I t’s the giant network of drains, weirs and crossings that is crucial to the farming lobby and the state’s South East, ensuring the region can produce $1 billion of food and economic activity every year. But the South East Drainage Network is on the brink of ruin as the lack of much-needed government maintenance allows it to fall into disrepair.

The network, SA’s version of the world-renowned Snowy River Hydro Electric Scheme, drains the area’s low-lying floodplains, which have an annual average rainfall of 712mm in places.

In the 153 years since the original vision of brilliant South Australian Government Surveyor General George Goyder was first mooted, it has been developed, piece by piece, by successive governments.

Now, reports by Primary Industries and Regions South Australia say the vast system, comprising 2589km of drains, weirs and cross-structure, has boosted agricultural production by 500 to 1000 per cent.

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