



Northern Irrigation Newsletter

For Mixed Farmers and Croppers in the Irrigation Areas of Northern Victoria.

Newsletter of the Victorian Irrigated Cropping Council No 14 July 2007

Published by:
Victorian Irrigated Cropping Council Inc.
PO Box 238,
Kerang, Vic. 3579

Phone: 0428 545263

Fax: 03 5452 2313

Email: vicc@dragnet.com.au

Contributions are welcome.

Editor: Rob Fisher

Disclaimer:

This publication has been produced for the benefit of mixed farmers and croppers in northern Victoria. It may be of assistance to you but the editors, the Board of the VICC and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your purposes and therefore disclaim all liability for any error, loss or other consequences which may arise from relying on this publication. Information about commercial products or services does not endorse or imply endorsement of those products or services by the VICC.

Editorial

Welcome to the winter edition of the VICC newsletter. In this edition we have a look at the season so far, likely irrigation allocations, as well as a brief report on what is happening with one of the VICC projects that involves double cropping. Also included is information and a registration form for the annual irrigation update to be held at Barooga. As organisers we hope that you will find the update informative and relevant. As always your suggestions and feedback are important to us. Please feel free to contact us with what is important to you

Rob Fisher

Seasonal Summary for the Murray Valley

Dale Grey Cobram, DPI

The seasonal forecast is delicately balanced. The much promised La Nina has still failed to materialise, but for this month the signs for some of the indicators are much improved. The 30 day SOI has reached good positive territory (+12), cloudiness around the date line has been reduced and the easterly trade winds in the Pacific have increased; all essential signs for a La Nina. Frustratingly, the ocean temperatures in the eastern Pacific have warmed up to

more neutral levels compared to last month. The cold water to depth has also warmed somewhat. Cold water is a critical factor in the La Nina development and meteorologists think that the stronger trade winds could increase up-welling of cold water in the east and send it westwards across the equator. For Tocumwal the SOI in a rising phase for this month is a positive sign for increased chances of spring rainfall. For both Echuca and Kerang the signal for greater spring rainfall is likely, if the July 30 day SOI can remain above +2, keeping us in a positive phase. The moisture for the wet weather on the east coast is coming from the warm water above Australia but the Indian Ocean temperatures are not playing ball at the moment for good NW cloud feed.

Rainfall for late April, May and June has led to a very good start for crops (Table 1). This is localised more to the west of Echuca section, as the eastern area has had next to no rain in June and the topsoil has dried out rapidly with frosts and strong winds. Soil moisture has only reached 40 cm on Eastern region paddocks which did not receive high April rainfall. Soil moisture is below 60 cm in wetter paddocks.

Table 1

	April	May	June	GSR so far	Apr-Jun decile
Kerang	27	63	31	120	8
Echuca	32	66	31	128	7
Tocumwal	18	44	11	73	3

Most of you would have seen early sown crops jumping out of the ground with a full head of steam. This was due to the record warm May for Victoria and translated into crops being approximately 5 days ahead of normal. Crops actually appear more advanced than this, but not many crops have been sown in early May of recent years (unless you have pre-watered!). Later sown crops have been sluggish, this is because June temperatures have been below average. Day degrees are a measure of total temperature accumulation that drive plant growth (see Table 2). It takes 100 day degrees to put a leaf out on a cereal plant. Many early crops will be between 6-7 leaves, which is very close to the first node stage. People thinking of grazing early sown cereals, (possibly a cheap form of growth regulator) will have fire up quickly if they haven't already done it.

Table 2

Day degrees for May		LT avg	diff
Kerang	456	389	67
Echuca	450	378	72
Tocumwal	446	400	46
Day degrees for June		LT avg	diff
Kerang	251	288	-37
Echuca	240	282	-42
Tocumwal	260	281	-21
Day degrees May- June		LT avg	diff
Kerang	707	677	30
Echuca	690	660	30
Tocumwal	706	681	25

What's New?

“Coping with Change”

LATEST INFORMATION FOR
MIXED ENTERPRISE CROPPERS IN IRRIGATION AREAS

Speakers presenting in concurrent sessions on Agronomy, alternatives, current issues
Experts, farmer experience and displays

Sportsmans Club, Barooga

Thursday 2nd August 2007

8.30 am – 4.00 pm

Lunch provided by NSW Department of Primary Industries as part of their
“Farm Family Gathering” Initiative

Organised by farmers through:
Victorian Irrigated Cropping Council
Irrigated Cropping Forum
Department of Primary Industry (NSW & Victoria)



VICC

Supported by:
Growers through the GRDC
Pioneer Hi-bred
Bayer CropScience
Cobram Rural
Australian Grain Accumulators
Australian Grains Council
GPS Ag

Topics and presenters offer something for everyone:

Keynote Address

- The P.M's water plan, what does it really mean to irrigators?
Dr James Horne, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Environment and Water Resources

Specific risk management issues

- Should I still be an irrigation farmer? *Rob Rendell,*
RMCG
- Climate change
– is it real and has it caused the drought? *Dr Scott Powers*
BoM

Plus Cropping at the cutting edge

- Can we breed varieties that perform well under irrigation? *Andrew Milgate, NSW DPI*

- 8 tonne wheat crops – correcting myths
DPI *John Lacy, NSW*
- Inter row cropping
GPS Ag *Brendan Williams,*
- Double cropping – is fodder in the rotation the key
to success? *Damian Jones, DPI Vic*
- Cloud seeding – does it work?
Lordena Warren,
Snowy Hydro
- Stubble, soil organic matter management
Clive Kirkby, CSIRO
- Water use and yields under centre pivot irrigation
Sam North, NSW DPI
- Maintaining productivity under continuous intensive
cropping *Peter Fisher, DPI Vic*
- The new V flexible layout *Harry Kooloos*

Detach along here

Cost: \$35 pre-paid entry; \$50 pre-paid entry and 2007 membership (for Newsletter and other benefits);
\$45 entry at the door; \$60 entry at the door & 2007 membership.
Includes notes, lunch and morning and afternoon teas.

To register fill-in the form and post, fax or email the information.

Registration form:

Name:

Postal address:
.....

Phone:; **Email:**

Number of registrations:..... (If more than 1, include personal details on the back of this form).

Cheque enclosed: \$ (Payable to VICC);

Post to GRDC Update, PO Box 238, KERANG, 3579

Or Direct Debit: \$ (VICC a/c no. 633 000 1128 40301, quote your surname as a reference)

With direct debit email registration information to: vicc@dragnet.com.au or return by fax (03)5452 2313

More information: Phone – Rob Fisher 0428 545 263 or email vicc@dragnet.com.au

Lifting irrigated cropping profitability and WUE- Double Cropping

Dale Boyd, (DPI Echuca) the Double cropping Agronomist is currently conducting on-farm research to assess the ability of irrigated double cropping to provide opportunities to capitalise in irrigated agriculture. The project aims to improve double cropping practise adoption in Victoria and southern NSW by demonstrating that 20t/ha annual production is achievable. The research component focussed on 2 field trials at Northern Victorian sites. Data was collected from 2 locations, one investigating winter cropping and the other alternative site, due to the drought growing summer crop. Extension activities have been held on site with more planned in the future and establishing a group or double croppers network.

Previous studies (NSW DPI survey) show that issues such as stubble management, harvesting and sowing conflicts between winter/summer crops and rotations are barriers to increased adoption. Low water allocation is also a large determining factor with recent low rainfall years leaving storage dams depleted.

Key findings to date include:

- ❑ High temporary water prices in the drought emphasised the importance of assessing crops, and using all tools to evaluate its ability to yield (grain) with further irrigation or finish the crop as hay.

- ❑ Always be open to all options, high gross margins with cereal hay in the drought and ending the crop early allows time for preparation and sowing of the next crop. Forage gives you more options for the summer crop but if forage prices are low, grain production GM will generally be better.

- ❑ Development and information days on cutting cereals for hay. Using the Hay Vs grain model to help determine which is the right option. Increased awareness of alternative hay crops (Canola) and the importance of feed tests to determine quality to assist sales and develop feed budgets for stock. This operation then allows time for preparation of summer cropping.

- ❑ Utilisation of sub soil moisture for summer crop, but also being aware of the last summer irrigation can cause sowing delays in wet autumn.

- ❑ Use technology that is available
 - Super condition hay for quicker dry down times
 - Disc seeders to sow into stubbles
 - Irrigation strategies, moisture monitoring equipment

- ❑ Feed the crop according to the production target yield you budget on. High yields are achievable with applications of required nutrients, determined from soil tests.

- ❑ The crop entry into the double crop system is critical. Weeds need to at low levels when starting or use the first crop to lower grass weed numbers. Canola and clover can do this and also permit timely spring removal to prepare and sow summer crop.

For further information and/or to be on the mailing list to be notified of upcoming events contact

Dale Boyd
 DPI Echuca
 Mobile: 0417 3398 04
Dale.Boyd@dpi.vic.gov.au

Irrigation Allocations

1. From MIL's "Talking Water" 7/7/07

Total Season Inflows	Chance of this inflow or higher in 2007/08	Water Availability	Comment
Flood of Record (more than 40,000GL)	Very unlikely	Full allocations	Very unlikely with current conditions
Repeat of 1996/97 – most recent good wet year (16,000GL)	Less than 5%	High allocations	Flood flows lower than in 1996 due to refilling of major dams
Long-term average (11,000GL)	15%	Reasonable allocations	Moderate reserves for 2008/09
Repeat of 2005/06 – a 'reasonable' inflow year (6,500GL)	50%	Moderate allocations	Low reserves at end of year as most water consumed
3,500GL	75%	Similar total availability to 2006/07	Less water for SA & Vic than in 2006/07 – more for NSW
Repeat of 2006/07 (less than 1,000GL)	High chance of exceeding	Critical human needs – almost no irrigation	Contingency arrangements in place

2. From GMW'S Website 7/7/07

Goulburn System (% of HRWS at date shown for given probability)

Probability	15 Aug 2007	15 Sep 2007	15 Oct 2007	15 Dec 2007	15 Feb 2008
1 chance in 10 (wet)	70%	100%	100%	100%	100%
5 chances in 10 (average)	21%	56%	78%	100%	100%
9 chances in 10 (dry)	0%	17%	31%	44%	51%

Murray System (% of HRWS at date shown for given probability)

Probability	15 Aug 2007	15 Sep 2007	15 Oct 2007	15 Dec 2007	15 Feb 2008
1 chance in 10 (wet)	19%	47%	82%	100%	100%
5 chances in 10 (average)	0%	26%	49%	61%	80%
9 chances in 10 (dry)	0%	0%	3%	13%	21%

Campaspe System (% of HRWS at date shown for given probability)

Probability	15 Aug 2007	15 Oct 2007	15 Dec 2007	15 Feb 2008
1 chance in 10 (wet)	41%	100%	100%	100%
5 chances in 10 (average)	0%	24%	37%	52%
9 chances in 10 (dry)	0%	0%	0%	0%

Loddon System (% of HRWS at date shown for given probability)

Probability	15 Aug 2007	15 Oct 2007	15 Dec 2007	15 Feb 2008
1 chance in 10 (wet)	100%	100%	100%	100%
5 chances in 10 (average)	0%	65%	92%	100%
9 chances in 10 (dry)	0%	0%	0%	0