

Forward planning for the possibility of a “French” (wet, cold) 2014 Spring

July 2014

1. Purpose

To consider the likely implications of a cold wet Winter/Spring in 2014 and consider what planning may be needed to help mitigate impacts of this for the kiwifruit industry.

2. Background

In 2013 and 2014 the French experience showed impacts of prolonged cold wet periods on their kiwifruit industry through high losses in flower buds and resultant reduced orchard productivities. Although these conditions were extreme in comparison with a typical or even difficult NZ spring, growers have become aware of the influence of cold wet weather conditions through this period.

This season, most NZ kiwifruit growing regions have experienced successive damaging storms through the late autumn, early winter period. Increased levels of wounding in many canopies is likely to pre-dispose these to higher Psa-V infection risk. Rainfall was also high through June and if wet conditions continue through July and beyond, Psa-V expression in Spring 2014 could be expected to be significantly higher than last year, particularly if growers have not followed proactive programmes through autumn and winter.

Levels of anxiety would be likely to rise again across the industry and pre-planning for this scenario is prudent.

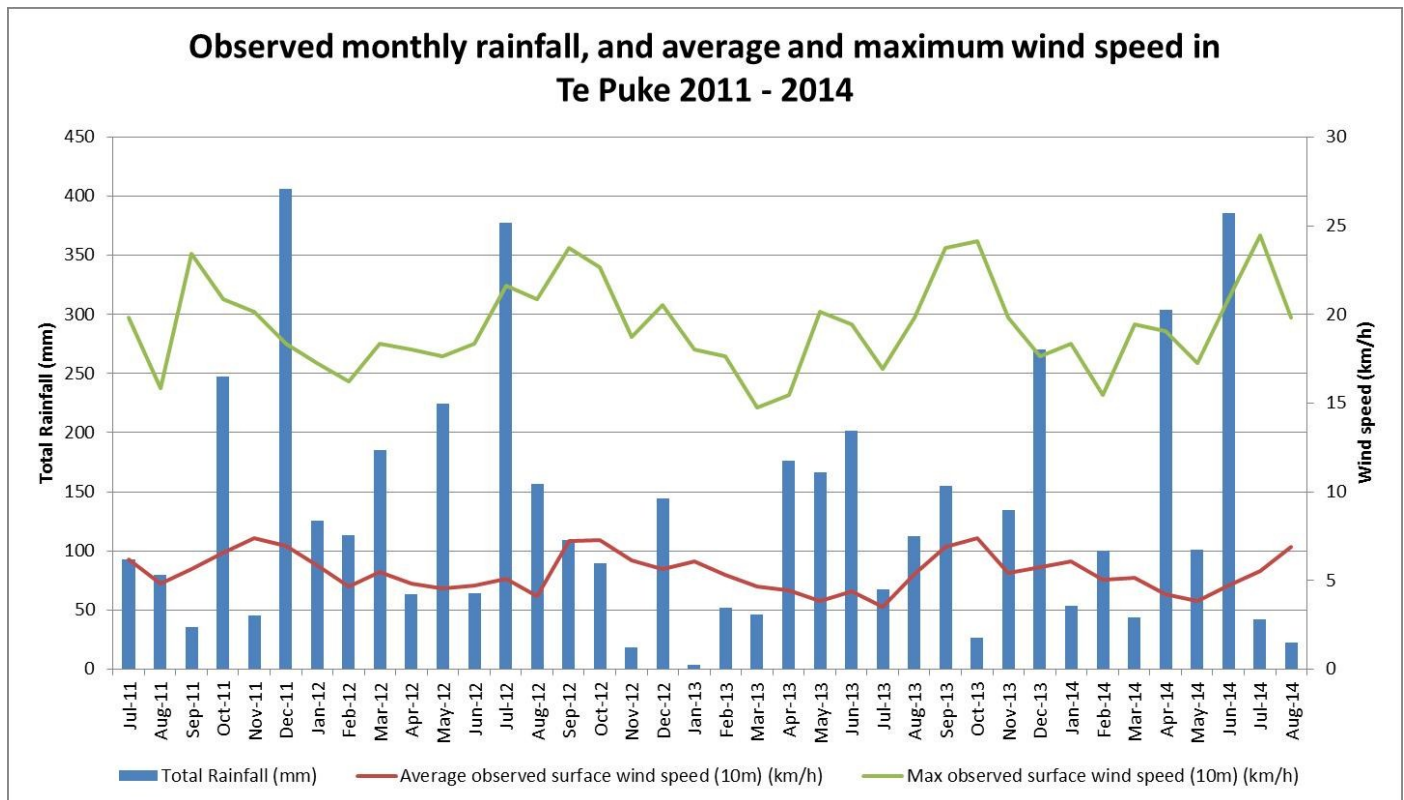


Figure 1. Te Puke Plant and Food research orchard – observed weather July 2011 to August 2014

3. Possible flow-on effects of a wet cold Spring and recommendations.

a) Increased possibility of Psa-V being found in regions where it is currently not detected.

Recommendation: KVH initiate increased monitoring to confirm presence/absence of Psa-V in Whangarei and/or the Nelson region and work with local regional committees and packhouses to support growers with monitoring.

b) High levels of symptom expression across all varieties in regions with Psa-V.

Recommendation: KVH to work with regional co-ordinators and packhouse teams to establish an accurate picture of regional Psa-V levels and provide accurate updates for the industry. Heavy promotion of orchard monitoring and early symptom removal, as well as spray applications to help control inoculum.

c) Increased inoculum loads particularly in proximity to infected blocks (particularly Hort16A)

Recommendation: Ensure growers are well supported when making GO/STOP decisions especially around Hort16A vine/block removal. Ensure appropriate removal and disposal practices are in place.

d) Pressure on sprayer capacity through wet days, and wet ground conditions affecting orchard access.

Recommendation: Prompt growers to pre-plan spring spray strategies with their contractors ahead of time to better ensure industry spray capacity is available.

Promote sharing of equipment/resource between neighbours to increase capacity. Promote use of super-spreaders to increase spray windows, and supply information on spray mix compatibilities to support decisions on suitable tank mixes. Use of helicopter spraying may need promotion in some areas.

e) Product choice challenges.

Recommendation: Provide clear advice on product choice/use. Best timings, product compatibility and strong reminders on use conditions (e.g. KeyStrepto™) to avoid problems resulting from lack of observance of use rules. Check chemical availability with merchants for a high demand spring.

f) Flower drop.

Recommendation: High emphasis on early season proactive spraying and infection removal programs to avoid inoculum build-up as this risks flower infection/drop later in the season. Further trial girdling technologies for efficacy in reducing flower bud-drop. Capture level of industry adoption of this practice and support data collection to verify value of this tool.

g) Potential for male pollen shortages.

Recommendation: Determine how much carry-over pollen is available in the industry. Better understand pollen viability and Psa-V load on stored pollen. Support planning to maximise collection and usage of pollen in 2014. Promote development of pollen treatment methodologies at pollen mills to reduce Psa-V load of processed pollen. Continue male management messages.

h) Poor graft take –weather and Psa related.

Recommendation: Review new variety and male graft-wood availability to ensure sufficient availability for re-graft needs. Encourage re-grafting from mid-November, when sap flow has ceased.

i) Possible increase in numbers of unmanaged orchards and neighbour conflicts.

Recommendations: Promote early contact with KVH for assistance in working through queries.

j) Need for increased level of pastoral care.

Recommendation: Reactivate and publicise grower support networks. Re-run simple messages “no-one is alone, look after self and neighbours and eat, sleep, and exercise well” through NZKGI, ZESPRI and KVH channels. To manage grower anxiety use known faces – Ian Greaves and Leanne Dunn and work also with parties interfacing with growers (merchants, technical staff and grower client service staff).

k) Banks and support industry anxiety

Recommendation: Regular communication to update and maintain confidence.

l) Consistency of industry messaging

Recommendation: Regional spring grower update meetings as appropriate. Ensure technical messaging is consistent from packhouses, spray contractors, merchants. Re-use French messages.