

**NATIONAL AG DAY - IRRIGATION A KEY DRIVER IN GROWING  
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION  
(21/11/2017)**

NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC) has welcomed the launch of National Ag Day as a timely and very important initiative to reconnect urban Australia with farmers and their food and fibre production. The Council congratulated the National Farmers Federation on its initiative to launch an annual day that focusses on building the links between the broader community and farmers, and improve the public appreciation of farming.

NSWIC CEO, Mark McKenzie, said the fact that so few Australians – only 4% - recognised Agriculture as the fastest growing sector of the Australian economy showed the importance of starting a new conversation with the community about where their food and fibre comes from, and the importance of agriculture to Australia.

“As an irrigation sector organisation we are also reaching out to urban Australians on the importance of irrigation as a key driver of farm production. In NSW alone, irrigated agriculture is worth between \$2.9 billion and \$3.5 billion at the farmgate and \$6.3 billion to \$7.7 billion once those dollars flow through the economy in employment and purchase of goods and services that support farm production. Around 700,000 hectares of farmland in NSW is irrigated – so irrigation is vital to the regional and State economies. Our capacity to achieve the next target of building Australian Agriculture into a \$100 billion industry and an even bigger export earner for the country, will rely on irrigated agriculture continuing its recent strong trend of producing more food and fibre with less water – efficiency gains that are supercharging irrigated farm productivity.”

“Our biggest earners in irrigated agriculture in NSW are cotton, which has reduced its water use per hectare by 40% over the last decade, in a world leading performance; followed by fruit and nuts, vegetables and dairy to round out the top four. But irrigation is also vital in production of rice (which has also increased productivity enormously by immediately following rice with cereal crops), and in growing feed for beef, sheep meat, pork and poultry production. People’s shirts on their backs and most of their food staples are produced with irrigation water,” Mr McKenzie said.

Mr McKenzie said the Council looked forward to National Ag Day becoming an important fixture in the national calendar. ENDS.

For Further Information:

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