

Recovery Takes Time

Even after irrigation supplies improve or rainfall returns, recovery may take more than one growing season.

After drought:

- Evaluate which fields recovered well and which may need renovation or replanting.
- Repair irrigation equipment before the next irrigation season begins.
- Address erosion, compaction, or soil health concerns caused by drought conditions.
- Record irrigation challenges, crop performance, and management decisions that can improve future drought planning.
- Update your drought response plan while this season's lessons are still fresh.

Start with JSWCD for local guidance and referrals.

Depending on your operation and the impacts experienced, assistance may be available through local, state, or federal programs.

Potential partners include:

- **JSWCD** — Local drought resources, irrigation information, and conservation planning.
- **OWRD / Jackson County District 13 Watermaster** — Water rights, drought tools, and water supply information.
- **Farm Service Agency (FSA)** — Disaster assistance programs, eligibility requirements, and application guidance.
- **NRCS / OSU Extension** — Irrigation efficiency, soil health, crop management, and conservation practices.

Good records can also be valuable if assistance becomes available. Keep notes on irrigation schedules, water shortages, crop impacts, production losses, photographs, and major repairs throughout the season.



Scan Me to check out the WaterWise Guides to find tips and resources that fit your home, land, livestock, or business needs.

jswcd.org/waterwise-drought-guides



Stay Informed.

Get seasonally relevant, local updates about upcoming events, funding opportunities, programs, and resources.

Drought Preparedness

for Crops

Protect Your Crops. Prioritize Your Water. Plan Ahead.

Start Before Water Is Short Define Your Goals & Priorities

Drought can affect every operation differently. Before water becomes limited, decide what you are trying to protect so you can make informed decisions.

Your priorities may include:

- Protecting high-value crops or permanent plantings (orchards and vineyards).
- Producing the highest quality crop possible with the water available.
- Maintaining long-term soil health and productivity.
- Reducing financial losses during a difficult growing season.
- Preserving irrigation capacity for the parts of your operation that provide the greatest return.

Knowing your priorities early can help guide irrigation, harvest, and management decisions if water supplies become limited.

Confirm Your Water Sources

Understanding your available water supply before the growing season helps avoid difficult decisions later.

- Wells and Storage Tanks
- Springs, Ponds, and Surface Water

Watch for declining flow or changing water quality before they become urgent.

Prepare Your Water System

Small maintenance issues can waste valuable water during drought.

- Repair leaking pipes, valves, gaskets, and fittings so water reaches your crops instead of being lost.
- Check pumps, filters, and regulators to make sure they are operating properly.
- Flush drip systems and clean filters before the irrigation season begins.
- Inspect sprinklers, drip emitters, or flood irrigation structures for damaged or plugged components.
- Fix areas where water consistently escapes before reaching the field.



WATERWise
Where Every Drop Matters



During Drought: Make Every Drop Count

Prioritize Water Where It Matters Most

When water supplies become limited, every acre may not receive the same amount of irrigation.

Consider:

- Prioritizing permanent crops, young plantings, or fields with the greatest production potential.
- Reducing irrigation on low-producing areas if necessary to protect more valuable crops.
- Adjusting production goals to match the amount of water available.
- Focusing on maintaining plant health rather than maximizing yield when water is limited.

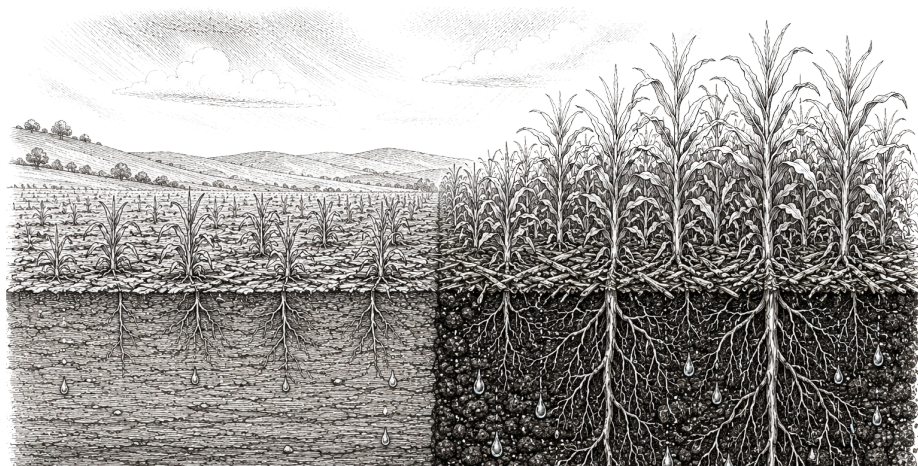
Sometimes protecting next year's crop is more valuable than trying to maximize this year's production.

Reduce Plant Stress

Healthy plants are generally better able to tolerate drought.

During dry conditions:

- Control weeds that compete with crops for limited water.
- Apply mulch where appropriate to reduce evaporation and moderate soil temperatures.
- Avoid unnecessary soil disturbance that can increase moisture loss.
- Monitor crops for insects and disease, which may become more damaging during drought stress.
- Avoid encouraging excessive new growth if water supplies are already limited.



Healthy soils can store more water.

Improving soil organic matter, reducing compaction, and minimizing erosion can increase the amount of water available to crop roots and improve resilience during dry years.

Maintain Soil Health

Watch Your Crops

Regular field observations can help identify problems before permanent damage occurs.

Look for:

- Plants that wilt during the day but recover overnight versus plants that remain stressed.
- Uneven growth that may indicate irrigation or equipment problems.
- Leaf scorch, curling, fruit drop, or reduced vigor.
- Dry areas caused by plugged emitters or uneven sprinkler coverage.
- Signs that irrigation water is not reaching the active root zone.

Walking your fields regularly often provides valuable information that cannot be seen from the road.

Match Irrigation to Plant Needs

Water demand changes throughout the growing season.

Keep in mind:

- Young plants often need more consistent moisture while becoming established.
- Mature crops may tolerate short periods of water stress better than newly planted fields.
- Recently harvested or dormant crops often require less water than actively growing plants.
- Watering during cooler parts of the day can reduce evaporation and improve efficiency.
- Apply enough water to reach the root zone without causing runoff or excessive deep percolation.

Did You Know?

Plants often begin experiencing water stress before the soil surface appears dry. Looking only at the top inch of soil may not accurately reflect moisture available deeper in the root zone.

