



AMURI IRRIGATION CO

ENVIRONMENTAL COLLECTIVE NEWSLETTER

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OverseerFM

AIC has set up as an OverseerFM organisation to help Collective members manage their Overseer nutrient budgets. We are committed to both the confidentiality of any information we hold on your behalf and providing a low-cost nutrient budget service for Collective members.

We have set up Farm Accounts for all Collective farms with a FEP. You should have received an email from Overseer Ltd asking you to activate the account. If you have not already done so, please respond to this request as quickly as possible.

Once your account is activated and the annual fee is paid, you will have access to the data in your old Overseer files that can be used to create nutrient budgets. You can either pay the annual account fee of \$200 when you activate the account or AIC will pay this on your behalf and on charge to you.

We are working with Fonterra to give them access to the Farm Accounts for Fonterra suppliers who use their Nitrogen Pages service so that all the nutrient management data is available to you through your OverseerFM Farm Account.

We will be running some training days on Tuesday 2nd July and 30th July for members to learn more about OverseerFM and how to use their Farm Accounts to review nutrient management and do scenario modelling. Please contact Renee if you'd like to attend or advise of any specific matters you would like covered.

2018/19 FEP Auditing: Results

This was the fourth round of FEP Auditing undertaken by the Collective and 70 audits were completed, including both first and repeat audits.

Almost all farms in the Collective have had at least one FEP Audit and 277 audits have been completed over the four-year period.

Completed Audits 2018/19

Total audits undertaken	70
Number of first audits	25
Number of repeat audits	45
Audits by farm type:	
Dairy	33
Beef & Sheep	28
Dairy Support	6
Other	3

The Agribusiness Group (TAG) were contracted to undertake the majority of audits with a team of four ECan approved FEP auditors. It is worth noting that because AIC staff closely manage the auditing process from start to finish, the cost of contract auditing is lower for AIC than it is for other irrigation schemes involved in similar auditing projects.

We can maintain this cost effectiveness if members make themselves available for audits at the appointed time, or seek a change to their audit date as soon as possible, late changes create a lot of additional work and risk contract auditors increasing charges because of gaps in their schedule.

Nutrient Budgets

For the first time, all audits were completed with Overseer nutrient budgets designed specifically for auditing. These came from a range of providers, but almost 75% came from either TAG or Fonterra.

TAG/AIC generated short report nutrient budgets are designed for auditing and are an important option for farmers wanting to keep the costs of auditing as low as possible.

Audit Results

The audit grade results show a year on year improvement in farm environmental performance, particularly for those farms at second audit.

Distribution of Audit Grades over four auditing rounds

Grade	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
A	5	10%	7	14%	19	18%	14	19%
B	31	63%	29	57%	69	65%	52	75%
C	10	20%	13	25%	17	16%	4	6%
D	3	6%	2	4%	1	1%	0	0%
Total	49		51		106		70	

- There has been a steady increase in the number of farms achieving either A or B grade since 2015 and a proportionate reduction in farms at C or D grade.
- Since 2015, 277 audits have been completed and currently 97% of all Collective farms are at either A or B grade.
- In 2018/19 of the 70 farms audited, 94% are either at GMP or on track to achieve GMP in an agreed timeframe.

The rate at which farms achieving A grade is more modest than those achieving B grade. This is understandable given the high expectations required for an A grade and the fact some actions, particularly those requiring infrastructure development, require more time to implement.



The FEP Auditing team would like to thank all involved in FEP Audits this year. The overwhelming response is very positive, and it is clear the vast majority of Collective members are working very hard to get to GMP or beyond and taking their environmental responsibilities seriously.

Winter Grazing Project

Winter brings wet conditions which combined with fodder crops increase environmental risks. Good planning and understanding of risks are key to minimising these impacts, particularly on water quality.

At its April meeting the AIC Board suggested that, given the risks associated with winter grazing, some monitoring and advisory work should be undertaken to check on winter grazing practices which can complement FEP Auditing which is undertaken during the summer months.

In response the Environmental Subcommittee has agreed to undertake a trial project this winter involving a sample of 10 farms which will receive an advisory visit to review the farm's winter management practices to ensure they are consistent with GMP and FEPs. These checks would be voluntary and would not influence existing audit grading.

We will also be publishing some guidelines for winter grazing GMP and risk mitigation options and using the updating of several FEPs as an opportunity to discuss winter management with farmers on a one to one basis.

It is hoped farmers will use this as an opportunity to discuss winter management practices and how to minimise the environmental impact.

Auditing for Good: Dairying, environmental auditing and the 'good farmer' in the Amuri Environmental Collective

Last year Claire McCorkindale, a Masters student from Lincoln University undertook a research project to assess changes in farmer attitude to environmental management and whether this changed the sustainability of farming practices. Claire interviewed 12 dairy farmers and five

'stakeholders' (ECan, Fish and Game, Forest and Bird and former LUDF director Ron Pellow) as part of this project.

Claire's work was published earlier in the year and while the full research thesis is not light reading, the conclusions are very interesting. The full thesis is available on the AIC website.

Some of the findings included:

- Farmers prefer to be managed by the Collective as opposed to ECan. This was despite AIC being perceived as having higher expectations of what it wants farmers to deliver. Both Forest and Bird and Fish and Game believed the Collective was more effective than ECan.
- The study recognised concerns from farmers over the possibility of ECan requiring Overseer to be used as a regulatory tool rather than as an advisory and scenario planning tool as it currently within the Collective. Fish and Game was supportive of the use of Overseer only as an advisory tool as used by AIC in FEP Auditing and while ECan recognised some limitations and frustrations with Overseer it felt it was the only tool available.

Conclusions: Overall there was agreement that there had been an overall mind-set shift towards environmental practices in the catchment, particularly over the last five years with far greater awareness around environmental issues than in previous decades, and this was a comment also expressed by stakeholders:

"The farming community has come a long way in the last five years from 'absolutely not' to 'yeah we need to move in a different direction and I am doing these things now' and well done to them" Forest and Bird.

The report concluded that farmers have recognised there is both an environmental and a financial benefit to improving the efficiencies of their system. As a result, understanding of water quality issues is much higher in the catchment and the interviews suggest that, for the most part, farmers have accepted the need to continue to adapt to new requirements and expectations.

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