

# New irrigation methods save water, increase yields



Overhead low pressure irrigation has saved water and increased yields on Chris and Sonya Hesp's Burdekin cane farm

## SHORT & SWEET OF IT

- Chris and Sonya Hesp recently concluded a four year sugarcane crop cycle trial comparing a lateral/pivot irrigation system to flood.
- The ditch-fed lateral irrigation system is 600 meters long.
- The Hesp's found the new form of irrigation in the Burdekin area to be much more economical with water usage.
- Efficiently designed irrigation systems, including overhead irrigation systems such as this, could be an eligible project for some Burdekin and Tableland cane growers under RWUE-IE.

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**RURAL WATER USE EFFICIENCY IRRIGATION FUTURES INITIATIVE**



### Supplied by Lindsay Corporation

Lindsay Corporation has a new case study showing how overhead low pressure irrigation helped a North Queensland cane farm save water and increase yields.

Hesp Farms is in the Burdekin region, one of Australia's largest and most productive sugarcane growing areas. Since 1991, farm owners Chris and Sonya Hesp have grown 607 hectares (1,500 acres) of flood irrigated sugarcane.

The Hesp's, along with other members of the Mulgrave Area Farm Integrated Action (MAFIA) grower group, recently concluded a four year sugarcane crop cycle trial comparing a lateral/pivot irrigation system to flood irrigation systems.

The trial, entitled "Evaluating Alternative Irrigation for a Greener Future," included soil moisture monitoring and tracking of water runoff and nitrogen levels.

The trial, detailed in the case study, demonstrated that agronomically alternative irrigation systems, including

overhead low pressure irrigation, can deliver water in an effective manner to grow high-yielding commercial crops of sugarcane.

The ditch-fed lateral irrigation system at Hesp Farms is 600 meters (1,968 feet) long.

The Hesp's planted their first sugarcane crop under the lateral in March of 2006. They have since increased their lateral irrigation use from 44 hectares (108 acres) to 132 hectares (326 acres) of farmland in the last two years.

With lateral irrigation, growers experience less water waste, according to Richard Hall, Lindsay Regional Manager, Southeast Asia, Australia/New Zealand.

"As growers deal with the drier weather in Australia, controlling the timing and amount of water that is applied is crucial to maximum yield," Hall says. "The overhead low pressure irrigation system on the Hesp farm helps prevent contamination to nearby water sources and complements the trend of green cane harvesting and trash blanketing." ▶

Chris Hesp added, "The lateral irrigation system is a new form of irrigation in our area. It is much more economical with water usage. As a result of green cane trash blanketing, we did not have to burn the trash and the trash on the ground actually helps to enrich the soil and keep water evaporation down, acting like mulch."

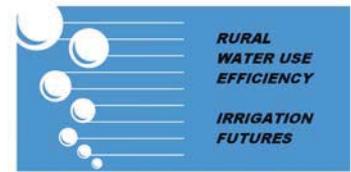
For a free copy of the case study, visit <http://www.zimmatic.com/sugar-cane>.

### About Lindsay

*Lindsay Corporation is a leading provider of automated mechanical move irrigation equipment and of transportation safety products. The company manufactures and markets center-pivot, lateral-move and hose reel irrigation systems which are sold through its worldwide network of dealers. The company's Zimmatic, Growsmart, FieldNET and LAKOS brands are recognised for their quality and technological leadership. The company also manufactures and markets infrastructure road safety and congestion mitigation products under the Lindsay Transportation Solutions name. In addition, the company produces large-diameter steel tubing and railroad signaling lights and structures. ■*

## Rural Water Use Efficiency: Irrigation Futures program open

The funding announced under the Queensland Government's 'Rural Water Use Efficiency for Irrigation Futures' program will work slightly differently than in previous years. Under this round, incentives and extension assistance has been honed in on the following areas:



Improving irrigation management for a profitable and sustainable future.

### Burdekin

Provide on-farm technical extension activities and financial assistance to assist irrigators to mitigate against water table rises. Implement decision support weather and soil moisture networks to assist irrigators to better schedule irrigations.

### Tablelands

Provide on-farm technical extension activities and financial assistance to assist irrigators to mitigate against water table rises.

### Central & southern regions

Provide on-farm technical and extension advice to assist irrigators to achieve best practice in on-farm water management. Implement decision support weather and soil moisture networks to assist irrigators to better schedule irrigations.

For more information about how to apply for assistance through the Rural Water Use Efficiency for Irrigation Futures program, contact the Project Manager, Burn Ashburner on [Burn\\_Ashburner@canegrowers.com.au](mailto:Burn_Ashburner@canegrowers.com.au) or 07 3864 6474. ■

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