

# Water for Profit

## CHOOSING A SOIL-WATER MONITORING TOOL



**There is a wide range of soil moisture monitoring devices that are available to assist growers make more informed irrigation scheduling decisions. If you are in the market for a scheduling tool, make sure you match its capabilities with your requirements. To assist making a decision ask yourself the following questions.**

### **How much time can I spend on taking measurements and interpreting data?**

It may be that you know that irrigation is vital but you don't have the time to allocate to data collection and interpretation. In some cases consultants are the best option. For others who can spend time with soil moisture monitoring, it's a matter of matching tool requirements with the time you have to gather and interpret data. Some tools such as Diviners, Gophers and tensiometers require manual collection of data. Others like EnviroScans, C-Probes and Buddy's will log data automatically with little manual input required.

### **What level of technology am I comfortable with?**

If you don't like to sit in front of computers, it's no good purchasing scheduling equipment that requires a lot of computer use. However, if you want a large amount of detailed information, most tools require a computer to display graphs. Choose a tool that won't have you quickly frustrated or conversely have you looking for more detail after only a short time. Tensiometers, Gophers and Diviners can be used as stand alone units in the paddock with the option of downloading to a computer, if required. A computer is absolutely necessary to view data gathered by an Enviroscan, C-probe or Buddy.

### **How much money am I willing to spend?**

The cost of equipment is relative to the level of information gathered and the amount of manual recording necessary. Irrigation is a crucial part of producing quality crops and poor management can be costly. Dollars spent now may be dollars gained latter. Typical prices for individual units vary so check with suppliers.

### **What other factors should I consider?**

Other factors to consider are listed below.

- Amount of soil variation across the property influences the number of units required.
- Enterprise size may influence who actually will be using the tool or for what purpose the tool will be used.
- Shallow-rooted crops are less likely to require tools with multiple sensor depths.
- Level of technical and maintenance support available.



For more details contact Growcom on 07 3620 3844.

*Disclaimer: This information is provided as a reference tool only. Seek professional advice for irrigation specifics.*

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