

TR-164

Farmers, Lenders and Water Districts Response to Texas

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There are 6.4 million irrigated acres in Texas with 80 percent irrigated from ground water and 20 percent irrigated from surface sources. This is compared to 8.6 million acres irrigated in 1979, a dramatic reduction. Total acre feet of water applied annually is approximately 8.8 million. This is 60-65 percent of all water use in Texas. However, irrigated land contributes about \$2.0 billion of output annually which has an economic impact to the state of over \$6.0 billion.

Thus, irrigation is important to the economy of Texas and particularly to the economic viability of rural communities over much of the state. There was a time when water was plentiful and there were only a limited numbers of users. With urbanization and growth in industry, water has become a limited resource. Continued pumping from the Ogallalla results in a declining water table. Urban demands in many areas have drawn heavily upon available supplies. The importance of water to the continued growth of agriculture, municipal and industrial sectors emphasizes the critical need for efficiency in use. The Texas Legislature enacted a program whereby low interest loans could be made available for the purchase of water conserving (more efficient) irrigation equipment. This was called the "Agricultural Water Conservation Loan Program." The legislation is covered under Texas Administrative Code sections 367.70-367.79 and are promulgated under the authority of the Texas Water Code, sections 6.101 and 17.903.

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