

WATER FOR FOOD PROJECTS

392. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Water:

The minister recently launched a number of Water for Food projects in my electorate, including the middle Gascoyne project in my electorate. Can the minister please provide an update on how these projects are progressing?

Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:

I thank the member for the question and his interest in this fantastic project. As members will be aware, this project is part of a \$40 million investment across the state to diversify our state's economy by expanding irrigated agriculture. At a time when we see contraction in the mining industry and calls for the government to invest in job creating industries, this is the best example we have in agriculture at the moment. It is part of the \$300 million investment that we are making through royalties for regions' Seizing the Opportunity Agriculture through the regional development portfolio with the Minister for Agriculture and Food. I recently travelled around the state to launch the second stage of this initiative. I have been in the midlands with the member for Moore, who will be chairing the stakeholder group for the midlands project. The sum of \$4.7 million has been dedicated to confirmed groundwater availability in the midlands with the hope of creating precincts where we can see intensive horticulture developed. We have also launched the second stage of the middle Gascoyne project where we will be investigating the amount and quality of water in the alluvial aquifers between Rocky Pool and the Kennedy Ranges. This is in addition to the investment we are making in the Gascoyne around the Gascoyne food bowl initiative. We are doing some very intense work with the Carnarvon growers' cooperatives, through the Carnarvon ministerial advisory council, to make sure we have a sustainable industry up there. It is very important for not only the current growers but the expansion of this industry across the state. The member to my left, a very proactive local member who was instrumental in the development of this initiative and is now supportive as the Minister for Regional Development, was with me to launch the southern forests part of this program, working with a really proactive group of growers in and around Manjimup.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie–Preston! You asked me not to shout at you today. Please stop. Thank you.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: There will be \$3.6 million invested to identify new water supply options where we have restrictions that are restricting growth in that area, and that is really important. We have made additional investments in that space through royalties for regions. There are 11 projects in total. This is a fantastic opportunity for this state to expand irrigated agriculture and diversify our economy. It is one of the best projects that I have been involved with, and I am really excited every time we visit these projects and talk to the people on the ground at the anticipation they see for job creation not only for those on the ground, but also for future generations. I commend this project to the house and encourage every member as we travel around, if they have an interest in this space, to join me or one of the local members to meet with those stakeholders.