



SEASONAL UPDATE WEBINAR - RECAP

August 2026

Seasonal snapshot by Marek Matuszek (Ag Logic), with an irrigator uniformity session from Chelsea McDonald (Ag Logic)

1. Current conditions & regional snapshot

North of Longford most profiles are at or near full, and an unusually warm May to July has driven growth rather than saturation. South of Longford the subsoil has not recharged, winter refill looks unlikely, and how long spring growth lasts will come down to August and September rain.

North West

Sandy soils around Woolnorth and Circular Head have held full point for a month, and Edith Creek filled sooner than in any of the past four years. May was the hottest on record and June and July both sat in the warmest 7 to 10 percent of years, so the warmth has driven pasture growth rather than leaving paddocks cold and waterlogged. Growth is easing through August as it usually does. Keep stock off country prone to pugging while feed is plentiful.

Northern Midlands

Profiles north of Longford are full and growth has been good. Meander region is wet but still growing well, and the red ferrosols through Hagley, Selborne and Westbury sit close to last year without being excessively wet. July rain topped up the heavier soils around Bishopsbourne. South of Longford profiles are not quite at recent levels, so the transition to drier country starts there. Walk paddocks while the ground is still wet, note where water pools, and use that to guide drainage designs.

This program received funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund

North East

One of the best winter refills in four years. Coastal profiles are full and inland sites have reached full point. Subsoil around Waterhouse and Rushy Lagoon has finally filled, which matters most on the sandy coffee rock country, and the region is running two to three months ahead on soil moisture levels.

Southern Midlands, Coal

Valley and Derwent Valley

Campbell Town through to St Peters Pass are at mid range for the past four years, with water held through the middle of the profile and the subsoil unfilled. Bothwell is above last year, and Kempton has no moisture below 60 centimetres apart from one event. A 40 mm event will not wet these profiles up. It takes closer to 90 to 95 mm across a couple of weeks, and a decile 9 September at Bothwell is only around 75 mm, so plan on winter refill not happening. Hamilton and Ouse has done better out of the systems coming through from the west, and the Coal Valley is wet in the low lying ground with the cracking clay slopes still needing follow up.

East Coast and Fingal Valley

Around Swansea soil moisture is near the lowest of the past four years after very little winter follow up, although further south looks better. The Fingal Valley is mid range and has barely shifted, and tells the same story across the river sands and duplex clays. Winter refill is unlikely and stored moisture volumes depends heavily on soil type.

Flinders Island and King

Island

Flinders is tracking like the good season three years ago, with heavier soils at full profile and the bottom of the profile now recharged. On King Island, Egg Lagoon reached the winter point earlier than last year, so rain from here should run into dams and storages, and Pegarah shows the same pattern. A warm winter has shown up in pasture growth on both islands.

2. Irrigation uniformity, getting pivots right before spring

Uniformity testing measures how evenly water lands on the ground, not the mechanical condition of the machine. Catch cans go out across the paddock, the pivot passes over them, and a GPS logs the location and depth in each can.

Tasmania has roughly 3,500 to 4,000 centre pivots and no requirement to test them. In New Zealand the standards are set by Irrigation New Zealand and enforced by councils, and in Canterbury failing uniformity can be treated as an environmental breach.



Key metrics to understand

Measure	What it tells you	New Zealand minimum	Best practice
Distribution uniformity (DU)	A DU of 80 means the driest quarter of the paddock receives 80 percent of the average depth.	80	90
Coefficient of uniformity (CU)	A CU of 94 means the average spot sits within 6 percent of the paddock average.	85	90
Average applied depth	Whether the depth landing on the paddock matches the figure set on the machine. Arguably the most important of the three.	None specified	As close as possible

The cost of poor uniformity

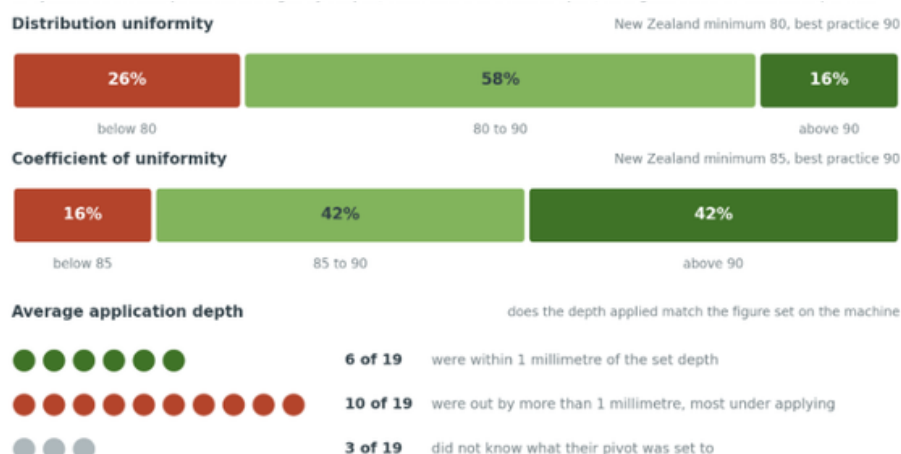
A low DU represents a yield lag. The below example demonstrates the cost of a DU of 80. The calculation assumes 20kg/ha of yield for every mm of water applied, \$440 per tonne, and a 40ha pivot.



Watering everything 20 percent harder is the obvious fix, but on most Tasmanian soils that trades a dry quarter for a waterlogged one. Falling behind early also dries soil so it holds moisture less readily, and efficiency drops later when crop demand peaks.

Testing across 19 pivots

Testing on 19 pivots on broccoli paddocks managed by Simplot, catch cans 3 to 5 metres apart, wind gusts below 17 km/hr.





In the testing,

- One machine set to 8mm was applying 14mm through a single band, enough to bog a wheel track.
- Another had three obvious faults, a leak and two blocked nozzles. Testing also found high variability on two spans and serious under application on the overhang.
- The oldest machine, from 2002, scored low on both measures. The cause was 23 sprinklers that did not match the nozzle chart, and nozzle placement is deliberate to the design of the pivot.
- Wheel drag left a span averaging 5 mm beside one averaging 12 mm. Correcting low tyre pressure is an easy fix.
- A near new pivot returned a DU of 87 because the manufacturer had fitted a 7.2 mm pack when a 10 mm pack was ordered. New machines are worth testing too.

Things to consider and include in your pre-season check:

- **Nozzles and leaks:** repair knocked off nozzles and leaks, they channel runoff, leave puddles in the paddock, and worsen erosion.
- **Looped hoses:** sprinklers pushed up over the truss stop pointing down, which leads to uneven water application.
- **Wobbler plates:** plates not wobbling properly were a common fault in the testing, so clean the sprinklers out and check they move.
- **Replacement sprinklers:** placement is deliberate, light flow near the centre and heavy at the end. When replacing sprinklers be sure to refer to the nozzle chart, or match the sprinklers either side.
- **Wheel tracks:** turning sprinklers down to stop the wheels bogging costs crop across every tyre track. Ask your provider about part circle sprinklers or boom backs. Correct tyre pressure can also prevent rutting.
- **Wind:** do not irrigate when it is blowing. It is the easiest uniformity gain available.

Useful Irrigation maintenance and performance tools available on the Hub website:

Preseason checklist: Basic system performance checklist for centre-pivots

Fact sheet: Basic centre-pivot system performance check

How to guide: Performing a centre-pivot pressure check

<https://tasfarmhub.com.au/resources/irrigation-maintenance-and-performance>



3. Seasonal outlook

- **August:** about a 50 percent chance of exceeding median rainfall through the Midlands, which means a wide range of outcomes rather than a forecast of average rain. The East Coast leans drier.
- **September onwards:** the chance of exceeding median rainfall drops away, most sharply on the East Coast. October to December carries roughly a 50 percent chance of the first or second decile and another 20 percent of the third or fourth.
- **Temperature:** above median maximums across the state are the most confident part of the outlook. Higher plant water use makes the spring curve steeper, so spring can fizzle out quickly.
- **Farming Forecaster pasture growth modelling:** where there is profile moisture, as at Edith Creek and Cluan near Westbury, the decile 9, 5 and 1 growth curves sit together into September and separate later. On the East Coast and at Apsley Park they diverge much sooner. Both islands stay above the poor range even in a decile 1 year.

4. Key Messages & Actions

- **Spring looks good north of Longford:** full profiles and a warm winter have meant growth rather than saturation.
- **Summer is the risk, not spring:** if the forecast dry arrives the pressure comes in December, January and February. Reliable irrigation gives you control that dry land grazing does not.
- **Winter refill is unlikely south of Longford:** there will still be a spring, but a dry start means it comes on quickly and finishes quickly.
- **Protect wet soils now:** keep stock off pugging prone paddocks while feed is plentiful, particularly north of Longford.
- **Test your pivots before spring:** a recent trial found over a quarter of the machines tested would not meet the New Zealand minimum, and most were more than a millimetre off their set depth. Check new machines too.
- **Have the plan even if you never use it:** decide now what rainfall trigger would change your stocking, selling or planting decisions.



5. Things to think about or speak with your advisor about

- Which of the past few seasons your property is really tracking closest to.
- What rainfall you need through August and September to fill your profile, and the plan if it does not arrive.
- Stock numbers, feed reserves and fodder measured against a dry summer rather than a dry spring.
- Getting your pivots tested, or at the least walking each machine with the nozzle chart first.
- How limited subsoil moisture will affect rooting depth and late season water use.
- Paddocks that pooled water this winter and drainage work to plan for when the ground dries out.

6. Links & useful resources

- **Farming Forecaster:** free access to soil moisture, weather, pasture growth predictions and livestock performance information for your own location, including best case, likely and worst-case growth projections – <https://www.farmingforecaster.com.au>
- **TIA Weekly Pasture Growth Rate Report:** a weekly update on pasture growth and leaf emergence rates for districts across the state – to sign up email jacob.lightman@utas.edu.au
- **Ag Logic Weather Station and Soil Probe Network:** real time weather, soil moisture and evapotranspiration data to guide irrigation and grazing decisions – sign up here: [Ag Logic weather station and soil moisture probe network subscription – Fill in form](#)
- **Bureau of Meteorology long range forecast:** rainfall outlook maps showing the likelihood behind the current El Niño classification and the seasonal rainfall outlook – <https://www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/overview/summary>
- **Irrigation uniformity testing:** testing and mapping of applied depth, DU and CU can be provided by consultants, including Ag Logic.
- **Previous webinar recordings and written summaries –** <https://tasfarmhub.com.au/resources/seasonal-update-with-ag-logic>

Next month's webinar: 1PM, Friday 4 September 2026

Register online: tasfarmhub.com.au/events



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