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Funding still available for innovative farmers

NSW Department Primary Industries (DPI) has provided over \$35 million in low-interest-rate loans to primary producers through the Rural Assistance Authority's (RAA) Farm Innovation Fund (FIF), with another \$30 million still available.

The FIF helps farmers identify and address risks to their farming enterprises, improve permanent farm infrastructure, ensure long term productivity and sustainable land use, and adapt to changing seasonal conditions.

Alli Gartrell, Manager Program Administration is encouraging NSW farmers to apply for farm innovation funding while there is still money available.

"The fund provides long-term, low-interest loans to farmers across the state for permanent, on-farm infrastructure. Farmers can access up to \$250,000 at an interest rate fixed at 2.5% over 20 years," Ms Gartrell said.

"The Rural Assistance Authority has so far approved \$35,945,693 worth of loans, just over half of the \$65 million allocated to the initiative."

Loan applicants are asked to address one or more of the main criteria: drought preparedness, environment, farm infrastructure and natural resources.

Gunnedah producer Keith Perrett runs a mixed farming business across three properties and has already benefited from two FIF loans.

"We added a new property five or six years ago and some of the facilities were quite old. The storage facilities were only good for short term storage, so we couldn't market effectively," Mr Perrett said.

"Having put in some good long-term storage we were able to improve our average price by about \$100 per tonne."

Whilst the loans assist in implementing vital infrastructure, Mr Perrett says the financial benefit is just one change his business has experienced.

"Working with upgraded equipment and new stockyards means there's less stress on myself and the employees, and has improved workplace safety," he said.

"That all makes it easier on the livestock as well; they tend to be a lot calmer."

The FIF is part of the NSW Government's \$300 million drought package to ensure NSW is better prepared for future drought conditions.

For more information on how to apply for the Farm Innovation Fund visit the [DroughtHub website](#) or phone DPI's Rural Assistance Authority on 1800 678 593.

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