

Greater flexibility for growers needed during droughts

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Credit: George Hodan/public domain

A report, recently published by Cranfield University and the National Farmers Union (NFU), highlights the benefits for water users of more flexible mechanisms to access water during dry periods.

Emergency procedures had to be put in place by the Environment Agency (EA) this summer as many growers were close to running out of [water](#) and struggled to meet their crops' water demands.

Paul Hammett, NFU water specialist and co-author of the report, said: "The licence 'flexibility' introduced during the 2018 irrigation season offered immediate help to farmers facing [water shortages](#) but also highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of current water trading practices."

Alongside the report, Cranfield and the NFU co-ordinated a workshop with growers to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of current and potential water trading practices. Benefits included water being more readily-available but there were concerns over undesired impacts for the sector and the environment.

In the report, the authors recommend the introduction of 'secondary market' products that would allow agreements between buyers and sellers of water to be made significantly in advance of the exchange; at the beginning of the irrigation season, for example.

Dr. Dolores Rey, Lecturer in Water Policy and Economics and co-author, said: "From the workshop, it was clear that farmers would like to have a more active participation in the water market. We believe that introducing new products would offer greater flexibility and risk-reduction benefits to agriculture."

Cranfield and NFU will continue to work together with other key stakeholders to gather lessons learned from the recent [drought](#), with a view to building on the key messages contained in this [report](#).

More information: Assessing opportunities for secondary markets for water in response to proposed abstraction reforms:

[www.nfuonline.com/nfu-online/s ... dary-markets-oct-18/](http://www.nfuonline.com/nfu-online/s...dary-markets-oct-18/)

Provided by Cranfield University

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