

Garry Carlon

Benerembah, NSW

After recognising that some of the land on his Benerembah property wasn't suited to cropping, Garry Carlon made the decision to switch to high-value nut production more than a decade ago.

Land forming and the conversion of flood irrigation to drip systems ensured that decision was a successful one, with the thriving production of almonds complemented by summer and winter cropping on other parts of the property.

"We converted some country, that wasn't suitable for rice, to almonds. We previously had to pump the water, as the area was elevated so we couldn't gravitate it - so that's where we first did the almonds. It was high water-use land, it was too high value water requirements for rice, so we converted that area to horticulture."

Long history of water use improvements

Three generations of the Carlon family have been farming in the Benerembah area since the late 1960s, and Garry has seen many changes in the way the Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) system operates.

In the early days of farming, the family worked with MI to realign a channel that ran through the middle of the farm, relocating it to the boundary and straightening it. Those works turned a leaky channel which was causing salt issues, into a more efficient supply channel.

"It was a joint effort, we basically built the channel and MI built all the infrastructure. Some tile drainage was needed so MI installed that and we then took it over and maintained it, so I thought it was a good outcome for both of us."

"The continual updates of the irrigation systems by MI over the years have allowed us to continue to improve the efficiency of our farming." - Garry Carlon



Ongoing modernisation

Continued improvements to irrigation systems in more recent years have provided flexibility for Garry's cropping program, and he hopes that ongoing modernisation will also provide further opportunities for allocation enhancements in the MIA.

The introduction of technology allowing irrigators to control the flow of water at any time of the day, along with upgrading outlets to higher flow versions have already proven to be significant steps forward.

"Replacing the outlets seems to work well and we're getting higher flows which is good. We had about 13 outlets we have now replaced with only around five, so we've got bigger outlets, less of them and they're all fully automated."

