

Water Conservation



Sharp Farms is this year's winner for the Water Conservation Award.

The basis of selection of individual award winners was determined considering the following points:

- a. Adoption of improved irrigation management techniques, such as irrigation scheduling, system improvement, and remote monitoring and/or control.
- b. Adoption of cropping systems to match irrigation system capacities.
- c. Adoption of appropriate tillage systems to reduce soil water evaporation and improve soil water storage from precipitation.
- d. Evidence of field tests for the evaluation of irrigation system performance.
- e. Submission of crop water budgets that track soil water levels, irrigation applications and rainfall events and yield performance.
- f. Improvement and/or development of on-farm or ranch water supplies.

To earn the award, Sharp Farms has installed 5 pivot systems with EQIP assistance. Four of the 5 systems are covering 120 acres each while one is covering 110. All systems were put in roughly 4 years ago, and have had drops and drags added that improved water usage 27% above what was already seen.

There were several reasons given for starting such a project. One obviously was to ultimately use less water, but it is also a labor saving practice, as they no longer flood irrigate the acres, and we all know what is involved there.

The benefits of the project have been shown through the even distribution of the water on the fields. With the pivot systems, you don't have to worry about a concentration of the water at one end of the field or the other, as happened with flood irrigation. They are currently trying to convert all of their acres over to pivot systems rather than flood.