

## The Big Dry

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New Zealand seems to be having an extended dry period while our friends in Australia are finally getting rain. Mind you, lack of rain at this time of year might hurt the Farmers but, it is a blessing in disguise for Horticulture.

Table 1 shows the lack of rain we have had around the country compared with last year. . This data was extracted from MetWatch Online, a valuable long term archive of weather data. The lack of rain should mean we are in for a good apple and grape harvest with both blackspot and botrytis well under control. If anything the South Island has had close to normal rainfall but, even so, it is still quite low.

<b>Table 1</b>					
			<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>	
<b>Region</b>	<b>Weather Station</b>	<b>Rainfall (mm)</b>	<b>Rainfall (mm)</b>		
Northland	Kerikeri Research C.	82.8	124		33% less
Auckland	Pukekohe Res. Stn	26.7	80.7		67% less
Waikato	Rukuhia, Waikato	11.3	102.6		89% less
Bay of Plenty	Te Puke Res Orchard, BOP	45	84.9		47% less
Poverty Bay	Matawhero-Awapuni, Gisborne	56	54.3		3% more
Hawkes Bay	Havelock North, HB	15.2	35.3		57% less
Wairarapa	Martinborough	16.2	32.6		50% less
Marlborough	Marlborough Res.Cntr	19.4	58		67% less
Nelson	Richmond, Nelson	43.4	82.9		48% less
Canterbury	Lincoln Univ., Cant.	20.4	16.7		18% more
Central Otago	Clyde, Central Otago	31.8	14.4		55% more

Both the apple and grape industries are trialing low residue production this year via: The Futures Programme, funded by the Sustainable Farming Fund. In theory, this weather should be good news. Not only should there be a reduction in pesticide use, but the increased hours of sunlight as shown in Table 2 should encourage pesticide degradation.

<b>Table 2</b>							
					<b>2008</b>		<b>2007</b>
<b>Region</b>	<b>Weather Station</b>				<b>Mean Temp Max</b>		<b>Mean Temp Max</b>
Northland	Kerikeri Research C.				23.4		24.3
Auckland	Pukekohe Res. Stn				25.3		22.7
Waikato	Rukuhia, Waikato				26.8		23.6
Bay of Plenty	Te Puke Res Orchard, BOP				25.0		23.2
Poverty Bay	Matawhero-Awapuni, Gisborne				25.0		26.4
Hawkes Bay	Havelock North, HB				23.2		23.9
Wairarapa	Martinborough				30.0		28.4
Marlborough	Marlborough Res.Cntr				25.0		22.9
Nelson	Richmond, Nelson				26.0		21.9
Canterbury	Lincoln Univ., Cant.				23.5		19.2
Central Otago	Clyde, Central Otago				27.2		22.7

Not all diseases are favoured by wet conditions. We may also have a rise in powdery mildew which tends to occur under dry and warm conditions. So, our vegetable growers as well as grape growers need to be careful.

It remains to be seen how long this weather pattern will last. We have rain forecasted for the weekend over much of the country. This may herald a change in the prevailing climatic conditions. However, long term forecasts are notoriously inaccurate and who knows what we will get.