



EVERY DROP COSTS: Will Lindner at his family's Wonga property.

Picture: SAM WUNDKE

Water costs hurt farmers

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THOUSANDS of farmers across South Australia in a range of food producing industries face an uncertain future as their viability is threatened by spiralling water costs.

Morgan sheep producers Will and David Lindner estimate they will pay SA Water about \$80,000 to provide water for their sheep this year, making it hard to make a profit on their pastoral station.

Mr Lindner estimates the cost would only be about \$10,000 in a normal year.

The drought across the southern pastoral country has forced the Lindners to cart about six tanker loads of water

every week to keep their 15,000 sheep alive.

"The high cost of water means it's getting past the point of the property being a sustainable grazing business," David Lindner said.

The rapidly rising cost is also hurting producers in the Upper South-East, most of the Mid North and the Barossa Valley through to Crystal Brook and across parts of the Eyre Peninsula.

SA Water said it delivered 15 gigalitres of water to about 14,500 agricultural accounts last financial year.

SA Dairyfarmers' Association president David Basham said for those forced to buy water from SA Water, it can cost up to \$100,000 a year or

more. "I think it is an excessive charge and farmers have approached SA Water to buy their own water and use the SA Water system to transport it, which would dramatically cut the cost, but they won't even consider it," Mr Basham said.

Liberal Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick said the party has a policy to allow farming groups to buy or lease water and transfer it through the SA Water network.

South Australian Minister for Agriculture Gail Gago said she was disappointed the State Government was yet to receive a response from the Federal Government over a request for funding to assist drought-affected farmers in the far North East of the state.