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Environment & Energy News

Welcome to the latest edition of *Environment and Energy News*, the newsletter of the ABS Centre of Environment and Energy Statistics (CEES). *Environment and Energy News* is published twice a year, highlighting developments in environment and energy statistics.



PROVIDING GREATER LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION IN THE FIELD OF
ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY STATISTICS



Energy and water efficiency beats price

Australian householders ranked energy star rating more important than price or brand when buying a new refrigerator, freezer or clothes dryer, according to ABS' Energy Use and Conservation survey, released last month.

Water efficiency rating was ranked first for washing machines, although price was ranked the most important factor when buying a heater.

This compares with a previous survey in 2002, when price was generally the most important factor when choosing white goods.

Some of the other key findings in the survey were:

- The number of households with air-conditioning or evaporative cooling more than doubled between 1994 and 2008 – from almost a third (32%) to two-thirds of households (67%).

- The proportion of households using solar energy increased by 60% between 2002 and 2008 (from 5% to 8%). Most of this was for solar hot water.
- Leading states for solar hot water were the Northern Territory and Western Australia, where it was used by 54% and 21% of households respectively.
- Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Australian households used cold water in washing machines, an increase from 61% in 1994.
- Almost one in five households with an LCD TV had two or more of this type of TV.

For further information, see the publication *Environmental Issues: Energy Use and Conservation* (cat. no. 4602.0.55.001) released 28 November on the ABS website or contact Kay Barney, (02) 6252 6766 or email k.barney@abs.gov.au

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Recent releases

June 2008	NSW in Focus, 2008 (cat. no. 1338.1)
June 2008	Natural Resource Management on Australian Farms, 2006–07 (cat. no. 4620.0)
Aug 2008	Water and the Murray-Darling Basin – A Statistical Profile 2000–01 to 2005–06 (cat. no. 4610.0.55.007)
Aug 2008	Water Use on Australian Farms, 2006–07 (cat. no. 4618.0)
Aug 2008	Agriculture in Focus: Farming Families, Australia, 2006 (cat. no. 7104.0.55.001)
Sept 2008	Farm Management and Climate, 2006–07 (cat. no. 4625.0)
Sept 2008	Information Paper: What are environmental accounts? (cat. no. 4655.0.55.001)
Oct 2008	Information Paper: Methods of estimating the Gross Value of Irrigated Agricultural Production (cat. no. 4610.0.55.006)
Nov 2008	Environmental Issues: Energy Use and Conservation, March 2008 (cat. no. 4602.0.55.001)

Water and the Murray-Darling Basin: A Statistical Profile 2000–01 to 2005–06

Agriculture was the major user of water in the Murray-Darling Basin (83%), according to *Water and the Murray-Darling Basin – A Statistical Profile*, released in August 2008.

Water use in the Murray-Darling Basin represented around 65% of Australia's total agricultural water use.

The publication draws together economic, demographic and environmental data from ABS and other sources to paint a picture about this important region which covers 14% of Australia's land area, contains Australia's three longest rivers (the Darling, the Murray and the Murrumbidgee), and is home to 10% of Australia's population.

For further information, contact Bernard Morrison on (02) 6252 5321 or email bernard.morrison@abs.gov.au

Statistics and climate change

The November meeting of the Australian Statistical Advisory Council (ASAC) discussed the statistical implications of climate change and climate change strategies.

ASAC members noted the importance of ensuring the robustness of existing statistics, particularly as initiatives such as the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme are implemented. ASAC also noted the priority statistical information needs that are emerging such as information to support the efficient operation of new markets and that contribute to the understanding of economic and social impacts of climate change.

The importance of collaborative cross-agency work to further the climate change-related information base, and ABS leadership in the development of statistical methodologies, were also emphasised.

For further information, contact Graeme Brown on (02) 6252 5920 or graeme.brown@abs.gov.au

NSW in Focus 2008

NSW in Focus, 2008 (cat. no. 1338.1) provides a snapshot of activity within the state. Drawing on both ABS and non-ABS sources, *NSW in Focus* has 12 chapters presenting a rich range of social, economic and environmental data.

New in this year's publication is the inclusion of "Statistical Highlights" which provides some analysis and graphs on selected indicators. Each chapter also features a summary table of selected indicators allowing users to track changes over time, and a list of data sources which are a helpful reference for further research.

For further information about these and related statistics contact the National Information and Referral Service on 1300 135 070 or Sarah Proudford on Sydney (02) 9268 4855.

NEWS

Survey review - household water use and conservation

The *Environmental Issues* series is an annual publication that provides data on environmental behaviour and practices of Australian households. Topics rotate each year and are as follows:

- Energy use and conservation (1994, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008).
- Waste management and transport use (1992, 1996, 2000, 2003, 2006).
- Water source, use and conservation (1994, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007).

A user consultation is conducted in the year prior to the survey. If you would like to participate in the consultation for the water use and conservation survey to be run in March 2010, please contact Fiona Clarke on (02) 6252 5180 or email: fiona.j.clarke@abs.gov.au

Planning for the 2008-09 Water Account

Preparations are currently underway for the release of the next Water Account, Australia (cat. no. 4610.0) for the 2008-09 financial year.

As part of the planning for the 2008-09 Water Account, a review of users of the 2004-05 Water Account has been undertaken. The main recommendations were:

- more information on ground and surface water comparisons
- continued focus on the Murray-Darling Basin as a separate region in the publication
- regional disaggregation where possible
- inclusion of time series

Users continue to express a strong interest in an annual Water Account, Australia publication.

Survey activity to support the Water Account, Australia 2008-09 is currently underway. The agricultural sector will again be the focus of ABS survey activity, and an economy-wide business survey is also under development.

With the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) having a new water information role as part of the Australian Governments investment in water security, the ABS is working closely with BoM to minimise duplication of data collection activities.

For further information, contact Dianne Bourke on (02) 6252 6473 or email: dianne.bourke@abs.gov.au



What are environmental accounts?

The notion of accounting for the environment is becoming increasingly popular and the term can be used in a number of ways to mean a variety of things.

The ABS recently released a brief Information Paper which will help to inform users about the types of environmental accounts that the ABS produces. It also compares them with other types of accounts, as well as with environment information and statistics more generally.

For more information, refer to the *Information Paper: What are environmental accounts?* (cat. no. 4655.0.55.001) or email Kirsty Leslie: kirsty.leslie@abs.gov.au

RELEASES

New information paper on estimating irrigated production

Gross Value of Irrigated Agricultural Production (GVIAP) refers to the gross value of agricultural commodities that are produced using irrigation. The ABS has been developing an improved methodology for calculating GVIAP, described in an information paper released in October 2008.

To date, the ABS has used two different methods to calculate GVIAP estimates for various publications such as the *Water Account, Australia* (cat. no. 4610.0) and the joint ABS/Productivity Commission publication *Characteristics of Australia's Irrigated Farms* (cat. no. 4623.0).

The information paper describes and evaluates the methods the ABS has used to produce estimates of GVIAP. It provides a description of the proposed improved methodology for calculating GVIAP for Australia, allowing increased accuracy and the flexibility to produce sub-state estimates.

It is proposed that experimental estimates based on the improved methodology will be published in *Experimental Estimates of the Gross Value of Irrigated Agricultural Production 2000–01 to 2006–07* (cat. no. 4610.0.55.008) in early 2009 and also for the next edition of the *Water Account*.

For further information, contact Steven May on (02) 6252 5593 or email: Steven.May@abs.gov.au

Irrigation water use down

Irrigation water use in 2006–07 fell by 29% from the previous year, according to *Water Use on Australian Farms 2006–07* (cat. no. 4618.0), released in August 2008.

The largest decline in irrigation water use was for rice, with volumes down more than 81%, followed by cotton (down 50%) and pasture for grazing (down 30%). The major use of irrigation water in 2006–07 was for pasture for dairy cattle, which accounted for 15% of all irrigation water use.

New South Wales reported the largest decrease in water for irrigation, a fall of 42% since 2005–06. Water use for irrigation in Tasmania increased by 29%, and by 8% in South Australia, mostly for pasture for grazing.

Adverse seasonal conditions affect agricultural production

Continuing unfavourable conditions and lack of water kept agricultural production down during 2007–08, according to *Principal Agricultural Commodities, Australia (Preliminary) 2007–08* (cat. no. 7111.0), released in November 2008.

Rice plantings dropped to the lowest levels since 1927, from 20,000 hectares in 2006–07 to 3,000 hectares in 2007–08, while production was down 86% to 23,000 tonnes.

Wheat production increased by 28%. Barley production rose by 69% which was still below the average production of the previous five years. Cotton lint production fell 44%, with the area planted to cotton the lowest since 1980–81. Plantings of grain sorghum was a record high of one million hectares, leading to a tripling in production to 4 million tonnes. For further information, contact Adrian Bugg (03) 6222 5850 or email: adrian.bugg@abs.gov.au



Other findings included:

- irrigation water used in the Murray-Darling Basin decreased by 40% from 7,370 gigalitres in 2005–06 to 4,458 gigalitres in 2006–07. The major use of this water was for irrigation of pastures for grazing (1,093 gigalitres) and irrigation of cotton (819 gigalitres).
- the volume of groundwater used by farms increased by nearly 15%, while volumes from all other sources decreased.

For further information, contact Ron Just on (03) 6222 5842 or ron.just@abs.gov.au

Natural Resource Management on Australian farms

During the 2006–07 financial year, Australian farmers spent \$1,574 million controlling weeds, which is more than pests (\$768 million) and land and soil problems (\$649 million) combined.

The ABS publication *Natural Resource Management on Australian Farms 2006–07* (cat. no. 4620.0), reported the total cost of managing these problems was \$2,991 million, or an average of about \$21,000 per business.

Nationally, nearly two-thirds of farmers reported that they had improved their natural resource management practices. Of these, 89% reported doing so to increase productivity, 88% for farm sustainability, and 75% to improve environmental protection.

Other findings include:

- farmers in Australia managed 425 million hectares of land, or just over half (55%) of Australia's land mass.
- of all expenditure on weed management, nearly two thirds (\$982 million) was spent on herbicides.
- of all expenditure on pest management, more than half (\$430 million) was spent on pesticides.

For further information, contact Ron Just on (03) 6222 5842 or ron.just@abs.gov.au



Valuing Australia's Environment Course

The ABS delivered a one-day course focusing on the emerging discipline of environmental accounting to people from organisations across the public and private sectors in August 2008.

Following positive feedback from course participants, ABS is planning to run it again in May 2009.

The course covers reasons for, and conceptual underpinnings of Environmental Accounting as framed by the United Nations' "System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting" (SEEA). It also covers practical issues associated with producing these accounts and presents some case studies, both within Australia and internationally.

The course would be of interest to people requiring an overview of environmental statistics and their use and/or working in the field of environmental accounting or national accounts.

It will next be presented in ABS House in Canberra during May 2009 at a cost of \$450 per person.

To express your interest in attending, or for further information, please contact Peter Comisari on (02) 6252 5381 or email: peter.comisari@abs.gov.au

Did you know?

- In March 2008, more than three-quarters (77%) of Australian households had a heater, two-thirds (67%) had a cooler and more than half (56%) had a clothes dryer.
- More than half of all Australian households (52%) were GreenPower aware in 2008, including 5% already paying for GreenPower.
- The ACT had the highest GreenPower awareness (71%) while Western Australian had the lowest (39%).

Further details are available in *Environmental Issues: Energy Use and Conservation* (cat. no. 4602.0.55.001)

Land Management and Farming in Australia, 2007-08



This publication will provide important information on a variety of management practices being adopted by Australian farmers, including cropping and pasture management, soil management, fertiliser use, surface water and effluent management, natural environment conservation protection and farm management.

Due out in May 2009, it will also include data on the types of adverse seasonal conditions experienced in 2007-08, and the farm management responses found effective in dealing with these adverse seasonal conditions. Data will be presented at the national and state level, as well as for each of the 56 NRM regions across Australia.

For further information, contact Ron Just on (03) 6222 5842 or ron.just@abs.gov.au

Upcoming releases

Expected release date

Dec 2008	Agricultural Survey, Apples and Pears, Australia, 2007-08 (cat. no. 7121.0.55.002)
Jan 2009	Environmental Views and Behaviour, 2007-08 (cat. no. 4626.0.55.001)
May 2009	Water Use on Australian Farms, 2007-08 (cat. no. 4618.0)
May 2009	Land Management and Farming in Australia, 2007-08 (cat. no. 4627.0)
May 2009	Agricultural Commodities, Australia, 2007-08 (cat. no. 7121.0)
June 2009	Experimental Estimates of the Gross Value of Irrigated Agricultural Production 2000-01 to 2006-07 (cat. no. 4610.0.55.008)



Contact us

Environment and Energy News features articles and developments in relation to work done within the ABS Environment and Energy Statistics program. If you would like to be placed on our free electronic mailing list, please contact Bonn Maguire and include your address details.

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