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Drought portal shares research benefits

Drought is on the lips of everyone from Canberra to Karratha and the focus has been on what affected producers can do to minimise the effect of the big dry.

With this in mind, the Council of Rural Research and Development Corporations' Chairs have launched a Drought Portal on their website www.ruralrdc.com.au to help those involved in agriculture, fisheries and forestry to access practical tools and research results dealing with managing through drought.

Chair of the Council Terry Enright says the Drought Portal will act as a hub of relevant information from all the RDCs and enable advice to be shared easily across industries.

"Each year the Rural RDCs fund a number of different projects, both individually and collaboratively, to assist producers to manage the effects of drought," Mr Enright said.

"In 2005-2006 over 20% of Rural RDC investment was directed towards Natural Resource Management (NRM) projects.

"These projects include the Managing Climate Variability Program which has invested \$7.6 million over three years researching Australia's climate variability; the likely impacts of this variability on agriculture and NRM; and how to manage these impacts.

"Seven rural R&D Corporations contribute to this program, which has launched initiatives such as Yield Prophet, a web-based tool for simulating crop growth by combining region-specific climate data with information on crop condition and seasonal outlook."

External evaluation of the Managing Climate Variability program has estimated that the benefits of this investment in climate research and development will double from an initial investment cost of \$10 million to \$20 million over 25 years.

Other project results that producers will be able to access through the Rural RDC Drought Portal include Meat & Livestock Australia's Rainfall to Pasture Growth Outlook Tool which shows actual rainfall and indices of soil moisture and pasture growth.

"The web-based Rainfall to Pasture Outlook tool was awarded fourth place in the Business Review Weekly's Top 10 innovative new products, further evidence that rural R&D is highly regarded and at the cutting edge of technology capability," Mr Enright said.

"Our aim is to bring technology and innovation like this to producers in different industry sectors. One of the great advantages of rural R&D investment is that the results are able to flow beyond that of the industry R&D Corporation funding it."

The Drought Portal can be accessed via the Rural R&D Corporations' Chairs website www.ruralrdc.com.au and will be updated on a regular basis to include further results, tools and advice as it comes to hand.

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