2011 TEEA Winner Agriculture, Harlingen Irrigation District

Narrator:

Jim Hoffman has been growing grapefruit for nearly fifty years. During that time he's watched much of the Rio Grande Valley change from country to city, reinforcing to him the importance of the one resource they now share.

Jim Hoffman, Farmer:

A decade ago I would have flood irrigated this.

Narrator:

The Harlingen Irrigation District Cameron County Number One brings together farmers and scientists to develop innovative water conservation techniques and promote proper management of water.

Jim Hoffman:

Here's the moister reader. It measures on three different depths.

Wayne Halbert, General Manager, Harlingen Irrigation District:

We know that with 80 percent of the water going to agriculture that that's were the most conservation can be. That’s the low hanging fruit.

Mac Young, Extension Program Specialist, Texas Agrilife Extension Service:

The question is what is the benefit or incentive for farmers to change.

Narrator:

Researchers discovered that the key to affective conservation is the proper management of water and not so much about irrigation method. For some farmers adding small berms on either side of citrus trees controls flood irritation and produces almost the same savings as drip systems.

Shad Nelson, Associate Professor of Horticulture and Chair, Texas A&M University, Kingsville:

They can still use flood irrigation and still maximize water saving.

Narrator:

In addition, the Harlingen Irrigation District installed meters and a special monitoring system to better assess the valley's water usage.

Wayne Halbert:

That technology's been spread throughout the state as well as even in other states.

Narrator:

Hoffman opts for a drip system that even measures soil moisture.

Jim Hoffman:

These will drip at the rate of about one gallon per hour.

Narrator:

The investment will bear fruit.

Jim Hoffman:

I probably save 85 percent of the water.

Narrator:

Even as these trees mature.