Brent Reeve:

I'm the general orchard manager for Jeffrey Thompson Orchards. There's 125 hectares here. We're growing apples and pears, some stone fruit. And to do this, we need to have water to the plants at the optimal times and the correct amount of water to be put onto the trees depending on the weather conditions at the time.

Brent Reeve:

So, this orchard is 24 years old. The pumps were becoming inefficient. There was a lot of breakdowns. So, we decided to do an upgrade of the whole system. So, we replaced the four irrigation pumps, the two filters and put VSDs, variable speed drives, on all pumps as well. And that then maintains a constant pressure and has the power not fluctuating as much to run those. So, the VEU program, we started looking into that to recoup some costs on some of the efficiencies that we could gain from some of the upgrades on our older pump stations. And we are looking to hopefully recoup about 20% of the outline.

Emma Jacobs:

The Victorian Energy Upgrades program is a key part of Victoria's energy sector, emissions reduction pledge.

Ross Tunmer:

Essentially incentivises businesses to implement energy efficiency projects. This is done by comparing greenhouse gas emissions before and after the implementation of the project. The amount you can get from the VEU program varies by project, but this can be quite significant and it can range from anywhere between 10% to 100% of a project's total costs. To find out if your project is eligible, you can reach out to an accredited person.

Tomas Clarke:

The APs role is to help the companies to comply with their regulations and the guidelines, and to help them to complete the process till the certification creation.

Brent Reeve:

So, it was quite easy getting into the program. Reached out to an accredited person to help to make sure that we were eligible for the project. So, we did have to wait for pre-approval before we implemented the project. Started looking into the project a month or two beforehand and then gave some data sets out and got some quotes in on the pricing of what it was going to cost to upgrade the system. So, the data that I collected was a 12-month window. So, a 12-month usage of our water and the 12-month power consumption. Been a beneficial process that hasn't required too much of my time.

Arlen East:

Victorian Energy Efficiency Certificates, or VEECs, are electronic certificates which are awarded for each tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent which are reduced.

Ross Tunmer:

VEECs are generated through the process and sold to entities that are required to buy them under Victorian legislation. And the price of these VEECs varies with typical supply demand forces.

Brent Reeve:

So, my understanding of a VEEC is every greenhouse gas emission that we are not creating, we are getting paid for. So that's helping everyone.

Ross Tunmer:

Measuring energy consumption and other production data is not only important for the VEU program but can also be important for internal operations. You can't manage what you're not measuring.

Tomas Clarke:

The data is used for creating the baseline and to create the energy profile of the farm.

Brent Reeve:

I think it's been great for us doing this project. You can see the benefits of the savings in the future with energy, which is great for my family and for future generations. And hopefully other people will go down the same path and do the same types of things, which is only a benefit as we will be saving money over the next few years with this project as it has been. And also, that the system was getting older anyway and was going to fail. So, it's been a win-win for everybody in this process.

Nick Tsaktsiras:

Agriculture Victoria's website will have plenty of information there for Victorian farmers about the VEU program. Ultimately, the VEU program will assist Victorian farmers to reduce their energy costs, which means more money in their pockets.