

Australia's Grower Group to develop water planning tools for farmers

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A significant portion of Australia's grain harvest is produced in Western Australia's southwest Wheatbelt, despite a drop of more than 20 per cent in annual rainfall since the 1970s.

The region's farmers are among the world's most productive but are working to better understand how their dams can function in dry years.

That's where the WaterSmart Dams: Making Dams Work Again project comes in.

Led by the Grower Group Alliance, WaterSmart Dams received \$3 million over 3 years in funding from the Future Drought Fund's (FDF) Innovation Grant program and \$1 million from the Western Australian state government.

Through the FDF South-West Western Australian Adoption and Innovation Hub, and in partnership with regional grower groups, the project is researching ways to make dams function better in drought.

This includes co-designing new farm water planning tools to help farm businesses and regional communities become more water-efficient, resilient and profitable, in even the driest years.

"The South-West Australian Hub is all about collaboration and getting important projects off the ground," Mark Holland hub Director told the 2022 FDF Science to Practice Forum.

â??Our core goals and project focus are exemplified by this project and its sister program WaterSmart Farms, which address farmersâ?? critical water security needs.â??

Project partners include Compass Agricultural Alliance, Southern Dirt, Merredin and Districts Farm Improvement Group and the Fitzgerald Biosphere Group. Researchers are from The University of Western Australia and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.