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Climate change boost for farmers next door

Sunraysia Daily, Mildura



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By Lauren Adcock

ladcock@sunraysiadaily.com.au

SUNRAYSIA'S Food Next Door Co-op has received a \$69,000 climate change adaptation grant.

The grant, distributed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), will fund a Community Water Bank (CWB) which will provide irrigation water for Food Next Door's farmers.

Food Next Door executive officer Deborah Bogenhuber said the project would demonstrate how community-owned water could support small-scale, regenerative agriculture farmers.

"The CWB will support the weekly local produce scheme, Out of the Box, where the produce is supplied by the Co-Op's farmer members and sold to the community," she said.

"Donations of irrigation water or funds to buy water from local businesses and communities will be sourced then given to the CWB.

"The water will then be allocated to member farms through an agreement with Food Next Door."

The project would be set up with partners including University of Melbourne, Mallee Regional Innovation Centre and Regional Development Victoria.

The grant was one of four Community Climate Change Adaptation grants awarded in the Loddon Mallee region totalling \$224,000.

"DELWP Loddon Mallee Community and Partnerships team are working with local communities to develop a climate change adaptation plan for the region," community partnerships officer Dona Cayetana said.

"The initiative is a three-year program providing practical support for communities to prepare for the challenges of a changing climate."



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Food Next Door growers mentor Peter Webb, Out of the Box operations manager Michelle Gray and Food Next Door executive officer Deb Bogenhuber.

Picture: Louise Barker