

# SEASONAL UPDATE WEBINAR - RECAP

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### 1

## Key messages & actions

- Late season irrigation should balance yield potential with harvest risk, particularly for potato crops approaching maturity.
- Large rainfall events in March and April can delay harvest and increase disease risk if soils are already wet in the topsoil.
- As crops mature and temperatures decline, evapotranspiration falls and irrigation demand reduces.
- Soil moisture probes and evapotranspiration data can help identify when plant water use begins to slow.
- Allowing some drawdown of deeper soil moisture creates storage capacity for rainfall and reduces waterlogging risk.
- Poor irrigation earlier in the season can restrict root development and limit the crop's ability to access deeper soil moisture later.
- Late season irrigation should maintain moderate moisture in the topsoil while avoiding excessive water deeper in the profile.
- During peak irrigation, you need to monitor the best performing parts of the paddock to maximise yield, but later in the season you need to also consider the poorer performing parts of the paddock to reduce the risk of disease.

# Current Conditions & Regional Strategies

**Soil moisture across Tasmania is generally similar to the same time last year. Recent rainfall events have mostly maintained soil moisture rather than fully refilling soil profiles. Many areas remain dependent on irrigation while waiting for a more reliable autumn rainfall pattern.**

## **North West**

- Recent rainfall has helped maintain soil moisture but irrigation is still required to support pasture and crop growth.
- Irrigation demand is easing compared with mid summer and systems can begin reducing weekly application rates.
- For late season crops such as potatoes, begin allowing deeper soil moisture to draw down to reduce harvest risk.

## **North East & East Coast**

- Soil moisture remains relatively stable but reserves remain limited in many paddocks.
- Irrigation should continue while gradually reducing application rates as evapotranspiration declines.
- Maintaining a small soil moisture buffer helps manage the risk of heavy rainfall events before harvest.

## **Northern Midlands**

- Soil moisture conditions vary widely depending on soil type and rainfall distribution.
- Some paddocks remain very dry and will require repeated rainfall events to refill deeper soil layers.
- For new sowings, use smaller and more frequent irrigation applications to protect shallow root systems.

## **Southern Midlands, Coal Valley & Derwent Valley**

- Soils remain close to seasonal dry levels in many locations.
- Very dry soils can reduce infiltration during intense rainfall events.
- Irrigation should focus on maintaining moisture in the main root zone while waiting for autumn rainfall.

## **Flinders Island & King Island**

- Recent rainfall has improved topsoil moisture in some locations but overall soil moisture remains similar to last year.
- Pasture growth has used much of the available moisture so further rainfall will be important to support autumn growth.
- Seasonal rainfall patterns over the coming months will influence soil moisture recovery going into winter.

## 2

### Things to think / chat with your advisor about

- Review irrigation scheduling as crops move past peak water demand and evapotranspiration declines.
- Use soil moisture probes together with paddock inspections to confirm where water is being extracted in the soil profile.
- Check whether irrigation strategies allow deeper soil moisture to draw down before harvest.
- Consider the trade off between maximising yield and reducing harvest risk late in the season.
- Inspect dryland pasture paddocks for cracking soils or preferential water movement that may affect infiltration.
- For new crops or pastures use small and frequent irrigations rather than large applications.
- Consider drainage planning in paddocks that are prone to waterlogging during winter.

## 3

### Tools & next steps

- Monitor evapotranspiration data from local weather stations to guide irrigation decisions.
- Use soil moisture probes to track daily plant water use and seasonal changes in crop demand.
- Record photos and notes from paddock inspections to compare soil conditions before and after rainfall.

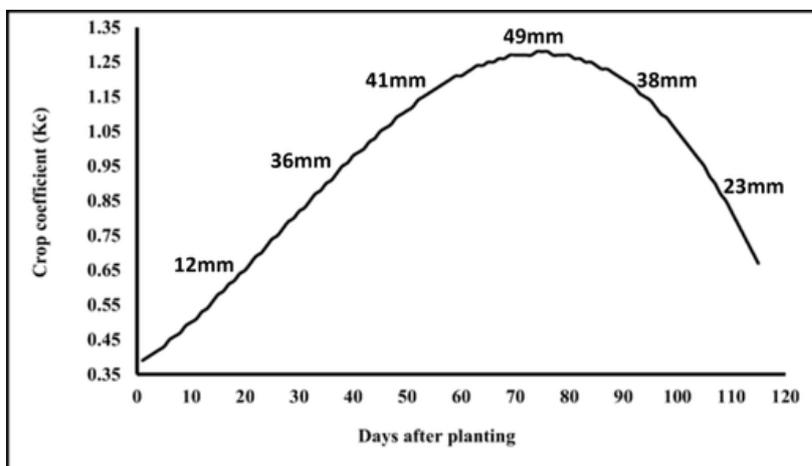


Figure 1: Change in crop coefficient for potatoes according to days after planting (Allen et al., 1998), modified to include approximate mm of rain and irrigation per week at each stage. waterlogging during winter.