

Soil probe update

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Soil Moisture Probe Update. This update is part of a Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) that recently commenced across central and east Gippsland, aimed at helping farmers understand the information provided by their local soil moisture probes. Furthermore, use that information to guide seasonal decisions. Updates will be provided monthly, or fortnightly during periods of greater change.

Soil moisture probes provide valuable information on soil temperature and moisture to depth that can assist with timely decisions, such as when to sow or apply fertilisers, and promote earlier spring livestock management decisions. Interest in this information is growing in response to climate variability.

The demonstration brings together data from 17 soil probes across central and east Gippsland, providing monthly updates of soil moisture and temperature, and considerations for pasture management.

Three sites across the region will also demonstrate how soil probe data can be used to make more timely decisions with the benefits being monitored throughout the season.

The demonstration includes a series of paddock walks at the demonstration sites, and workshops to discuss and develop trigger points that assist with timely seasonal decisions and social media updates.

We are grateful to the farmers hosting soil moisture probes on their properties for allowing their soil data to be shared in this project.

What's been happening to soil temperature (measured at 9am, 30cm depth) and soil moisture percentage (measured overall between 30-100 cm) across the region?

Site	Soil temp (°C) 14.3.23	Soil temp (°C) 14.2.23	Soil moisture (%) 14.3.23	Soil moisture (%) 14.2.23	February rainfall
Yarram**	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Sale**	17.8	18.9	22	49	23.8
Rosedale	18.9	18.3	68	74	NA
Winnindoo	18.9	18.3	80	80	NA
Meerlieu	16.2	NA	13	NA	NA
Bairnsdale**	NA	17.8	NA	NA	NA
GRF*	20	20.7	2	3	13.6
Mt Taylor	16.9	17.5	2	2	11
Swan Reach*	18.8	20.4	10	5	10
Tambo Crossing	17.9	18.8	56	71	5.8
Ensay	17.6	17.4	NA	NA	NA
Omeo*	15.9	16.8	NA	NA	14.8
Benambra	17.2	17.7	NA	NA	7.4
Buchan South*	18.8	18.8	10	16	15.6
Wairewa	19.1	20.4	41	42	NA
Bete Bolong	NA	NA	NA	NA	11.8
Tonghi Creek	17.4	18.3	31	64	6.8

Note: * soil temperature taken at 20cm

** soil temperature taken at 10cm

Installation of the soil moisture probes was supported by:

- The Australian Government National Landcare Program
- East Gippsland CMA
- TopSoils Project
- East Gippsland Landcare Network
- Far East Victoria Landcare
- Southern Farming Systems
- East Gippsland Shire
- Commonwealth Bank
- Gippsland Agricultural Group
- Agriculture Victoria.

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Timely tips:

- Soil temperature is falling and the time for preparing and sowing autumn fodder is closing, especially in the high country.
- Although there is moisture at depth, total soil moisture levels are low, which is typical for this time of the year. Pastures are now drawing on moisture levels deeper in the profile.
- Ideally, pastures should be sown once moisture levels are rising. Soil moisture levels are now restricting pasture growth so consider animal requirements and supplementary feeding if required.
- More info: <https://gippslandag.com.au/research/weather-stations> and <https://intelliweb.mait.com.au> (use GAgG username and password)

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