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Identification of Barriers to Agricultural Water Efficiency in the Rio Grande Basin

Rio Grande Project water resources are shared by Mexico, Texas and New Mexico and are administered by numerous federal and state agencies and water user organizations. Water supplies in this desert region are limited, especially during drought years. Water scarcity are seen in various forms around the irrigated west: Growing cities and increased demands for water in environmental uses are prompting examination of measures to provide financial incentives for irrigators to look for methods to reduce water use in agriculture while maintaining the profitability of farming. Despite the growing demands for water by all users, several institutional barriers may discourage irrigators from investing in measures to conserve water. Several barriers to water conservation are identified: undefined titles, water transfer restrictions, illusory water savings, and insecure rights to conserved water, storage, interstate compacts, attitudes, culture, land tenure and uncertain duty of water. This report examined barriers to agricultural water conservation in the upper and lower Rio Grande basin and identifies challenges and opportunities for promoting it.

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