

28 February 2025

Initial prospects for irrigation - forecast for 2025

Summary

Current irrigation prospects are good across the whole of England for 2025.

We encourage irrigators to act now to safeguard supplies for the summer. Possible actions include:

- Maximising opportunities to refill reservoirs during high flows
- Contacting us if having reservoir refill problems
- Planning cropping to meet reduced water availability
- Ensure your abstraction licence meets your current needs

The irrigation prospects reflect the water situation using current river flows, groundwater levels, weather forecasts and Met Office seasonal outlooks. Overall rainfall across England over the past three months (Nov 2022 to Jan 2023) was 102 % of the long-term average (LTA) The majority of areas across England have received normal rainfall between November and January with the exception of the far north west and north east where rainfall has been slightly below average. Rainfall totals for February so far range from 64% of the LTA in north-east England to 96% of the LTA in south-east England.

Latest information shows that river flows at most reporting sites are classed as normal or higher for the time of year. Groundwater levels at the end of January across England ranged from normal to exceptionally high.

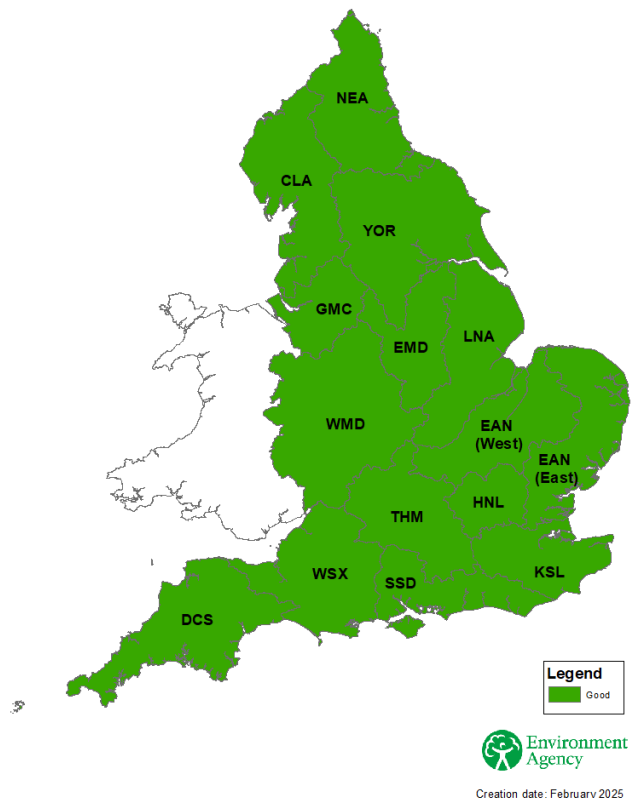
Into March, it is expected that more unsettled conditions are likely in northwestern areas while high pressure is likely to be more influential across the south of the UK, bringing more settled conditions. Later into March, there is an increasing chance of unsettled conditions becoming more widespread across the country.

More information on the water situation is available at [Water situation reports for England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/water-situation-reports-for-england).

More information on weather forecasts is available at the Met Office. [The Met Office 3 month forecast](https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/forecast/uk/3-month) is now available.

We will reflect any further changes in our updated prospects report which will include a full detailed area forecast in late spring.

Figure 1- Initial irrigation prospects spring-summer 2025



Prospects for individual areas

Area	Prospects for 2025
Environment Agency Cumbria and Lancashire	Good
Environment Agency Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	Good
Environment Agency East Anglia East (covering Essex Norfolk and Suffolk)	Good
Environment Agency East Anglia West (covering Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire)	Good
Environment Agency East Midlands	Good
Environment Agency Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire	Good
Environment Agency Hertfordshire and North London	Good
Environment Agency Kent, South London and East Sussex	Good
Environment Agency Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire	Good
Environment Agency North East	Good
Environment Agency Solent and South Downs	Good
Environment Agency Thames	Good
Environment Agency Wessex	Good
Environment Agency West Midlands	Good
Environment Agency Yorkshire	Good

Definitions

Prospects for spray irrigation are defined as 'Good', 'Moderate' or 'Poor'.

Good	Water levels are average or above average and supplies are expected to be safe. There is a possibility of minor local controls on abstraction from surface water in late summer if the weather is exceptionally hot and dry.
Moderate	Water levels are low. Some controls on surface water abstraction are possible by midsummer if the weather is hot and dry. Controls on abstraction from groundwater are possible in small, sensitive groundwater areas.
Poor	Water levels are well below average. Soil moisture deficit is developing early and significant restrictions on abstraction from surface and groundwater are probable.

Mark Betson, the NFU's Water Resources Specialist said "As we emerge into 2025 the conditions have built on a wet 2024 indicating good prospects for available water going forward. In this time of plenty, access to water can slip from the agenda of growers, but while other priorities may seem more pressing,

now is the time to check your business resilience accessing water. Firstly, by checking existing infrastructure, such as reservoir linings, so that they are fit for the upcoming and future seasons. Then making sure you are licensed to access the water you need and are aware of potential changes to licences that could restrict that water access in the future. Updates on risks and future options with water resources will be coming out from the Environment Agency and regional water resource groups in the coming months that abstractors should keep an eye out for”.