

Kent Water Task Group: plans and perspectives

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Background

- **Concerns about water availability were raised at the Kent Economic Board event for the land-based sector in 2011.**
- **The 2012 Kent Water Summit identified the need for improved water efficiency and storage.**
- **Kent Rural Board identified water availability for agriculture and horticulture as a priority and in late 2012 set up a Water Task Group to address this.**

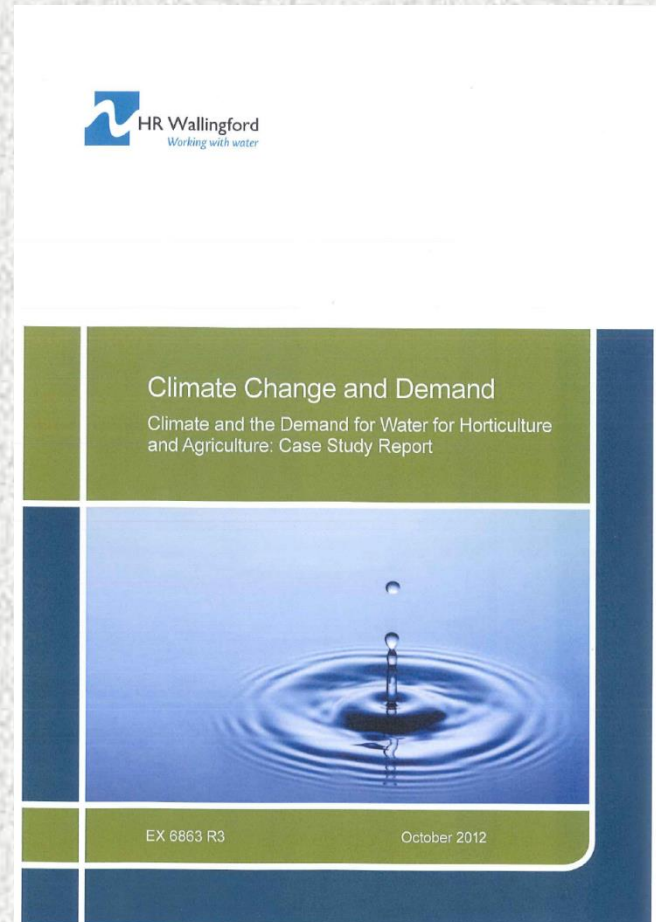


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Baseline

Assessment of baseline irrigation water demand in Kent and projected impacts of climate change



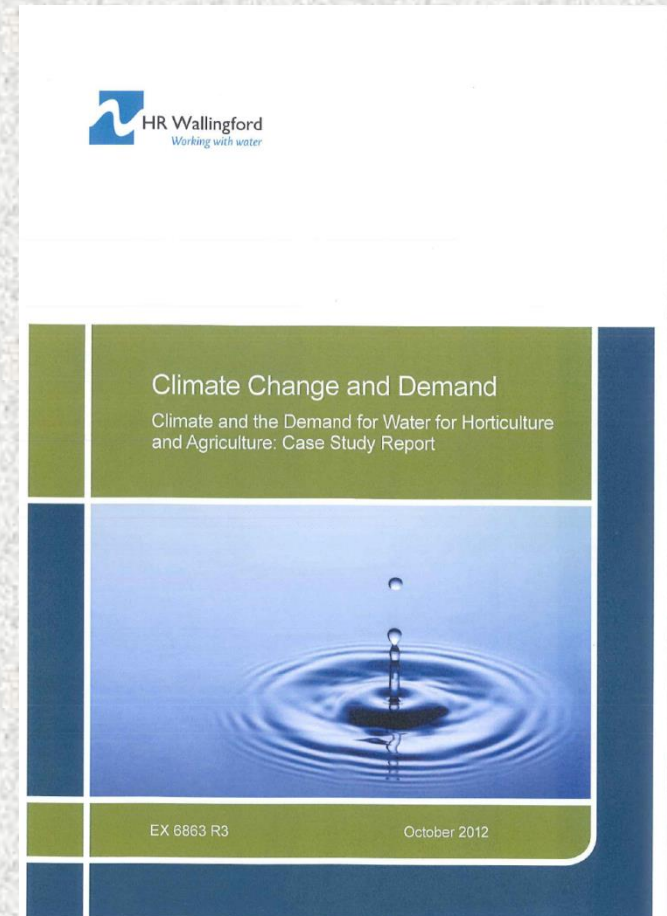
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Baseline irrigation demand

2011 Kent data –

- **Approx 3500 MI/yr total direct abstractions (70% groundwater, 30% surface water)**
- **40% (1500 MI/yr) is used with trickle irrigation**
- **Total mains water demand for irrigation is unknown but estimated 250 to 450 MI/yr and increasing.**
- **Demand has increased since 2006 but long term trends are unclear.**



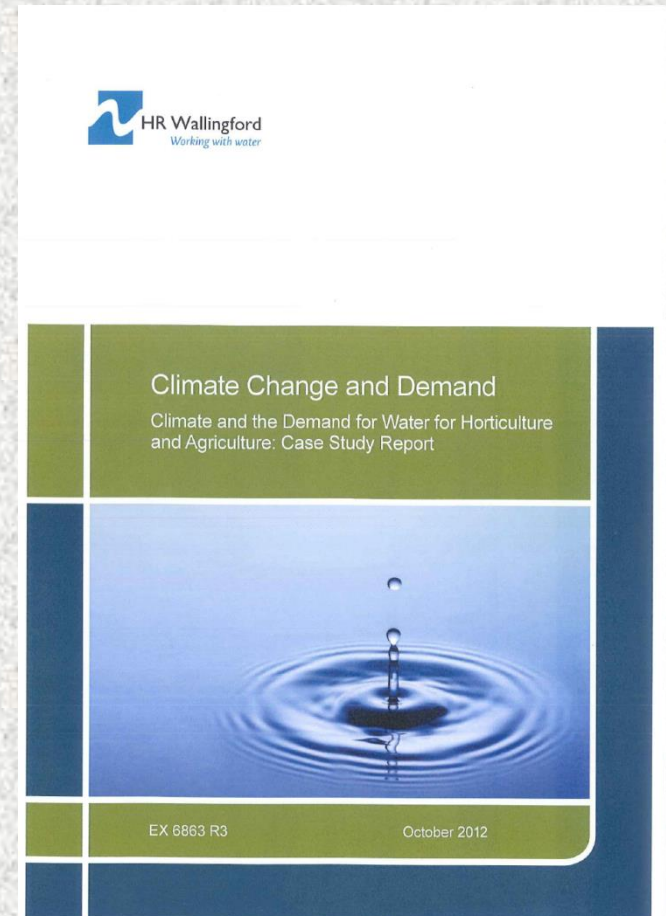
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Baseline irrigation demand

Future climate change implications for irrigation –

- **Very small decline in groundwater availability**
- **Large decline in summer surface water availability**
- **Possible increase in winter surface water availability**
- **Significant increase in demand**

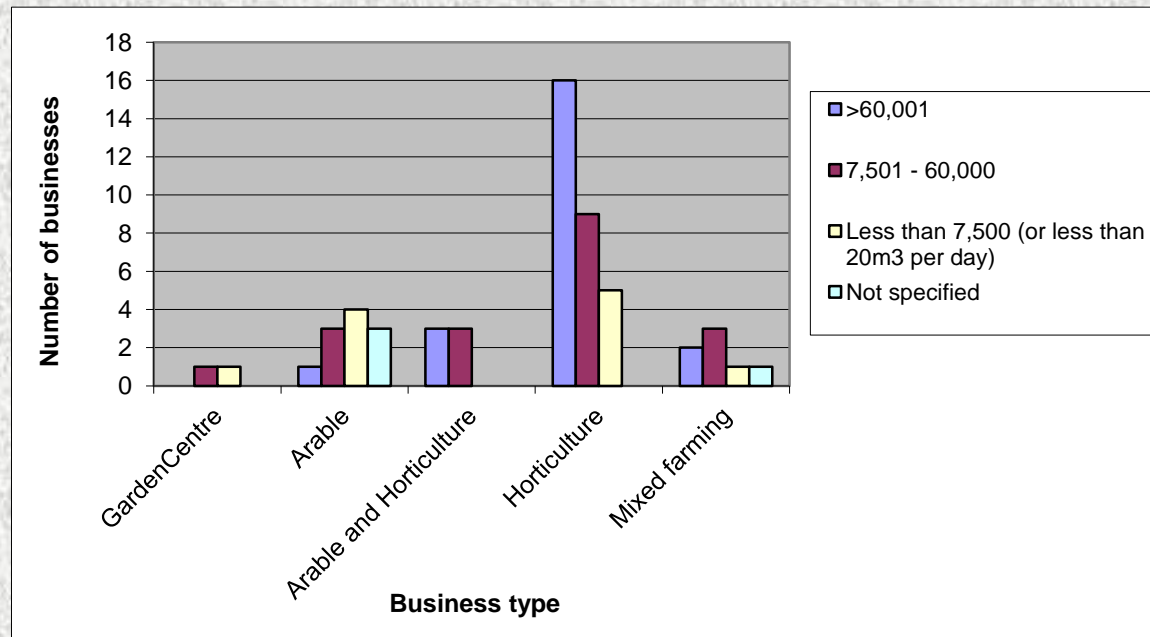


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Farmer survey

- Survey of LEAF UK members in Kent (approx 100)
- 50 respondents
- Mainly large horticultural water users



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Farmer survey findings

Headlines -

- **60% of respondents indicated that their water usage had increased in the last 5 years and only 2% reported a decrease.**
- **More than 75% of the respondents thought that their water use efficiency had increased.**
- **50% said that their business had been affected by limited water availability over the last 5 years.**
- **23% said they will be building a new on-farm storage reservoir within the next year.**



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Composition of the KRB Water Task Group

- **KCC (chair)**
- **East Malling Research**
- **ERDF WATERR project**
- **Environment Agency**
- **Kent Economic Board**
- **A major horticultural business**
- **South East Water**
- **Country Land and Business Association**
- **NFU**
- **Kent Forum**



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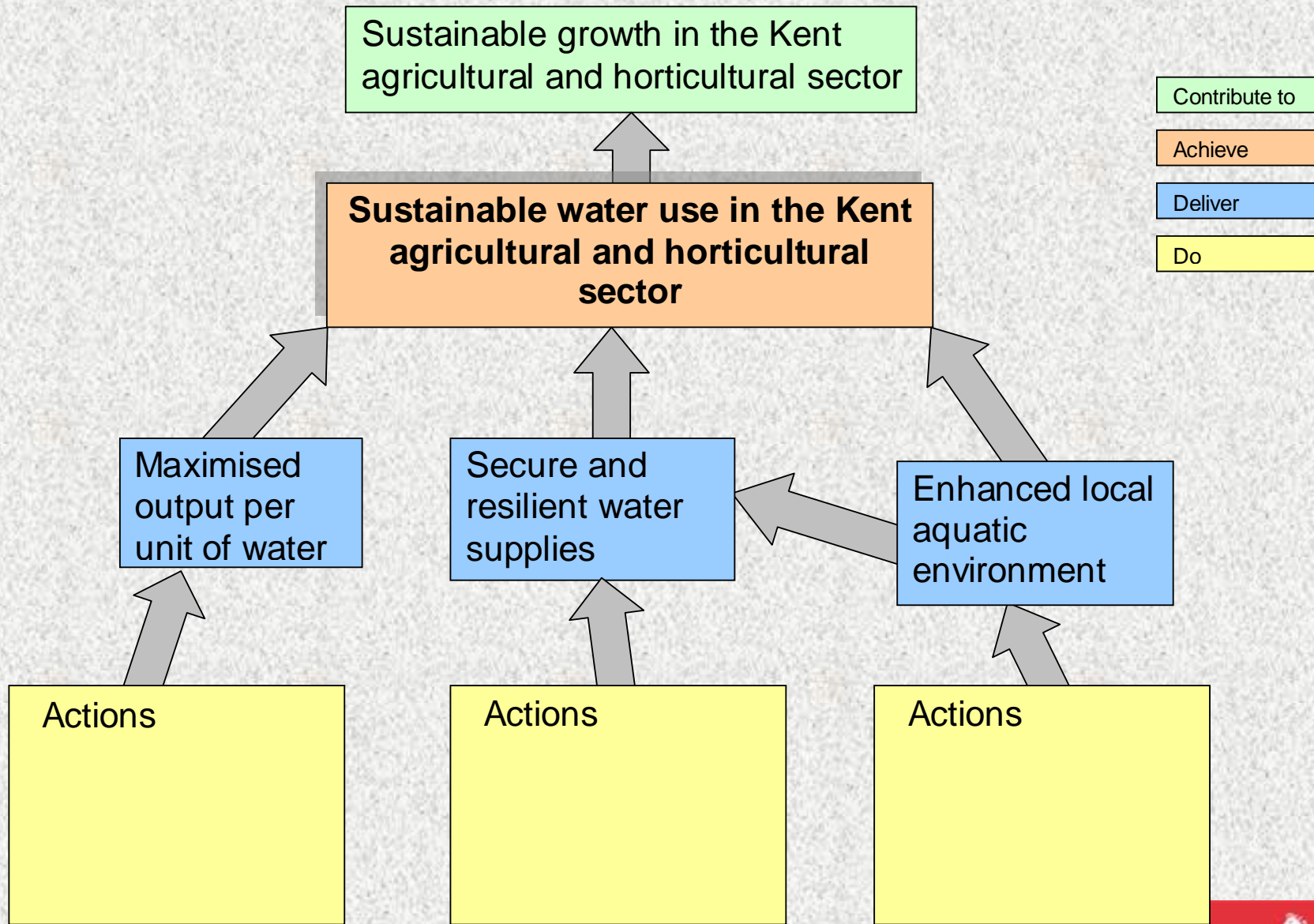
Water use focus

- **All sources (i.e. directly abstracted and from public water supply)**
- **Horticulture and agriculture**
- **All types of farm water use but prioritised according to the scale of demand**
- **Irrigation is therefore the main focus**



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Early action

A comprehensive work programme includes 50 actions.

Early actions include -

- **Partnering with the ERDF WATERR Project**
- **EA work to ensure quicker information to abstractors about short-term water availability**
- **South East Water has planned for additional irrigation demand within its Water Resources Management Plan for 2015 to 2040**

Early action

- **Discussions started with South East Water about future, additional untreated water supplies for irrigation.**
- **Assessing total farm reservoir capacity and local hydrology to provide better advice to irrigators on the availability of water for filling winter storage reservoirs.**



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Thank you

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