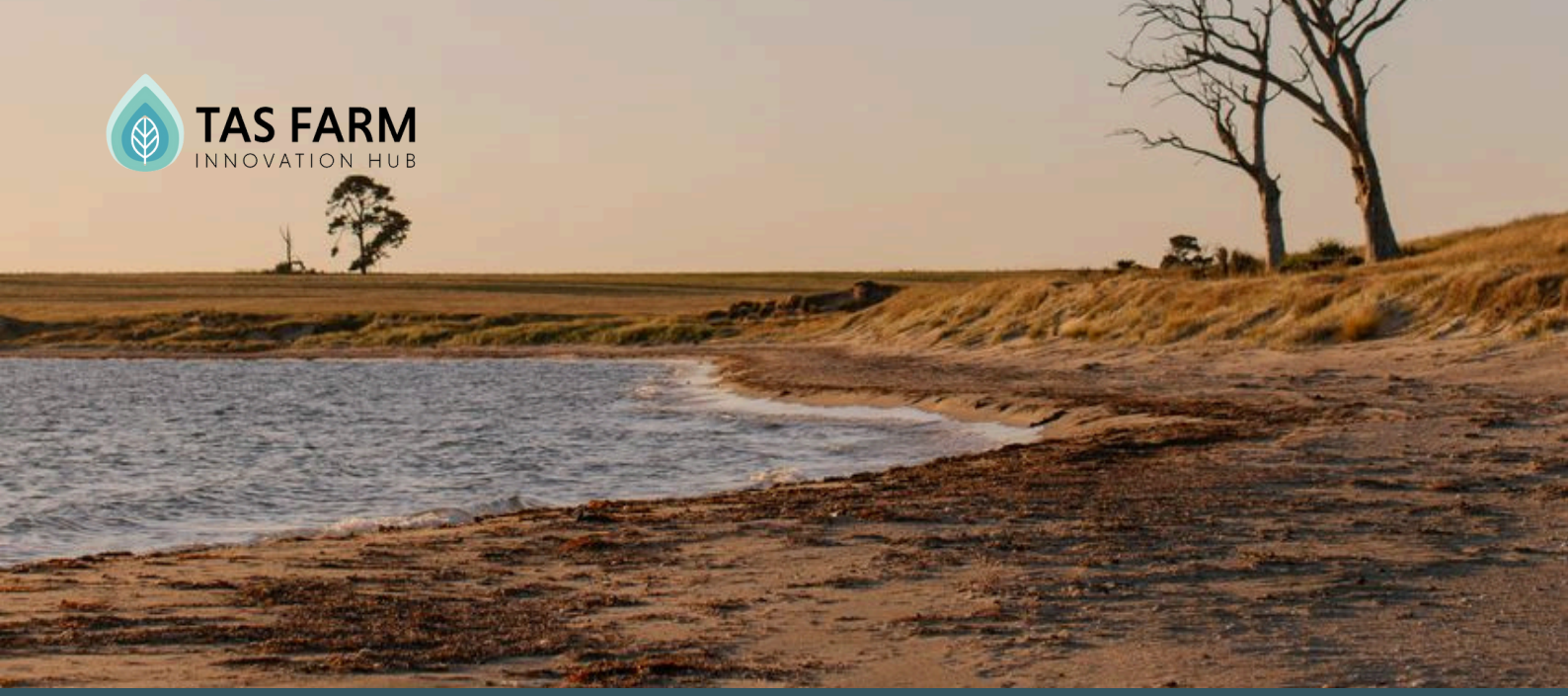

SEASONAL UPDATE WEBINAR - RECAP
November 2025

by Marek Matuszek from Ag Logic

1 Key messages & actions

- **Learning about your infiltration is key** to improving your water management. The best way to start is to dig two 30cm holes after a large rain event or after you've irrigated. *What do you see? What has your rain been worth to you?*

- **Maintain yield, don't chase it.** The priority is to maintain yield potential rather than trying to chase it later. Treat large spring rainfall events as something you cannot avoid, but can plan for. **Each paddock should have its own plan based** on soil type, drainage, crop stage and irrigation capacity, rather than a single rule of thumb for turning irrigators off when rain appears on a forecast.

- **Understand your risks.** Use the November conditions as a prompt to ask what an earlier seasonal finish in drier regions would mean for your business.

- **Begin or continue conversations with advisers** about fodder conservation, stocking rate and irrigation priorities now rather than waiting until stress is obvious in crops and pastures.

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Future Drought Fund
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Current Conditions

- Spring has been very windy, with stronger than usual winds across most of Tasmania.
- Rainfall has shifted from frequent small events to fewer larger events that can create uncertainty around irrigation decisions.
- A strongly negative Indian Ocean Dipole has placed very warm water to the north west of Australia, feeding extra moisture into systems that reach Tasmania and giving recent rain a tropical downpour feel.
- Climate models indicate that this pattern is short lived, so the recent very wet Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) signal is unlikely to persist far into summer.
- BOM three-month outlooks suggest near average summer rainfall but above average temperatures, so crop water use is likely to be higher even if rainfall totals are similar to average.

Regional Strategies

- **North West** – Many sandy and lighter soils are still wet but are not as severely waterlogged as last year, while some heavier soils remain slow to drain. Well structured paddocks show clear wetting and drying cycles after each event. Irrigation for spring sown crops is still limited but will need to start promptly once diurnal stepping in soil moisture becomes more obvious (see over page)
- **East Coast, North East & Fingal Valley** – The east continues a familiar pattern of drying each spring, with recent rain offering only a short term boost. Topsoil moisture has been maintained by recent rain, but profiles that did not fully refill in winter still lack deep reserves. Sandier blocks and areas with coffee rock (see October Recap) are already close to needing regular irrigation despite surface moisture that looks similar to last year.
- **Southern Midlands, Coal & Derwent Valley** – Winter refill left limited subsoil storage, so most extra water sits in surface layers and is used up rapidly as temperatures and wind increase. If your soils refill from the top down (see September Recap), prioritise fodder conservation now and avoid long pauses in irrigation after short lived rain events because there is little deep moisture to fall back on.
- **Northern Midlands** – There is roughly a two week buffer compared with last season around Longford, Hagley and Meander due to well timed rainfall. Grass seed, clover and other pastures are already drawing strongly on the top thirty centimetres, so skipping irrigation based on a single forecasted system can push these crops into deficit quickly.
- **Flinders & King Islands** - Parts of Flinders and King Islands have roughly a one to three week buffer relative to last year, especially on heavier soils, but lighter country will move through that buffer quickly without further rain.

2 Things to think about

Soil Moisture & Variability

- **The top 30cm of soil can usually only store around 30-35mL of plant available water.** Whether you receive 30mL or 130mL, the crop does not suddenly gain an extra 100mL of storage. Instead, more runoff and ponding occurs in low spots.

- Case studies from the North West last season showed that **about six days after a 130mL event free draining and well-structured soils already needed irrigating again** because roots were drawing from deeper layers.

- **Wet patches can dominate how a paddock looks**, but they may represent only a small proportion of the area. Where ponding is persistent, drainage is usually a better answer than reducing irrigation so far that the best ground is starved of water.

- **Use soil pits and probe data** to understand how water is moving through your soil profile. In some paddocks, infiltration under irrigation is poorer than under rainfall because the instantaneous application rate is higher. **Splitting irrigations into smaller passes can improve infiltration and reduce runoff**.

Irrigation timing

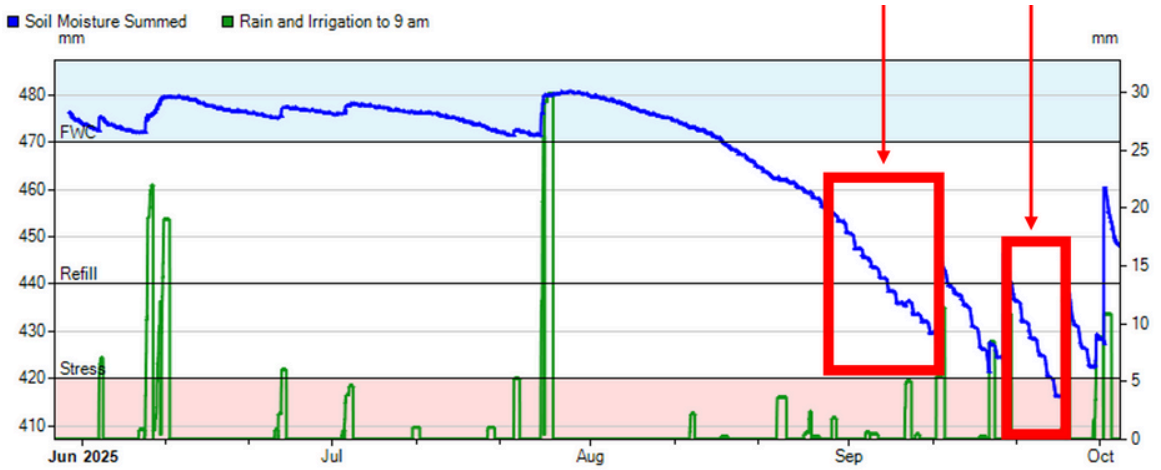
- **Diurnal stepping** (see graph below) in soil moisture graphs is a key signal that plants are actively using water and that irrigation should begin or resume, even after recent rain. Avoid letting the wettest part of a paddock set the timetable for irrigation decisions. Use soil probes or soil pits in the drier areas to understand what most of the paddock is doing.

Irrigation Strategy

- **Where water is limited**, spread irrigation across key growth stages so that you maintain a balance between plant demand and water supply rather than over irrigating early and running short later. Rank in advance which paddocks or crops will be prioritised if water becomes tight.

- **Where water is adequate**, focus on irrigating the soil profile, not just the crop canopy. Wetting the profile early improves later infiltration efficiency and reduces runoff from big events. Irrigating during or soon after moderate rainfall can improve infiltration compared with very dry soil receiving a single large event.

Graph depicting soil moisture, with the blue line indicating soil moisture summed, and examples of diurnal stepping highlighted in the red boxes.



3 Tools & next steps

- **Ag Logic Weather Station & Soil Probe Network**: Subscribe for real-time weather, soil moisture and ETo data. This supports more confident irrigation and fodder decisions, especially when conditions are changing rapidly. If you have requests for how you would like to see data displayed contact Ag Logic. Feedback helps improve how information is shared across the network.

- **Farming Forecaster**: Farming Forecaster gives pasture growth forecasts that can be linked to on farm measurements and soil moisture data. This helps match stocking rate, fodder conservation and irrigation plans to likely feed supply.

- **Ag Logic Online Resources:** Short videos and guides from Ag Logic explain how to interpret soil moisture graphs, reference evapotranspiration (ETo) and crop evapotranspiration (ETc). These resources support decisions on when to start, pause and resume irrigation**.**

- **BOM resources for understanding weather and climate**: Learn about key factors that can affect Australia's weather and climate, such blocking highs, east coast lows and cut-off lows as well as ENSO, IOD, SAM.

- **Optimising irrigation resources**: Case studies, factsheets and associated short explainer videos can all be found on the TAS Farm Innovation Hub website and YouTube.

Next month's webinar: Friday 5 December, 1pm.
Register online: tasfarmhub.com.au/events