

Saving Water on the farm or ranch

We can all do our part to lessen the effects of limited water supplies this summer. We can start by conserving the water we use today. Here you will find helpful and common tips for saving water on your farm or ranch.

Fix any leaks in the irrigation system

Some studies have shown as much as 16 percent is lost due to leaks.

Make your irrigation system more efficient and easier to maintain

Consider a reduction in nozzle size or installation of drip irrigation. Research has shown that drip tape uses 30 percent to 50 percent less water than overhead irrigation.

Ensure pivot pressure regulators and nozzles are in good operating order

This will ensure uniformity of water distribution. Pressure regulators and nozzles should be replaced every 5-7 years to avoid uneven distribution.

Know how much water you are using

Install flow meters or other measurement devices that keep track of water use.

Monitor or test soil moisture

To save water, it is important to determine if moisture is penetrating below crop root zones. Water below the root zone means too much water is being applied.

Turn off end guns and leave the corners of fields fallow

Estimates are that this conservation measure may conserve as much as 13 percent of your water.

Plant less water-intensive crops

Shift to cropping patterns that are less water dependent than your current system. Plant varieties of crops that withstand dryness, hold water, and reduce the need for irrigation. Melons, tomatoes, squash and beans are better suited to dry conditions, while lettuce and corn rely on wetter conditions to thrive.



Tap into local resources

A variety of technical bulletins and online resources are available from partners around the state. The Extension Program through Oregon State University (OSU), the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and local soil and water conservation districts can help you find ways to use water more efficiently this year and beyond.

OSU Extension's Small Farms Program provides 15 ways to you help mitigate drought on your farm:
<http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/sfn/sp14drought>

Conserving water in agriculture through livestock water management during a drought:
<http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/20542/em8588-e.pdf>

Drought-related conservation practices from NRCS:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/?cid=stelprdb1075332>

Strategies for advancing water conservation in Agriculture, courtesy of the Oregon Environmental Council:
http://oeonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Making-Water-Work_web.pdf

NRCS, through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, can help fund irrigation systems, water management, livestock watering, vegetative buffers, and more:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/or/programs/farbill/?cid=stelprdb1193512#priorities>

Energy Trust of Oregon offers energy incentives for irrigation systems:
<http://energytrust.org/library/GetDocument/1875>

Grants offered from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board:
http://www.oregon.gov/OWEB/GRANTS/pages/grant_faq.aspx

Grants for feasibility studies offered from the Oregon Water Resources Department:
http://www.oregon.gov/owrd/Pages/LAW/conservation_reuse_storage_grant_program.aspx

Oregon Department of Energy's State Energy Loan Program is available for irrigation system improvements and has been used by irrigation districts to make energy and water efficiency upgrades:
<http://www.oregon.gov/energy/LOANS/docs/selp.pdf>

Oregon Department of Energy's Incentives Program offers tax credits for agricultural irrigation system improvements and adjustable flow irrigation pumping:
<http://www.oregon.gov/energy/BUSINESS/Incentives/Pages/EIP-SPP.aspx>

Directory of local Soil and Water Conservation Districts:
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/NaturalResources/SWCDDirectory.pdf>