of his list.

He has grown corn since the 1980s and this year also has faba beans and canola in the mix.

He said the new fast-flow border check irrigation had an immediate impact on the corn yield.

While he still places his four-day order with Goulburn-Murray Water for a delivery to the backbone channel, the water now goes on and off rapidly, preventing waterlogging in the clay-loam soil before it returns to a large recycle dam for its next use.

"In the past, there would still be surface water (on the crop)," Mr Thornton said.

"With fast flow I save water, but the crop health and production increase can't be underestimated, it's just logical."

In mid-2012, Mr Thornton signed a contract with (now defunct) Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project and a second with Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority.

Mr Thornton said it had been a hectic couple of years since then; as well as acting as project manager, Mr Thornton did much of the earth-moving himself, including filling in the 1.2 km G-MW spur channel that the projects made redundant and bedding in the 5 km of pipes to his liking before filling in the trenches.

"It went smoothly, but there was a lot to do."

Automation on the project was by Rubicon Water, pipes and risers by Mick Hogan Excavations, pumps from W & P Pumps at Kyabram and electric motors were supplied by BCS Motion Technology, Shepparton.

The Goulburn Broken



Watering under the new system is faster, and saves water. Pictures: Cathy Walker



A large recycle dam ensures every drop of water that comes off the irrigated paddocks under the fast-flow system can be used again.

CMA project was funded from the Victorian On-farm State Priority Project through round two of the Farm Water Program.

It involved channel works and upgrades, automation and installation of pipe-and-risers. Half of the water saved was transferred to the government for environmental purposes.

Although the property is close to dairy farms, it has never been used for that purpose "apart from a house cow", Mr Thornton said, rolling his eyes as he

recalled how it had to be milked each morning before school.

Mr Thornton's great-grandfather established the farm in 1920 and drove a horse and gig up the road to check sheep on another block.

But Mr Thornton said animals tied people to a property 24-seven.

His great-grandfather would struggle to grasp how Mr Thornton now can control his fast-flow irrigation from his phone, anywhere in the world.



Moisture probes show a much more even moisture profile in the paddocks since the system was upgraded to automated fast-flow irrigation.

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