Paul Harrison:

I'm one of the four founders of the business. We founded it 20 years ago, MainStream Aquaculture. We're an urban fish farm. We produce juvenile fish, which we call fingerlings. We also, on this facility, have a production plant which grows those juvenile fish up to one kilogram market size. In our best year we did 27 million fish annually.

Paul Harrison:

So, on this site, the important operational aspects are the re-use of water and water efficiency. We run what we call a recirculating aquaculture system, which is a system that continuously recirculates or reuses water. And that's where our energy consumption comes in. Using the VEU program, we implemented solar panels on our roof. It was a 500 kilowatt solar system. We identified that it could save us somewhere between 7 and 11% of total power consumption on this site.

Emma Jacobs:

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

Ross Tunmer:

It 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.

Paul Harrison:

We started looking into their program because we'd first identified that solar panels was a good business opportunity for us. We were looking for grants and other opportunities, and we'd contacted the Victorian Government, we'd contacted the Department of Aquaculture. We then went into the project expecting to get a minimum of 30% of the cost recovered. The figure is a little bit dependent on the price of leaks and so forth, but it's probably closer to 40 or 50%. The VEU program hasn't required a huge investment in time from my side, and I've been leading the program from our business with two others involved in it.

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.

Paul Harrison:

And each VEEC, or each energy certificate, is the equivalent to 1,000 kilograms of CO2 emission. So, the VEEC is issued to a company in proportion to how much energy has been saved by some of these energy saving initiatives.

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.

Paul Harrison:

The additional thing I'd say about this process is that here the accredited person does a lot of the work. So, it's one where you're really just having to provide some information and gain some assistance in getting the job done. But we found the process to be quite streamlined and quite straightforward.

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, help them fund technology upgrades on their properties, which means more money in their pockets.