

MEDIA RELEASE

From the Waikato Regional Drought Committee

27 January 2011

Recent rain welcome but some farmers still struggling

Recent rain has helped restore crucial soil moisture to above average levels in the Waikato, says a sub-group of the Waikato Regional Drought Committee, with further rain forecast this weekend.

But some farmers will still need ongoing support due to the effects of drought and the risk remains that soil moisture levels could plummet again if there was an extended period of dry weather.

A sub-group meeting today heard that recent rain meant rainfall levels in the Waikato this month had been between 140 millimetres and 200 mm in most farming areas around the region, compared to a January average of around 100 mm.

“That means soil moisture levels are back to above average levels for the year following the extended dry spell in the run-up to Christmas,” said committee chairman Peter Buckley of Environment Waikato, himself a dairy farmer.

“However, some farmers are still dealing with the impacts of last year’s drought and there is always the risk of a renewed dry spell.

“The sub-group is asking the Government to maintain the availability of Rural Assistance Payments (RAPs) to qualifying farmers for the time being and to continue financial support for the Rural Support Trust in the region, which provides advice and support to farmers.”

The meeting heard that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is due to discuss next week the status of the Waikato drought declaration, which also covers south of Auckland city and Ruapehu district, and whether to keep making the special financial support measures available.

Looking forward, Mr Buckley said many farmers still had issues accessing the right amounts of stock feed and it would be important for them to proactively manage their feed requirements.

“Drought has been a feature of the Waikato farming landscape in recent years and it’s been good to see farmers this season taking proactive steps to minimise problems in the face of the tough conditions. Farmers and the wider rural community need to continue to work hard together to get through this current difficult patch. But, if further rain is received, given high commodity prices, there is the possibility of ending the season on a high note”

PLEASE NOTE: You have received this email because at one time or another you have indicated you wish to receive media releases by email. If you no longer wish to receive these emails please reply to this email with **UNSUBSCRIBE** in the subject line.

For further information, contact:

Stephen Ward
07 859 0782