Frank Young:

So the farm is a broiler poultry farm, where we grow broiler poultry birds for meat, all grown under RSPCA animal welfare standards. What we actually do is really just babysit those chickens. Look after those chickens provide the labour, the housing and the electricity gas that goes into running that operation looking after those birds.

Frank Young:

Our biggest cost in running this operation is gas, electricity, and labour. So energy efficiency is really important to us. It's a significant part of our running costs. We've been looking at different ways of saving our energy and reducing our carbon footprint. And after doing an energy audit assessment, we put in a 247 kilowatt solar system.

Emma Jacobs:

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

Ross Turner:

Essentially it 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 a hundred percent 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 the regulations and the guidelines, and to help them to complete the process till their certification creation.

Frank Young:

Having done an energy assessment through Ag Victoria, they actually prompted us towards the VEU program. We had then an accredited person reached out to us and went through the process, what the program was. The VEU program is a program put in place to help recoup costs of either energy efficiency projects, or energy generation projects. And that's been terrific for us to be able to save some money, but also as I said, reduce our carbon footprint along the way. So, the accredited person reached out to us for quite a lot of data. And it was data that we'd compiled anyway, through our energy assessments. So maybe it took me 10 or 15 hours worth of work, I suppose in piecing that together and going back and forth with information. So not a significant investment really in time, as far as being involved in the VEU program. I absolutely have to wait for pre-approval. And it was very well spelled out to us.

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 Turner:

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.

Frank Young:

As we reduced our greenhouse gas footprint, we created these Victorian Energy Efficiency Certificates. We expected to create around about 3000. We will measure the savings over time against the baseline and then the certificates will be generated from there. Then my understanding is the accredited person

will sell those certificates on our behalf and pay us whatever those certificates make. But we would hope that we could recoup somewhere in the order of 50% of the cost of putting the solar system in place.

Ross Turner:

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 Clark:

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

Frank Young:

I think the most valuable piece for us is it forced us into making a decision around an energy project, particularly reducing the carbon footprint, saving greenhouse gas, being a better corporate citizen from that point of view was really important. The savings in electricity, in dollars were secondary to that but also really important. But I certainly recommend people looking into it. It's been a real game changer for us.

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.