Irrigated Horticulture in the Victorian Murray-Mallee

Summary - 2015 Crop Report

The Victorian Murray-Mallee
Irrigation region comprises an irrigable area of 33,310 hectares. This includes 1646 properties in five pumped irrigation districts (Nyah, Robinvale, Red Cliffs, Mildura and Merbein) and 448 properties irrigated by private diverters in areas outside the pumped districts.

Crop types
Nut plantings (of which 99% were almonds) were the dominant crop type in 2015. The area of nut trees increased by 18,980 ha (986%) from 1997 to 2015. Grapevines were the dominant crop type from 1997 to 2012.

The irrigable area in 2015 was 73,015 ha comprising:
- 70% permanent plantings;
- 13% irrigated seasonal crops;
- 14% vacant or not irrigated for less than 10 years; and
- 3% vacant or not irrigated for more than 10 years.

78% of permanent plantings and 89% of seasonal crops were irrigated in the private diverter areas in 2015.

Irrigation development
Across the Murray-Mallee region the irrigable area increased by 84% (33,310 ha) from 1997 to 2015. The irrigable area of the five pumped irrigation districts decreased by less than 1% (55 ha). In the private diverter areas,

At a glance

The irrigable area increased by 84% from 1997-2015, with nut plantings the dominant crop for the first time in 2015.

This fact sheet is a summary of information contained in the Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) 2015 Irrigated Horticulture Crop Report. It is based on a time series of high-resolution orthophoto imagery (scale-accurate, digital aerial photography). Crop details are derived from grower input or interpretation of imagery and field surveys. The report is the continuation of a series of triennial crop reports first produced in 1997 along the Murray River from Nyah to the South Australian border.
the irrigable area increased by 150% (33,365 ha). Expansion in the private diverter areas predominantly occurred in the Boundary Bend and Wemen river reaches.

**Irrigation properties**

There were approximately 2047 irrigation properties in the Victorian Murray-Mallee in 2015. Property numbers declined by 17% (405 properties). The number of properties with an irrigable area of less than 40 ha declined by 483, while the number over 40 ha increased by 78. The average property size more than doubled, from 16 ha in 1997 to 36 ha in 2015.

79% of properties were in the pumped irrigation districts (average property size 11 ha).

21% of properties were private diverters (average property size 124 ha).

**Grapevines**

Grapevines were predominantly grown in the Murray-Mallee region for wine production from 1997 to 2015.

In 2015, there were 20,150 hectares of grapevine plantings comprising:
- 49% wine grapes;
- 36% table grapes;
- 15% dried grapes; and
- Less than 1% for other purposes including research, juicing or canning.

**Irrigation methods**

Drip irrigation was the dominant irrigation method across the Murray-Mallee region from 2006 to 2015. Prior to 2006 the dominant irrigation method changed from furrow (in 1997) to overhead sprinklers by 2003.

In 2015 the irrigable area of 73,015 ha comprised:
- 57% drip irrigation;
- 12% low level irrigation;
- 10% overhead sprinklers or pivots;
- 4% furrow and flood irrigation; and
- 17 percent not irrigated.

**Salinity impact zones**

Irrigated crops in the Victorian Murray-Mallee are predominantly in the lowest river salinity impact zone (LIZ 1). The area irrigated in the high impact zone (HIZ) decreased by 34% from 1997 to 2015.

In 2015 the irrigable area comprised:
- 48% in LIZ 1;
- 21% in LIZ 2;
- 3% in LIZ 3;
- 13% in LIZ 4; and
- 15% in the high impact zone (HIZ).

**More information**

Further information and the full Mallee CMA 2015 Irrigated Horticulture Crop Report can be obtained from the Mallee CMA or downloaded from the website at: www.malleecma.vic.gov.au

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