



**This has been a catastrophic event, and it is natural and OK to feel totally devastated and at a loss.**

**The message from growers who have stood in your shoes is that you will find a way to get through. Your soils are changed but their recovery may be quicker than you fear or are told by others.**

## **From There to Here**



*September 2023*



*January 2024*



*January 2025*

# Disaster Recovery Decisions

**Silt Laden Flood Waters, Roads and Bridges Gone, Communications Down, Crops and Income Lost**

**It may be some time before you can begin the physical clean up. Look after yourself and your people first.**

## Look After Yourself and your People

**Assess health and safety for you and your family** – consider physical and mental wellbeing.

Be aware that stress can affect your decisions. Slow down and assess risks

Take time and time-out

**Check in with Neighbours** - Get together and work out what needs to be done and who can help who

**Security and Neighbourhood Watch** - Be aware that some see a disaster as an opportunity for gain. Check your security measures.

**Don't be in a rush.** Take time for breaks. Have fun with your kids. Go away and get a change of scene.

Talk about something else

## Look After Your Business

**When access is safe assess the damage to your land, buildings and property. Develop a “to-do” list and prioritise actions in response to accessibility.**

**Develop a system for record keeping.**

Take photos of the damage to your buildings, farm infrastructure and machinery and lost crops.

Collate the information in one place.

**Inform your bank.** Develop a financial plan

**Inform your insurance company**

Provide evidence of the damage

## Look After Your Land

**Clean up rubbish.**

Talk to the council about disposal options – including being able to burn items.

**Mend infra-structure** – prioritise requirements. Start with the most important to support your business plan.

**Clear drains and tile-drains** to assist drying.

**Assess the deposited silt.**

- How deep is it?
- Is it sand, silt, clay?
- Work out how to work it?
- What machinery will you use? What can you share or borrow?

**What you might find**

Logs and timber

Inorganic waste;- tyres, posts and wire, building materials, bins and bales, household items.

Organic waste, including dead stock

Hazardous waste – fertiliser and agrichemicals



**Look after your staff**  
Be aware of their personal circumstances. Clean-up will be slow and the hours long. Give them time off to recover.  
Show appreciation and say thank you.



**Find out about community assistance and ask for help**

- ✓ Your grower network
- ✓ Rural Support Trust
- ✓ Sector Groups
- ✓ Community Groups
- ✓ Councils
- ✓ Horticulture Advisory Group



**Find out about available funding** for “clean-up” and how to apply for it

- ✓ Government
- ✓ Council
- ✓ Industry
- ✓ Horticulture Advisory Group



**Get professional help** if you feel you are not coping.

**Develop a business recovery plan**  
Seek professional advice.  
Ask and explore:

- ✓ How soon can I return to business as usual?
- ✓ What needs to happen to get there?
- ✓ What will I do in the interim?
- ✓ Where will the money come from?
- ✓ What is a cost priority and where can costs be saved?
- ✓ Consider your economic opportunities – Where will you make the money.
- ✓ Consider whether you need to make a quick return to support cash-flow.



**Create an activity timeline and set milestones.**  
Some farmers found it helpful to set a hard-completion date for the “clean-up” and achievable milestones.  
Celebrate your progress as you go.



If possible, **be patient** and wait until the ground is dry enough to work.  
Going too soon can lead to

- Machinery damage.
- Getting stuck.
- Multiple passes and the risk of compaction.



**Mulch** in unharvested crop



**Plant a cover crop** if this fits with your economic recovery plan.  
Experience in Hawkes Bay showed that there was no rush to do this and it didn't matter what the covering crop was.  
The important thing to remember is that root activity will kick-start the soil recovery.  
Graze or mulch cover crops to build soil organic levels.  
It's OK to do nothing.



**Cover Crops to Consider**

- ✓ Grass - can be flown on.
- ✓ Proprietary cover crop mixes.
- ✓ Mustard.
- ✓ Oats
- ✓ A mix of seeds you have in store.
- ✓ Leave untouched and allow the previous crop and other plants to grow.



## Making a Start - Preparing the Soil

Consider the silt as a valuable resource but allow time for it to be incorporated into the underlying soil. Silt removal is expensive and generally not necessary.

### Sand Deposits

Spread over as wide an area as possible and mix in.

Consider the economics. Moving deposited sands, gravels and silts is expensive.

It might be better to find an alternative option for the land.

### Silt Deposits - depths up to 50cm

Aim to work the silt into the underlying soil.

Consider the available machinery.

Wait until it is dry enough not to get stuck.

Soil test and address the nutrient status before planting the first crop.

If the deposits are silty clays, work them back in. Be aware that lumps of clay will stay in the soil profile and may contribute to tackiness after rain.

### Silt Deposits - Too deep to work in.

If your business structure allows, plan to have a rest from cropping for 2-3 years.

In line with your business plan establish plant cover as soon as possible on the silt layer.

Aim to increase soil organic levels as soon as possible. Any root activity will help.

Apply capital fertiliser to address nutrient deficiencies.

## Getting Back to Normal

### Consider the following:

What does your new soil environment look like? What has changed and will the new soil profile support your previous commercial rotation?

In year one, the uncertainty of crop success is higher – choose a crop with lower input costs.

Keep an eye on the nutrient supply to the crop – additional fertiliser may be required.

Monitor crops for new weed species. Eradicate them before they set seed and cause ongoing problems.

Monitor crops for new pests and diseases. Take control if possible.

**Have confidence - return to normal in most flood damaged fields was quicker than expected with yields in the first crops exceeding expectations.**

**We acknowledge the courage, tenacity and resilience of all the cropping farmers in Hawkes Bay who managed the devastating impact of Cyclone Gabrielle on their land. The information in this chart is derived directly from their experience and advice.**