

Disaster recovery decisions

Silt laden flood waters, roads and bridges gone, communications down, crops and income lost. It may be some time before you can begin the physical clean up. Look after yourself and your people first.

Look after yourself and your people

Assess health and safety for you and your family
Consider physical and mental wellbeing.
Be aware that stress can affect your decisions.
Slow down and assess risks.
Take your time and take time-out.

Check in with neighbours
Get together and work out what needs to be done and who can help.

Security and neighbourhood watch
Be aware that some see a disaster as an opportunity for gain. Check your security measures.

Don't be in a rush
Take time for breaks. Have fun with your kids. Go away and get a change of scene.
Talk about something else.

Look after your staff
Be aware of their personal circumstances.
Clean-up will be slow and the days long. Give them time off to recover.
Show appreciation and say thank you.

Find out about community assistance and ask for help

- Your grower network
- Rural Support Trust
- Sector groups
- Community groups
- Councils
- Horticulture Advisory Group

Find out about funding sources for “clean-up” and how to apply for it

- Government
- Council
- Industry
- Horticulture Advisory Group

Get professional help
if you feel you are not coping.

Look after your business

Once it is safe, assess the damage to your land, buildings and property. Develop a “to-do” list and prioritise actions in response to accessibility.

Develop a system for record keeping
Take photos of the damage to your buildings, farm infrastructure, machinery and lost crops.
Save the information in one place.

Inform your bank
Develop a financial plan.

Inform your insurance company
Provide evidence of the damage.

Develop a business recovery plan
Seek professional advice.
Ask and explore:

- How soon can I return to business as usual?
- What needs to happen to get there?
- What will I do in the interim?
- Where will the money come from?
- What is a priority and where can costs be saved?
- Consider your economic opportunities... where will you make the money?
- Consider whether you need to make a quick return to support cash-flow.

Create an activity timeline and set milestones
Some farmers found it helpful to set a hard-completion date for the “clean-up” and achievable milestones.
Celebrate progress as you go.



Look after your land

Clean up rubbish
Talk to the council about disposal options – including being able to burn items.

Mend infra-structure
Prioritise requirements. Start with the most important to support your business plan.

Clear drains and tile-drains
To assist drying.

Assess the deposited silt

- Is it sand, silt, clay?
- How deep is it?
- Work out how to work it.
- What machinery will you use?
- What can you share or borrow?

Be patient:
Wait until the ground is dry enough to work. Going too soon can lead to

- Machinery damage.
- Getting stuck.
- Multiple passes and the risk of compaction.

Mulch
Unharvested crop.

Plant a cover crop if this fits with your economic recovery plan.
Experience in Hawkes Bay showed that there was no rush to do this and it didn't matter what the cover crop was.
The important thing to remember is that root activity will kick-start the soil recovery.
Graze or mulch cover crops to build soil organic levels.
It's OK to do nothing.



What you might find
Logs and timber.
Inorganic waste: tyres, posts and wire, building materials, bins and bales, household items.
Organic waste, including dead stock.
Hazardous waste including fertiliser and agrichemicals.



Cover crops to consider

- Grass can be flown on.
- Proprietary cover crop mixes.
- Mustard.
- Oats
- A mix of seeds you have in store.
- Leave untouched and allow the previous crop and other plants to grow.

Making a start - Preparing the soil

Silt removal is expensive and generally not necessary. Consider the silt as a valuable resource but allow time for it to be incorporated into the underlying soil.

Sand deposits
Spread over as wide an area as possible and mix in.
Consider the economics. Moving deposited sand, gravel and silt is expensive.
It might be better to find an alternative option for the land.

Silt deposits - depths up to 50 cm
Aim to work the silt into the underlying soil.
Consider the available machinery.
Wait until it is dry enough not to get stuck.
Soil test and address the nutrient status before planting the first crop.
If the deposits are silty clays, work them back in. Be aware that lumps of clay will stay in the soil profile and may contribute to tackiness after rain.

Silt deposits - too deep to work in
If your business structure allows, plan to have a break from cropping for 2-3 years.
Establish plant cover as soon as possible on the silt layer (in line with your business plan).
Aim to increase soil organic levels as soon as possible. Any root activity will help.
Apply capital fertiliser to address nutrient deficiencies.

Getting back to normal

Consider the following
What does your new soil environment look like? What has changed and will the new soil profile support your previous commercial rotation?
In year one, the certainty of crop success is lower – choose a crop with lower input costs.
Keep an eye on the nutrient supply to the crop – additional fertiliser may be required.
Monitor crops for new weed species. Eradicate them before they set seed and cause ongoing problems.
Monitor crops for new pests and diseases. Take control if possible.
Have confidence - return to normal in most flood damaged fields was quicker than expected and yields in the first crop exceeded expectations.

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