

SEASONAL UPDATE WEBINAR RECAP

OCTOBER 2026

Seasonal snapshot and start of irrigation season by Marek Matuszek (Ag Logic)

1 Current conditions and regional snapshot

Spring is set up; summer is the question.

May was the warmest on record, and the rest of winter was not far behind, with growing degree days since May well ahead of the last four years. Moderate rainfall meant most paddocks avoided waterlogging, and pasture kept growing. Plants are now drawing moisture at the rate we would normally see in November. North of Longford needs spring rain to carry it into summer, while southern areas need it just to sustain spring growth.

North West
Actively drawing down at 30 cm, about a month ahead of last year. Recent rains have not refilled profiles.

Northern Midlands
Moisture uptake on free draining soils is at November rates and heavier soils are starting to actively draw moisture. South of Longford never reached winter refill.

North East
Best coastal winter in five years, with great spring growth. Ringarooma's drawdown is a month ahead compared to the coastal areas.

East Coast and Fingal Valley
Lowest moisture for this time of year in four to five years. The top 30 to 40 cm is exhausted, and deep moisture is only used to keep pasture alive, so significant rain is needed for active pasture growth.

Flinders Island and King Island
Have slipped from last year and tracking like two years ago. Use that season as the guide and be aware that the large early December rain saved the 2024/25 season.

Southern Midlands, Coal Valley and Derwent Valley
Mostly below last year and likely to run out sooner. St Peters Pass could be exhausted by late October or early November. Hamilton and Ouse are just ahead of last year.

Rainfall and Temperature Outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology shows no signal for above-average rain for October and November, but it is confident of warmer temperatures. That could add 0.5 to 1 mm a day to ETo, or roughly 4 to 7 mm of extra irrigation a week. Make sure you factor that into your irrigation scheduling.

2 Starting the irrigation season

The Key Terms

Term	What it is	How to use it
ETo	Water used by actively growing reference pasture, based on temperature, day length, radiation, wind and humidity.	A good guide for pasture. It overestimates water use for young crops.
Crop factor (Kc)	Scales ETo to your crop and changes with growth stage.	Young crops (emerging peas, poppies) sit around 0.2 to 0.3.
ETc	ETo × Kc.	With an ETo of 5 mm, pasture needs 5 mm and a crop at Kc 0.5 needs 2.5 mm.
Diurnal stepping	The daily staircase on a soil moisture probe.	Follow the gradient over a number of days to see when you will reach your refill point.

When to start

- **Perennial pastures and autumn sown crops:** base timing on your lighter, best performing soils, not the wet patches, then match ETo.
- **Spring sown crops**: use ETc with the right crop factor for each growth stage.
- **Check your assumptions:** make sure the irrigator applies what you think and the water infiltrates. Water-repellent, cracking or worked soils, including potato mounds, often have reduced infiltration.



An example of a crop factor curve can help you schedule irrigation requirements when combined with ETo.

What are you irrigating for?

Purpose	Signs	Approach
Keeping Up	Soil responds and use matches demand.	Match ETc. Split long irrigations to cut drainage.
Catching Up	Profile never refilled over winter.	Understand where your water sits in the profile and irrigate accordingly.
Finding Out	Probe shows little or odd response.	Apply a normal exploratory irrigation, watch the response, then adjust.

For annual cropping

In dry areas such as the Southern Midlands, irrigate early to build a subsoil buffer if you have water. Keeping up with demand alone will not be possible in December and January.

Potato growers:
Ag Logic and Potatoes Tasmania now run a separate monthly irrigation scheduling series with regional pulse checks. Sign up through Potatoes Tasmania.

3 Questions for you and your advisor

- What is each paddock's irrigation purpose, and what crop factor curve applies through to harvest?
- What worked two years ago, in a similar season, for stocking, grazing and irrigation?
- Is your irrigator applying what you think, and is the water going in?
- How much water do you have if allocations are cut, and where does your feed wedge need to be by late summer?

4 Links and useful resources

Farming Forecaster:
Soil moisture and pasture growth forecasts.
farmingforecaster.com.au

Tasmanian Irrigation dam levels:
Updated daily, useful for tracking scheme water into the season.
tasmanianirrigation.com.au

Bureau of Meteorology long range forecast:
Click the map, hover your locality, and read the chart that pops up.
bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks

Previous recaps:
tasfarmhub.com.au/resources/seasonal-update-with-ag-logic

Ag Logic weather station and soil probe network:
Real-time weather and soil moisture data.
Subscribe here

Potatoes Tasmania irrigation project:
potatoestas.org.au/

NEXT MONTH'S WEBINAR:
1pm, Friday 6th November 2026

Register online at:
tasfarmhub.com.au/events

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