

## Upgrading with the help of Reef Rescue

### Ross and Sandra Patane

Ross and Sandra Patane have used Reef Rescue funds to replace flood irrigation with trickle tape, or drip irrigation. They grow eggplants and chilies near Ayr in north Queensland.

The conversion has saved two-thirds of the water they would normally use. Ross says they water more frequently but use less water. Trickle tape also delivers water more accurately to the roots of the plant.



They also run fertilisers through their irrigation system. The system is more efficient and the Patanes are finding that the plants produce better and production has increased by 30%.

The Patanes used to farm in Gumlu, a large horticulture area entirely under trickle tape. Finding the right filtering system for trickle irrigation has been tricky. The iron content in the water was blocking up the fine drippers. Mesh filters aren't effective under these conditions so they've opted for sand filters which cost up to \$40,000. Natural resource management group NQ Dry Tropics allocated \$18,000 towards the project.

Ross says they would have installed trickle irrigation regardless of whether they got funding; however Reef Rescue helped them afford it sooner rather than later.

Irrigating vegetables via trickle is an expected practice throughout Australia. Ross said they might not be exercising best practices on their farm but they are working on it.

"We were towards the bottom of practices, we're heading up. We're always trying to improve because the more you improve the less it costs you. Buyers are pushing us." He said.

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Further information contact [communications@nqdrytropics.com.au](mailto:communications@nqdrytropics.com.au)



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