

## Background

The Amuri Irrigation Company (AIC) Environmental Collective currently holds 176 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 Environmental Collective, either as AIC shareholders or independent members.

The Collective was established by AIC in early 2013 and has an Environmental Management Strategy (EMS) which meets the requirements for an audited self-management environmental scheme, approved by the Canterbury Regional Council (ECan) in 2021.

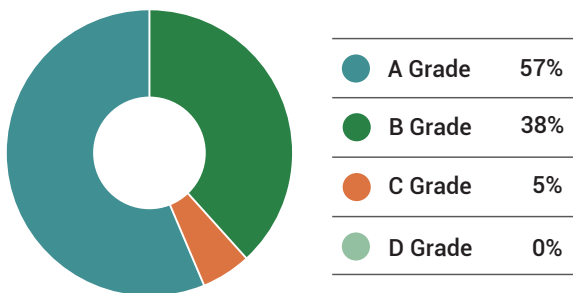
The Collective has been auditing FEPs since 2015 and has undertaken a total of 525 FEP audits over this period.

## 2022/23 Auditing Results

42 audits were completed between May 2022 and April 2023, including 11 winter audits, by three ECan approved auditors through our continued partnership with The Agribusiness Group. We acknowledge the 2022/2023 results illustrate a poorer performance than 2021/2022. A number of farms lifted their grade from B to A, however we also saw A grade farms drop to a B grade due to irrigation efficiency actions not being completed.

Among the reasons for the incompleteness was some miscommunication regarding timeframes, which left farms on the backfoot attempting to complete their bucket tests ahead of their audit. Unavailability of auditors to commence auditing in late Spring also contributed to a squeeze on timeframes.

Chart 1: Distribution of Audit Grade



Due to a successful trial in 2021/2022, audit follow-up for timebound actions is now a standard part of our process, providing additional assistance and increasing auditor confidence. This is reflected in the number of B grade farms moving to A grade this season. Post-audit reviews allowed several farms to provide further information, lifting their final grade. Those farms who received a repeat B grade have been tasked with revised actions to assist them with meeting Good Management Practices (GMP).

C grade farms have already received additional support and monitoring and improved outcomes are anticipated in the next auditing season. Last season's C grade farm was re-audited and we were very pleased to award a well-deserved B grade. The team continues to support them in their improvements.

## Change to Auditing Requirements

Due to the high percentage of A grade farms in 2021/2022, AIC's requirement to audit at least one third of our shareholders each season was reduced to auditing at AIC's discretion and/or when audits are due.

As a result we audited 27 farms less than the previous season, focusing on the properties where an audit was due. This is every two years for a B grade or four years for an A grade. AIC works with C grade farms within the season to assist them to lift their grade.

This change ensures that our auditing programme maintains its value and momentum while focusing on providing on-farm support and guidance.

Chart 2: Completed Audits by Farm System

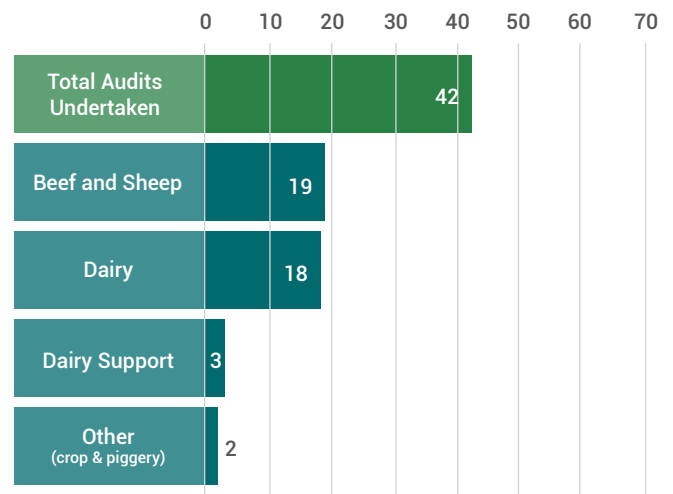


Chart 3: Distribution of Audit Grade by Farm System

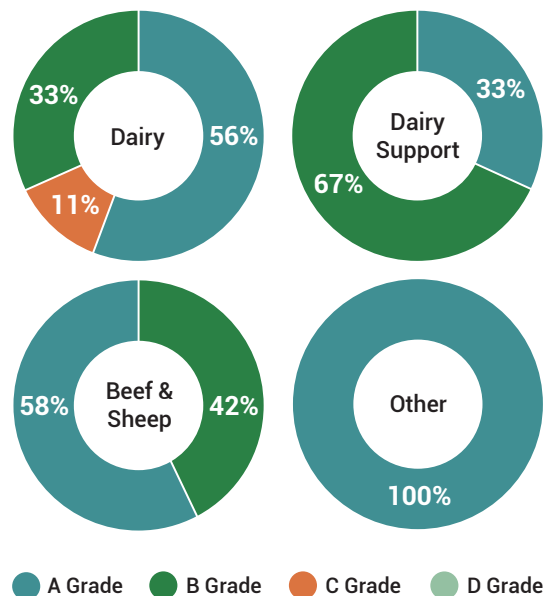
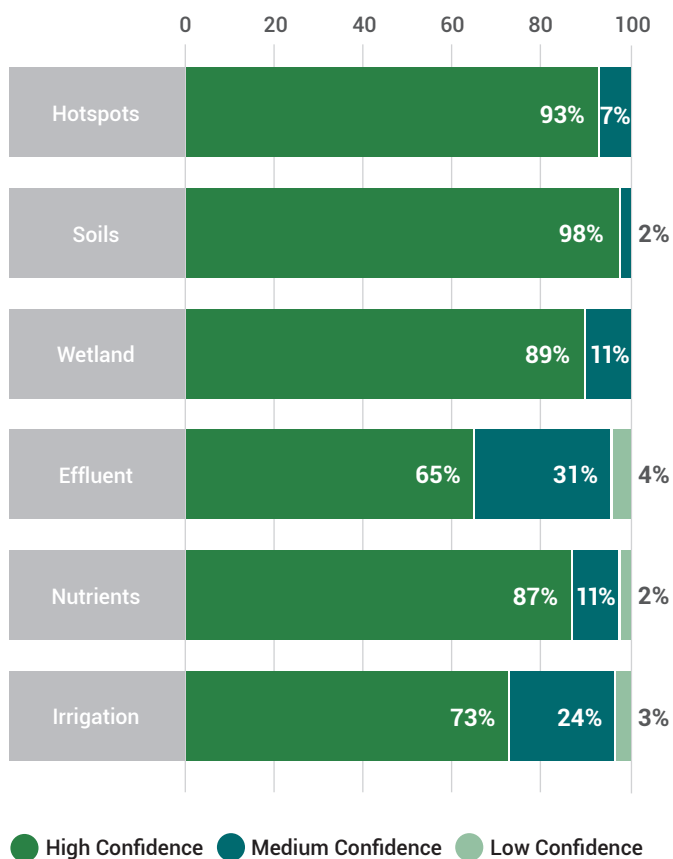


Chart 4: Performance by Management Area



Water efficiency still offers the greatest opportunity for improvement. Overall results suggest that there is some complacency towards audit actions and targets, e.g., bucket tests are seen as a tickbox exercise rather than as an irrigation efficiency tool. Catchment groups may be an opportunity to encourage a shift in mindset.

- 59% of audits showed the farm either needed to carry out bucket tests, or address the issues found in the results of a bucket test to reach 80% efficiency.
- 31% of audited farms needed to improve documentation of their practices for winter grazing, i.e., the inclusion of photos to demonstrate implementation of their plan.
- 16% needed to improve setbacks from waterways; ensure that wet areas in crop are not cultivated, and put plans in place to reduce sediment loss. It was noted that these actions have until 01 July 2025 to be implemented, as per the national Stock Exclusion regulations. For more information, please refer to the stock exclusion factsheet on AIC's website at [www.amuriirrigation.nz/](http://www.amuriirrigation.nz/) resources.

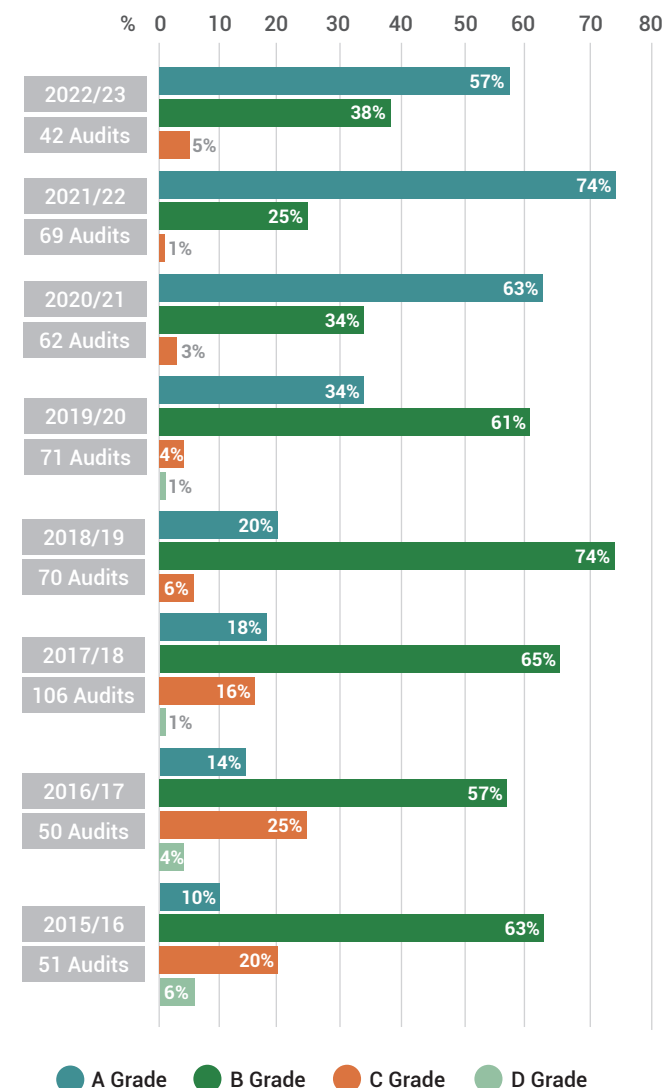
#### Feedback and Queries

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any feedback on the audit results or queries regarding this season.



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Chart 5: Distribution of Audit Grade by Season



#### Management Changes

If you have a management change on farm this June, please let our Environmental team know so that we can update your FEP and Nutrient Budget.

#### Focus for Auditing 2023/24

There are 36 audits scheduled for this season, with some to be undertaken as part of our winter audit work. Management changes on-farm may result in further audits. There are a number of repeat Bs due for re-audit in the 23/24 audit season, along with the C grade farms. A significant focus will be placed on visiting these farms and discussing FEP requirements prior to the audits.

We have locked in auditing resource through to the start of 2024. Farms due for audit this season were notified in January with reminders to carry out bucket tests and effluent application tests ahead of time. Further reminders will be issued to farms as their scheduled audit appointment approaches.

We aim to repeat the success of last season in following through on time-bound audit actions while emphasising the importance of irrigation efficiency.