

## FARM ENVIRONMENT PLAN AUDITING RESULTS 2019-20

### BACKGROUND

The AIC Environmental Collective currently holds 174 Farm Environment Plans (FEPs) covering over 85,000ha of farmed land in the Amuri, Hawarden and Hanmer Springs area. Almost all larger irrigating farms in the catchment are members of the AIC Environmental Collective, either as AIC shareholders or independent members.

The AIC Environmental Collective was established by Amuri Irrigation Company Limited (AIC) in early 2013. The Collective has an Environmental Management Strategy (EMS) approved by the Canterbury Regional Council (ECan) which meets the requirements for an audited self-management environmental scheme. The Collective's EMS was first approved in 2014 and the latest version (copy available on our website [www.amuriirrigation.co.nz](http://www.amuriirrigation.co.nz)) was approved in December 2018.

The EMS specifies the:

- Required content of FEPs
- Good Management Practice standards that members need to meet covering six different farm management areas:
  - Nutrient Management
  - Irrigation Management
  - Collected Animal Effluent Management
  - Waterway and Riparian Management
  - Soil Management
  - Management of hot spots such as silage stacks and offal pits.
- The governance and management procedures of the Collective
- The required standards and process for independent auditing of FEPs by ECan approved FEP Auditors.

Farmers are assessed by a standard defined by industry groups known as Good Management Practice (GMP). FEPs are individual to each farm and identify environmental risks and actions required for that farm to meet GMP standards to address those risks. FEPs are independently audited to assess if there are any areas in need of improvement and whether progress has made towards meeting the actions identified in the FEP and if the farm is at GMP.

Each farm receives a detailed FEP audit report listing required actions and a timeframe for implementation and an overall grading ranging from A to D:

- **A Grade:** All management areas meet GMP standards or better. Repeat audit within 4 years.
- **B Grade:** Some areas need further action but farm on-track to achieve objectives within a reasonable agreed timeframe. Repeat audit within 2 years.

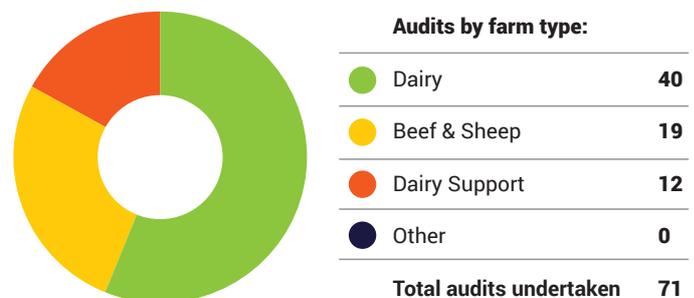
- **C Grade:** Some areas need further action and the farm is not on track to meet these within an agreed timeframe. Repeat audit within 1 year.
- **D Grade:** At least one area needs urgent attention. Repeat audit within six months.

All farms in the Collective must have a FEP in place within six months of joining which must be audited within three years of joining. The Collective has been auditing FEPs since 2015 and has now concluded its fifth consecutive round of auditing. The Collective has undertaken a total of 347 FEP audits over this period.

### 2019-20 AUDITING RESULTS

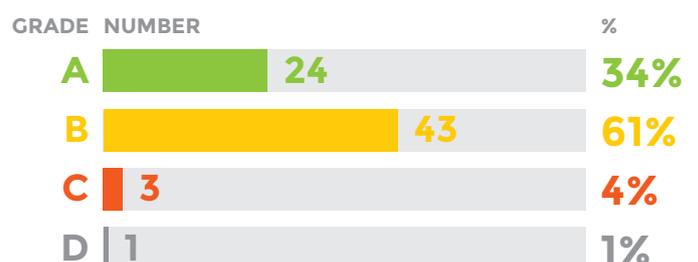
71 audits were completed by a team of four ECan approved auditors between early November 2019 and June 2020. Auditing was suspended in March due to the Covid-19 pandemic with six audits remaining to be completed. Auditing resumed in June when the postponed audits were completed. All audits were completed with fit for purpose Overseer nutrient budget for the 2018-19 season. All audits were repeat audits and undertaken across a range of farm types see Graph 1 below.

Graph 1: Audits by farm type 2019/20



The distribution of audit grades for the 2019-20 year are shown in Graph 2 below:

Graph 2: Distribution of audit grade



There has been a steady improvement in performance across all five auditing rounds, see Table 3 and Graph 3. below. In 2019-20, 95% of all farms audited are either A or B grade compared to 73% in 2015/16. A fall in the number of B grades from the last auditing round (2018-19) reflects farms progressing from B to A grades. There has also been a steady decline in the number of farms at C grade from 20% in 2015-16 to only 4% in 2019-20.

## C AND D GRADES

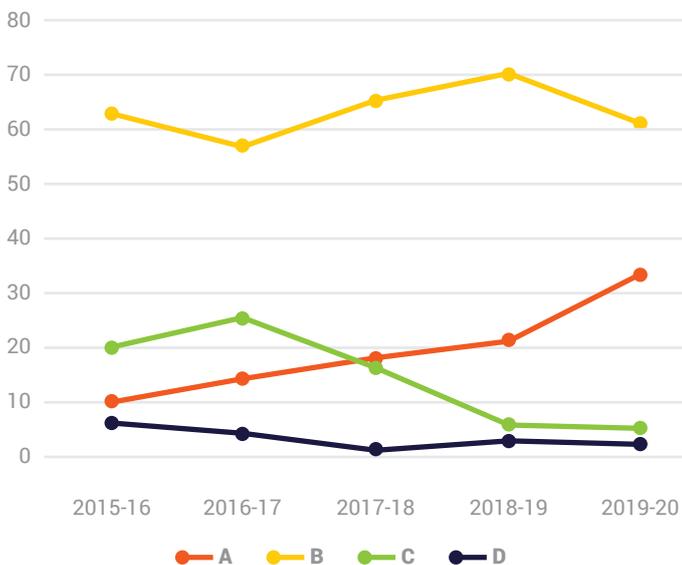
The farm that received a D grade was subject to ECan compliance action and will be reaudited in September 2020 to assess whether the actions outlined in the last audit have been addressed.

Three farms that were previously at a B grade received C grades for failing to make sufficient progress on actions identified in previous audits. These farms will be audited before March 2021 to assess whether these farms are on track to meet GMP.

Table 1: Distribution of Audit Grade by Year

	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20	
	No	%								
A	5	10%	7	14%	19	18%	14	20%	24	34%
B	31	63%	29	57%	69	65%	52	74%	43	61%
C	10	20%	13	25%	17	16%	4	6%	3	4%
D	3	6%	2	4%	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%
TOTAL	49		51		106		70		71	

Graph 3: Audit grade trends from 2015-16 to 2019-20



## BEYOND GOOD MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

As the Collective continues to move its farmers to GMP, a number of initiatives have been developed by AIC's Environmental Subcommittee that go beyond what is required by GMP. These projects include:

**Nutrient Use Efficiency Benchmarking:** Using the very latest version of the OverseerFM Nutrient Modelling tool, we will be bench-marking Collective farms on their nitrogen use efficiency and focusing attention on the least efficient farms in their nutrient use and working with them to develop more efficient systems.

**Environmental Data Layer:** Using our Geographical Information System (GIS) we have brought together a wide range of environmental data in one useful layer to enable environmental risk assessment and management at both a farm and scheme level.

**Winter Management GMP:** Following nationwide concerns regarding the impact of winter management of stock on the environment, the Collective launched a project to look at various winter management practices and what could be done to reduce the impacts on the area's waterways. A new Winter Management Handbook, including a new Winter Management GMP standard has been published and will be included in FEP Audits from next year.

**Irrigation Efficiency Benchmarking:** This project utilises various climate and water use data to model irrigation efficiency both for individual farms and the schemes as a whole. Initial results indicate that the AIC schemes and the great majority of individual farms are exceeding Environment Canterbury's irrigation efficiency standards.