

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

IRRIGATION AND NITROGEN MANAGEMENT PLAN WORKSHEET (INMP)

1. Has the Nitrogen Management Plan Worksheet changed?

- a. Yes. Growers in the ESJWQC are now required to complete an **Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan (INMP)** Worksheet and Summary Report starting with the 2019 crop year. The new worksheet and summary report templates include the following changes:
 - i. documenting the expected water demand of your crop (worksheet only),
 - ii. indicating if you farm a parcel that was an outlier the previous year,
 - iii. submitting the amount of nitrogen applied as 3 different categories (irrigation water, dry/liquid fertilizers, and foliar fertilizers),
 - iv. recording the age of perennial crops, and
 - v. recording irrigation and nitrogen management practices.

2. Why is my property listed as High Vulnerability?

- a. Vulnerability categories (low and high) were determined through the Groundwater Assessment Report (GAR) that was prepared by a hydrogeology firm hired by ESJWQC. The GAR was approved by the Regional Water Board in 2014 and updated in 2019. The land characteristics examined in the GAR include soil type (sandy soil is more likely to leach nitrate than clay soils), concentration of nitrate in the groundwater and depth to groundwater.

3. Do I need to test my soil for nitrogen carryover?

- a. Soil testing is a Best Management Practice and is recommended but not required. If you do have your soil tested and there is available nitrogen, it could be usable by the crop and you may be able to apply less dry/liquid and foliar applications during the growing season.

4. Do I need to test my irrigation water for nitrate?

- a. This is considered a Best Management Practice and is recommended but not required. If irrigation water contains high nitrate levels, you can apply less fertilizer as the nitrate in irrigation water provides usable nutrients for the crop. While testing is not required, a reasonably accurate estimate of the amount of nitrogen contained in and subsequently applied in irrigation water is a requirement for completing the INMP; this is a new reporting requirement that started with the 2019 crop year.
 - i. Estimates of irrigation water nitrate can be obtained by sending samples to a laboratory, by using hand-held nitrate meters, or by using at-home test kits (available at many pet and aquarium supply stores).
 - ii. If you irrigate with canal water, your water district may be able to give you an estimate of the nitrate typically found in their canals. Generally, surface water east of highway 99 is very low in nitrate. Canals flowing west of highway 99 can

have measurable nitrate levels if the canal is supplemented by groundwater pumping.

- iii. ESJWQC recommends that irrigation wells be tested for nitrate; it is now a requirement to test all domestic wells located on irrigated land parcels for nitrate.

5. What is a Management Unit (MU) or Field?

- a. Management Units are a way to track which field you are reporting and gives you the option to group fields together when they are treated with the same amount of nitrogen, have the same irrigation method, and have the same yield.
 - i. For Example: If a grower has 15 parcels and 5 parcels have 1st leaf, non-bearing almonds, a grower may list all 5 parcel Management Units as NB young almonds. This allows the growers to only complete the second page of the INMP Worksheet one time for those 5 parcels instead of completing it five times.

6. What calendar year do I use in my INMP?

- a. Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plans are a forward-looking document, taking into account what you or your CCA/agronomist believes you should apply for optimal production. The amount of nitrogen that you actually applied is then recorded at the end of the year.
 - i. At the beginning of the year, complete all boxes on the worksheet that pertain to a plan or recommendation. This is what you plan on doing based on recommendations or other crop specific information.
 - ii. At the end of the year, fill out the Actual column of the worksheet, based on actual amounts of nitrogen applied and production from the field. The Actuals for N applied and Yield are what are reported in the summary report.
 - iii. Page 3 of the worksheet should be certified and signed at the beginning of the year. The plan can be certified by a CCA or by a grower who has successfully completed the CDFA Self Certification Course.

7. When must the INMP worksheet be completed?

- a. Worksheets must be completed by March 1 every year. The Worksheet is to remain on farm and therefore the due date refers to the date your plan should be certified, completed and on file at the farm.
 - i. For any parcels designated in a high vulnerability groundwater area, a Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) or other qualified agronomist must sign off on your plan once recommendations and projections have been completed. Most fertilizer suppliers have CCAs on staff or can recommend a private consultant or agronomist who holds a CCA certification.

- ii. A grower who has undergone the CDFA Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Self Certification Course can sign off on their own plan.
- b. Please note that the INMP Summary Report must be returned to the Coalition by March 1 for the previous crop year (CY).
 - i. For example, summary reports for the 2019 CY are due to the Coalition by March 1, 2020.
 - ii. Worksheets for the 2020 CY must be completed (kept on farm) by March 1, 2020.

8. Do I return my Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan Worksheet to the Coalition?

- a. No. Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plans are to be kept on farm NOT returned to the Coalition. Please keep them where they are easily accessible in case of an inspection by the Regional Water Board.
- b. Please note that the INMP Summary Report does need to be returned to the Coalition by March 1 for the previous crop year.
 - i. For example, summary reports for the 2019 CY are due to the Coalition by March 1, 2020.
 - ii. Worksheets for the 2020 CY must be completed (kept on farm) by March 1, 2020.

9. How do I determine the amount of water I apply to a field in one crop year?

- a. If you do not have a water meter on your irrigation system, you can estimate the amount water applied throughout the growing season. Your local University of California Cooperative Extension specialist has information on the amount of water needed to produce most crops grown in the region. The amount of water applied multiplied by the level of nitrate in the water gives you an estimate of nitrate in irrigation water (number 25) that can be used by the crop.
- b. You can also use information from the [California Irrigation Management Information System \(CIMIS\)](#) to estimate water demand (ET). If you log into your [ESJWQC Member Portal](#) account, there is an option to subscribe to a service that provides crop specific ET information from CIMIS on a daily time step. Using the tool through the ESJWQC Member Portal will show you the available information for your parcels enrolled with the Coalition.

10. Do I still need to fill out an INMP even if I do not fertilize?

- a. Yes, regardless of fertilizer use, you must fill out an Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan unless you have irrigated pasture (no nitrogen applied) or a managed wetland (no nitrogen applied).
 - i. Because you are not applying N, you can fill in any N use as zero. The crop and amount of yield harvested are still required.

- ii. If you are not applying N, you can self-certify on the 3rd page and be sure to check the box that reads, “I do not apply Nitrogen.”

11. Do I still need to fill out an INMP if my only fields are irrigated pasture with no nitrogen applied?

- a. No, irrigated pasture with no additional nitrogen applied (excluding manure from grazing livestock) do not require INMPs to be completed. Please contact the Coalition to have your requirement removed.

12. On Page 3 of the INMP Worksheet, the “INMP Certification” Page, who signs where?

- a. The person who is certifying the plan will print, sign and date the first signature line.
- b. The member will use the second signature line to print, date and sign.

13. How can I become Self-Certified to complete my own INMP Worksheet?

- a. You will need to attend one of the CDFA Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Self Certification Trainings. These are held throughout the Central Valley.
- b. For a list of upcoming courses please visit: <https://www.curesworks.org/grower-training/>

14. I have taken and passed the INMP Self Certification Course, but need Continuing Education Hours, where can I find upcoming courses?

- a. Please visit: <https://www.curesworks.org/cecourses/>

15. How do I report the crop age for an orchard with mixed ages?

- a. Depending on your situation you can give the age of the majority of trees. If you have areas/sections of your farm that are of a similar age you can separate out that information by acreage. Wherever possible, try to report areas with differences in yields separately, such as immature sections that are not in full production.
- b. Example of providing an age based on the majority of the acreage:
 - i. A 100-acre parcel with mostly 10-year old trees has a small area with 6-year old trees. The younger trees are mixed in with the older orchard which is still about 80% 10-year old trees and nitrogen is applied based on the needs of the older trees. The age would be reported as “10 years”.
- c. Example of splitting out your information by acreage:
 - i. A 100-acre parcel contains 40 acres of 10-year old trees, 20 acres of 6-year old trees and 20 acres of immature trees (less than 4 years old). The nitrogen applied and the harvested yield would be reported for each of the acreages: 40 acres (10-year old trees), 20 acres (6-year old trees) and 20 acres (<4-year old trees).