



SOUTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES DROUGHT RESILIENCE ADOPTION AND INNOVATION HUB

KEY MESSAGES

- The Southern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub (Southern NSW Hub) enables regional communities to have a voice in drought resilience activities, gain access to resources, and provides tools and programs to assist adoption
- The work to date has revealed that while many learnings can be applied from past droughts, there are still knowledge gaps that could be filled by helping farmers not only in managing current situations but being prepared for climate variability.

BACKGROUND

The partners in the Southern NSW Hub are the Australian National University, Charles Sturt University, University of Canberra, NSW Department of Primary Industries, NSW Local Land Services, Rural Aid and the Farming Systems Groups Alliance, which includes Riverine Plains. The Hub encompasses most of the Macquarie River catchment and lower reaches of the Darling River, the Illawarra and South Coast, Riverina, Australian Alps, Western NSW and includes Canberra, Dubbo, Orange and Bathurst and their surrounding regions.

The Knowledge Broker Network, established by the Hub, has provided opportunities to build capacity in Riverine Plains staff members as well as share knowledge between professionals at various partner organisations. The Southern NSW Hub works with the Knowledge Broker network and Universities to provide relevant resources as well as support projects that help address identified priorities across southern NSW.


PROJECTS

As a result of collaboration with the Southern NSW Hub and various partner organisations, Riverine Plains has been involved in three projects within the Drought Resilient Soils and Landscapes grant program.

The *Improved drought resilience through optimal management of soils and available water* project showcases the work of John Kirkegaard's previous small-scale field trials looking at increased water use efficiency, soil organic carbon and nitrogen utilisation. The *Saving Our Soils During Drought* project demonstrated the best practice application of stock containment areas and was supported by a comprehensive suite of tools, materials and information to provide producers with knowledge and confidence to adopt. The *Changing landscapes with drought resilient pastures* project uses the latest research on species and management to increase the use of perennial pasture species within farming landscapes, to increase resilience during dry seasons.

Riverine Plains is also involved in the *On-Farm Water Management* project which will assist farmers to prepare and implement on-farm water management plans. These plans will be developed at workshops and one-on-one sessions to help farmers determine their stock and domestic water requirements and the capacity to meet these needs.

The Southern NSW Hub have awarded multiple partner organisations, including Riverine Plains, co-design grants which will assist with development of various projects and programs. To this end, Riverine Plains has completed co-design and consultation with our members and industry on the topic of succession planning and the challenges associated with starting the journey.

An aerial photograph of a vast green agricultural field. In the center, a large, dark green tree stands prominently. To the left of the tree, a small flock of sheep is grazing. The field is bordered by a dark brown strip, likely a plowed area or a different crop. In the background, a line of trees and a distant horizon under a cloudy sky are visible.

Finally, the Southern NSW Hub have been successful in the recent Future Drought Fund (FDF) Long Term Trial grant process, with Riverine Plains to be involved in the Long Term Field Trials in Southern NSW project. This project will see six years of small plot trials research extended to demonstration sites managed by farming systems groups such as Riverine Plains.

FUTURE OF THE SOUTHERN NSW HUB

A further commitment by the Australian Government has now also been announced committing to a further eight years of funding for the drought hub model subject to nation-wide review of the hubs. The Hub has produced a prospectus with a vision for the Hub's operations for the 2024-2028 period. The prospectus involves an enhanced and targeted focus on five impact areas for the SNSW region which include social and cultural resilience, enhancing and preserving the natural environment, ground cover, soil health and water, and water use. The prospectus has been submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) to be considered in the FDF 2024-28 Funding Plan.

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