Crop Action

Issue 12 Sunday 21 June 2026

In this issue of Crop Action:

Editor's note

This season is shaping up to be different to most, largely due to climatic conditions. May was a little warmer and much drier than usual for some regions, particularly Canterbury, and a looming El Niño is likely to affect planning for the upcoming spring and summer. Right now, though, some crops are growing slightly faster than usual and weed pressure may be higher. Aphid flights are continuing in most regions, with a heightened risk of virus infection. With a possibility limited irrigation access later in the year, there are some actions you could be considering now to make things easier later.

It probably seems a long way away now, but spring will be here before we know it, and planning for spring sowings will no doubt be something many growers have already begun thinking about. FAR's latest issue of the Cereal Performance Trials (CPT) booklet, for spring-sown cereals, has just been released, and can be accessed here.

Crop management

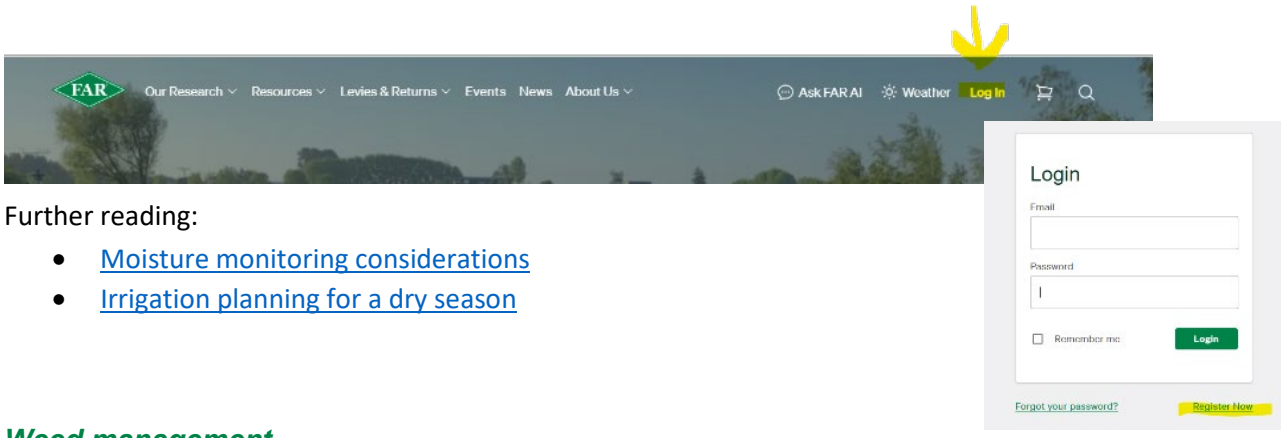
General

Preparing for El Niño

NIWA and other experts are predicting a high likelihood of El Niño conditions (some possibly extreme) this coming spring and summer. Climate predictions are difficult at the best of times, and current advice is that the coming El Niño could be more unpredictable than most, but here are some things you should consider.

- Stock feed could be at a premium later this year, so if there is excess green feed on farm at the moment, it could be worth baling it now (or soon). This might also relieve pressure on irrigation later. Feed quality may also be reduced later in the season.
- Nitrogen management can change in dry seasons. Fertiliser budgets can be shifted down if moisture is limited and yield expectations are lowered. Cereal silage is also an option if water needs to be conserved for other, higher value crops.
- Install your moisture probes now, if you haven't already, to keep good tabs on the situation throughout the season. They take time to bed in and start to return reliable data. This also leaves time to re-install probes if there are any issues. Moisture probes are useful even if you have no irrigation, as they allow you to make decisions about destocking, N timing, etc.
- Sign up for daily local weather forecasts via FAR's weather portal. You can also make use of the "Irrigation" tab in the weather portal, which has daily evapotranspiration (ET) and rainfall balance reports.

- To access the weather portal you need a FAR website account, which takes about two-minutes. Go to www.far.org.nz then click on Login. It will take you to a box where you can either login or register.



Further reading:

- Moisture monitoring considerations
- Irrigation planning for a dry season

Weed management

Broadleaf crops such as oilseed rape and white clover are often included in rotations to help manage grass weed problems, particularly if there is an issue with herbicide resistance (Group 1 and 2 herbicides are the usual culprits). One option for grass weed control in these crops is propyzamide (Kerb™, Polka™ and others, a Group 3 herbicide). Propyzamide works through root absorption, so applications must be made when the soil is moist and rain imminent, or during rainfall, with minimal surface debris. Air temperatures should also be below 13°C. Propyzamide controls grass weeds and provides a good alternative to Group 1 and 2 herbicides, which have had numerous instances of herbicide resistance recorded in New Zealand. A 2025 FAR study in oilseed rape showed that July applications of propyzamide were less effective at controlling ryegrass weeds than May or June applications. July applications were more effective when clethodim (a Group 1 herbicide) was included in the mix.

Always read the label before using any agrichemical product.

Cereals

Warm winter aphid management

Continuing dry, warmer weather is having a significant effect on aphid management decisions in autumn-sown cereals. In all previous seasons of FAR monitoring aphid numbers have been down to zero (or almost zero) by this time of year (as monitored by sticky trap captures). However, this is not yet the case at almost all currently monitored sites. Aphid pressure in inland areas seems a little higher than coastal, but in general we can say with some certainty that this is a high-pressure time. This is following on from a late spring/early summer where aphid numbers were also high. This season, it's coinciding with the time when most autumn-sown cereals are reaching tillering.

There is now a significant risk period for yield losses due to aphid-vectored viruses for crops that have reached tillering, so growers may wish to consider spray options. Earlier-sown crops may have received an application of foliar insecticide in mid-to-late-May. This may also have been the case for some later-sown crops, since growers were aware of the warmer weather and already on aphid alert from the previous season. Depending on the product, there can be residual control of 2-3 weeks, although the warmer the weather, the shorter this time.

With FAR monitoring showing that aphid flights are continuing, and crops reaching tillering, aphid colonies are likely to re-establish in crops and be present in spring when the weather warms up. Growers may therefore be considering a second insecticide application.

The weather is now cooling down, however, and so the rates of incursion into, and spread within the crop are both lower than a month ago. This means that waiting until winter has properly set in before applying a second foliar insecticide could be a valid option, as long as access isn't impeded.

Many of the same considerations apply if you haven't applied an insecticide, which could be because the crop is later-sown. There is now a significant risk period for yield losses due to aphid-vectored viruses for crops that have reached tillering, so growers may wish to consider spray options.

Post-emergence weed management

Much of Canterbury has been dry, which can cause some pre-emergence herbicides to lose efficacy. If you are worried about pre-emergence herbicide 'misses' it is important to walk your paddocks and get a sense for where the problem areas are, and what weed species are coming up. For assistance in identifying weeds FAR's handy "ute guides" are available here and here. Be wary of overusing Group 2 chemistry (e.g. Glean®, Hussar®, Othello®), especially if no other herbicide or weed control is used on the crop, as grass weed resistance to these herbicides is becoming more common on New Zealand arable farms.

As mentioned above, conditions on many farms have been dry. This may be an opportunity to try alternative weed management techniques such as tine weeding, which works best in dry soils. For more on this and other IWM practices, click here.

An **incomplete** selection of post-emergent herbicides approved for use in wheat is shown below (updated 2026). Refer to individual product labels for individual weed species controlled.

Product	Active Ingredient	Weeds controlled	Mode-of-Action group(s)
Duplosan® Super	Mecoprop + dichlorprop + MCPA	Broadleaf weeds	4
Glean® + generics	Chlorsulfuron	Broadleaf weeds	2
Hussar®	Iodosulfuron	Broadleaf weeds and grasses	2
Image®	Mecoprop + bromoxynil + ioxynil	Broadleaf weeds	4 + 6
IPU 500 Twister™ Protugan® etc.	Isoproturon	Broadleaf weeds and grasses	5
Kamba® and generics	Dicamba	Broadleaf weeds	4
Othello®	Diflufenican + mesosulfuron + iodosulfuron	Broadleaf weeds and grasses	2 + 12
Paradigm™	halauxifen-methyl + florasulam	Broadleaf weeds	2 + 4

Puma® S and others	Fenoxaprop	Wild oats, *Phalaris*	1
Pulsar® Quasar™	Bentazone + MCPA	Broadleaf weeds	6 + 4
Quantum™	Diflufenican	Broadleaf weeds	12
Rexade™ GoDRI	Halauxifen-methyl + pyroxsulam	Broadleaf weeds and grasses	2 + 4
Saxon™	Mecoprop-p + MCPA + fluroxypyr	Broadleaf weeds	4
Stratos™ Crusader™	Flamprop	Wild oats	0
Trimec® and others	Mecoprop + MCPA + dicamba	Broadleaf weeds	4
Tower®	Chlorotoluron + pendimethalin + diflufenican	Broadleaf weeds and grasses	5 + 3 + 12
Twinax® XTRA	Pinoxaden	Wild oats, *Phalaris*, and ryegrass	1
Multiple generics	2,4-D	Broadleaf weeds	4
Versatill™	Clopyralid	Broadleaf weeds	4

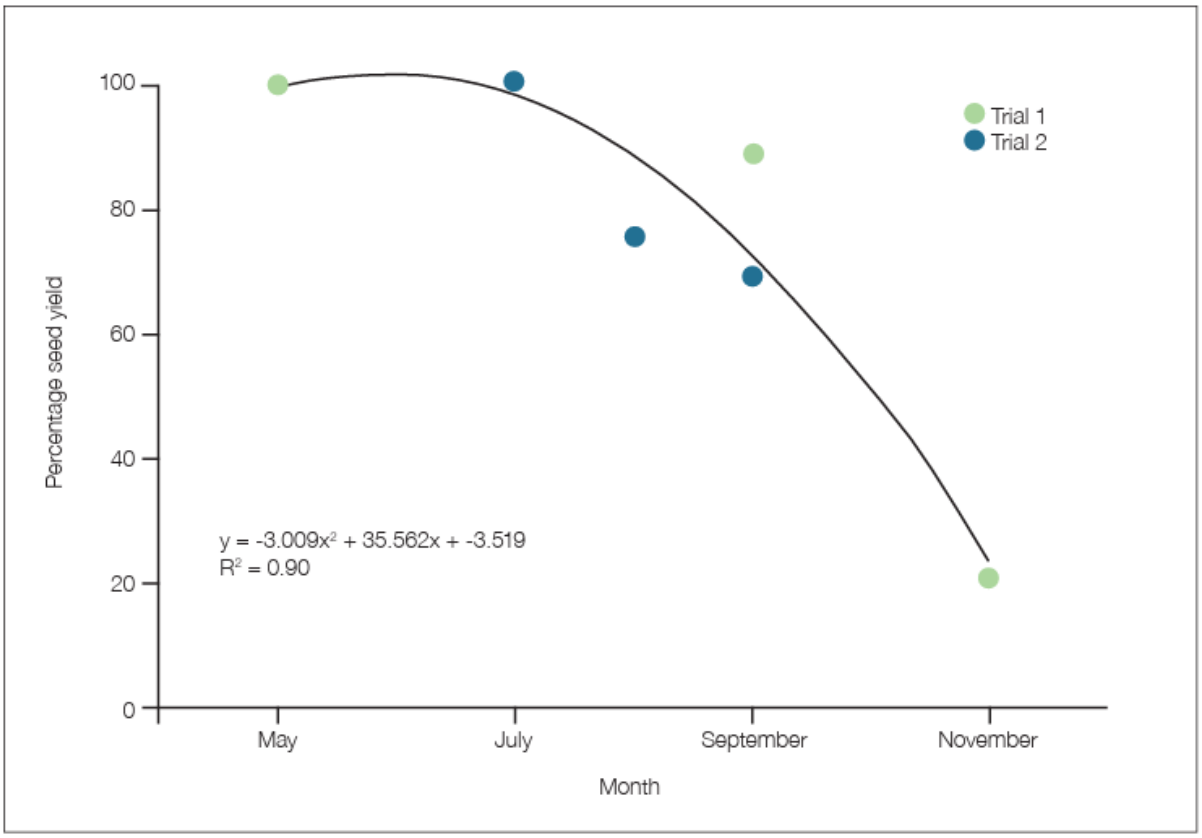
Herbage

Closing date in tall fescue and cocksfoot seed crops

A range of approaches can be used for closing tall fescue. Some growers build up autumn bulk and make baleage in late May, using this as their closing. Others graze through early winter and close in July. Both approaches work with many cultivars. Cocksfoot grazing often continues to mid-July, but later closing, e.g. August, can depress yields (Figure 1).

Further information can be found in FAR's recent publication, FAR Focus 16: Cocksfoot Seed Production.

Figure 1 (over the page): Cocksfoot seed yield from two trials (2012-13 and 2016-17) in the Methven area. Yield is expressed as a percentage of seed yield from the earliest closing date.



Weather Updates

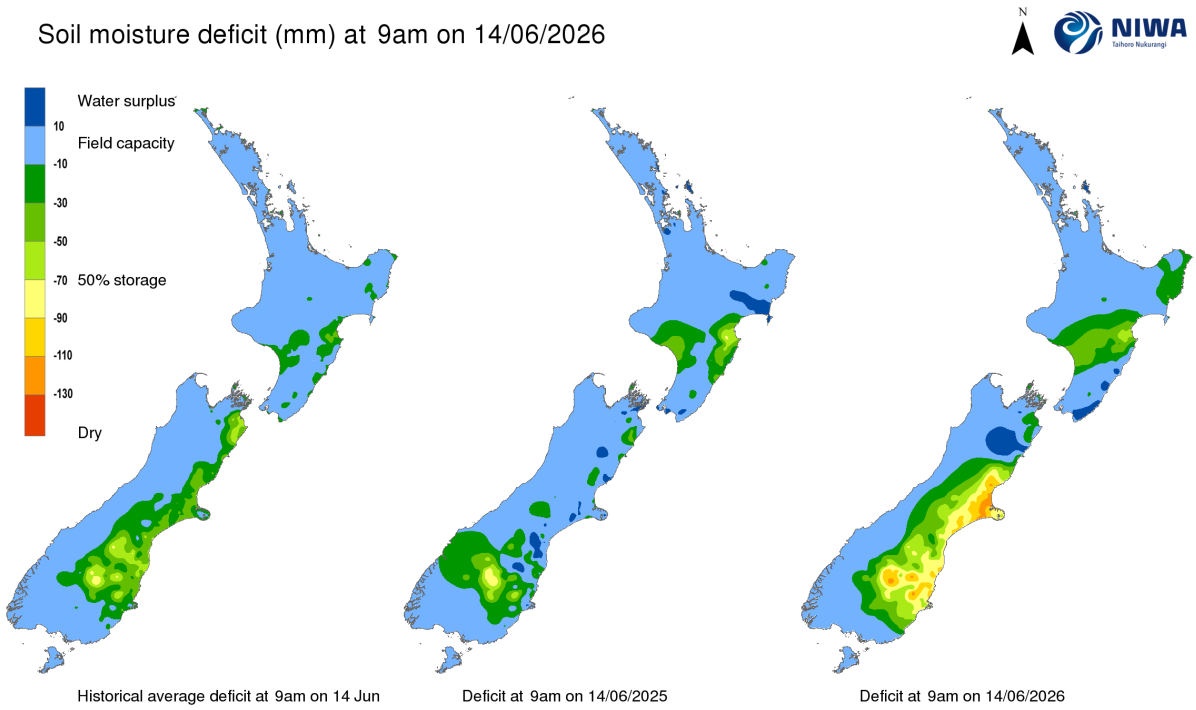
Seasonal climate outlook

NIWA's outlook summary for the winter warns that the weather experienced at the start of this month may not be indicative of what to expect as the season progresses, as air flow patterns shift around to the west/southwest. Western areas, especially in the South Island, may therefore experience more rainfall than usual, but all other regions should brace for a drier than usual winter. Soil moisture levels are likely to be below average. There may also be unusually windy conditions later in winter, with considerable temperature variability. Overall, temperatures should sit close to the historical mean. By the time winter is over, there is a 95% likelihood that El Niño conditions will be prevalent in New Zealand.

FAR weather tool

The FAR online weather tool is a great way to track weather patterns and to compare the current season's conditions with those of previous years. There are also a number of tools available to help with predicting disease and pest pressure. You can check it out here. Click on the link and select the weather station closest to you from the drop-down box at the top right of the screen. Please contact us if you have any queries about the tool, or suggestions on how to make it better.

Soil moisture data: see more from NIWA here.



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