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# Alpine Valleys

## agribusiness forum

*'Australian Alpine Valleys - Where the Best Grows to Perfection'*

### **North East Farmer December 2009 Weather Stations**

In the near future North East Victoria will be well serviced with a network of four weather stations across the Ovens, Kiewa and King Valleys with an opportunity to expand the network to pick up Beechworth and the Lower Ovens Basin.

This weather station network will reduce the black spot coverage of the existing Bureau of Meteorology automated stations which are located at Wangaratta, Albury, Mt Hotham and Falls Creek. There are many more manual stations that report daily but do not have the hourly breakdown as is possible with the new weather stations that use 3G technology to download weather data at 15 minute intervals and will be available from the TAFCO website [www.tafoo.com.au](http://www.tafoo.com.au)

The data will be used by producers to:

- better manage the agronomy of diverse crops and improve animal health, environmental protection and the utilisation of natural resources, especially water and soils.
- Improve decision making over crop selection, irrigation and spray application
- Improve risk management decision making based on real time weather information such as frost, hail, fire, wind spray application and irrigation application
- Improve quality assurance, pest management and time management through better decision making

In conjunction, the archiving of this essential data will equip the industries of the future with the capacity to build sustainable practices and new modes for species selection and natural resource management.

The project, a major regional response to the challenges of climate change, has received substantial public and private support across numerous industries, local and state government agencies and community groups.

The weather stations will collect locally relevant data across the region, but will be of greatest benefit in the mountainous terrains of Victoria's Alpine region where data collection has been difficult due to the region's physically vast and varied landscape of peaks and valleys, in all manner of elevations and orientations.

The non availability of locally relevant environmental data in the Alpine region has severely limited the capacity of primary producers to manage their natural resources efficiently and respond adequately to changes in the environment.

Basic information like temperature, solar radiation, wind speed and humidity can be used to calculate evapotranspiration which in turn is used by irrigators to schedule the timing and duration of applications, resulting in substantial water savings.

There has been considerable interest by individuals and farmer organisations in the weather station project to date, with a similar project has been undertaken in Towong shire which provides SMS updates and the use of sensors to alert farmers to milk Vat temperatures and electric dog fence breakdowns.

This service has considerable potential to increase productivity, quality and efficiencies in natural resource management across virtually every industry in the region. Please go to the TAFCO web site for free access.

Please note the author is a share holder in TAFCO.

