

Media Release from Water New Zealand re boost to irrigation funding

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Water New Zealand welcomes boost to irrigation funding

Water New Zealand welcomes the Government's decision to earmark \$80 million to fund irrigation schemes in the 2013 Budget. Large scale off-farm harvesting, storage and distribution water infrastructure for irrigation comes with a hefty price tag. The funding announced today is likely to be a deal maker, bringing planned schemes to fruition. This has to be good news for the New Zealand economy says Water New Zealand's chief executive, Murray Gibb.

"Our tradable sector is in the main biologically based, and provides our competitive advantage in an increasingly resource constrained world. If New Zealand wants to compete internationally it has to grow this sector of the economy," he said.

"New Zealand is extraordinarily water rich, but we only capture and use about two per cent of annual water runoff, which is low by international standards."

"Close to half a million hectares of dryland farmland in drier eastern parts of New Zealand could be irrigated. Across the globe the rule of thumb for irrigated land is a 300 per cent increase in production over dryland equivalent, and more reliable and sustainable watering means better quality production and a doubling again of the value of output. Having more of that going on in New Zealand just makes plain common sense,"

"The challenge for irrigators in realising New Zealand's irrigation potential is in funding the capital cost of both on farm and off farm infrastructure. Having the Government commit this funding as an investor will be a circuit breaker and all New Zealanders will benefit," said Mr Gibb.

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Contact Murray Gibb

Chief Executive Water New Zealand

Phone 0274 916 956

Water New Zealand

Water New Zealand is an independent not for profit association of water professionals and organisations. It is the country's largest water industry body, providing leadership and support in the water sector through advocacy, collaboration and professional development. Members are drawn from all areas of the water management industry including regional councils and territorial authorities, consultants, suppliers, government agencies and scientists. See www.waternz.org.nz for more information.