

# INMP/ INMR Frequently Asked Questions

## INMP & INMR Basics

### **Q: What's an INMP?**

An Irrigation and Nutrient Management Plan (INMP) is an on-farm planning and recordkeeping document that supports data-driven irrigation and nitrogen management. It includes both a pre-season planning component and an end-of-season recordkeeping component. It is used to plan irrigation and nitrogen applications for the upcoming calendar year (perennial crops) or crop cycle (annual crops), and to document what was actually applied and harvested.

INMPs are kept on site and are not submitted to VCAILG, but they may be requested by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board during a compliance inspection. For a brief overview of INMPs and INMRs, please watch our INMP/INMR Overview video [here](#).

### **Q: What's an INMR?**

An Irrigation and Nutrient Management Report (INMR) is the annual reporting mechanism used to summarize key information from your INMP. Beginning March 1, 2026, growers must submit an INMR to VCAILG each year.

The INMR reports what was actually applied and harvested in each Management Unit during the previous calendar year (perennial crops) or crop cycles completed during the previous calendar year (annual crops).

INMR data submitted to VCAILG is compiled and anonymized before being submitted to the Regional Board, as required by the Ag Order.

### **Q: How are the INMP and INMR different?**

The INMP is a planning and recordkeeping document that stays onsite and guides irrigation and nitrogen management decisions. The INMR is a required annual summary of specific data fields from the INMP and does not require new or additional information.

In short, the INMP is where you plan and track practices, and the INMR is where you report the outcomes.

### **Q: Who is required to develop an INMP and submit an INMR?**

Any grower operating irrigated farmland in Ventura County and subject to the Ag Order must comply. This includes developing an INMP annually and submitting an INMR for each Management Unit.

# INMP & INMR Timing and Deadlines

## Q: When do I need to complete my INMP and submit my INMR?

The deadline to develop an initial INMP is March 1, 2025, and INMPs must be updated and certified annually by March 1 thereafter. The first INMR is due March 1, 2026, and annually thereafter.

## Q: What if I don't know all the crops I'll be growing by March 1?

By March 1 of each year, you should develop INMPs for the crops you reasonably expect to grow that year. Any annual crop planted after March 1 must still be covered by an INMP by the time the crop is established. At a minimum, all crops in the ground must have an associated INMP.

## Q: Do I have to redo my INMP(s) every year if nothing has changed?

Yes. An INMP must be reviewed, updated, and certified annually, even if crops and practices remain the same. However, this does not mean starting from scratch each year.

Carrying information forward is acceptable and often the easiest approach. Growers may copy the prior year's INMP and update it for the current year. If you are using the Excel version of the INMP template, this can be done by duplicating the existing INMP onto a new tab and updating the INMP date (and any other fields that may have changed). Each year's INMP should reflect both current-year planning and end-of-year records of what actually occurred.

## Q: Why does the first-year annual crop reporting period specify March 1–December 31, 2025, and what does this mean for future years?

The March 1–December 31, 2025, reporting window reflects when the INMP and INMR requirements took effect. These requirements became effective on March 1, 2025, and do not apply to crops that were established prior to that date. As a result, annual crop growers are only required to report crop cycles that were completed between March 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025, for the first reporting year. For help determining which crop cycles to report, refer to the [1st Year Reporting for Annual Crop flowchart](#).

If you grow annual crops but did not complete a crop cycle during that period, you are still required to submit an INMR. Doing so ensures your compliance status reflects that there was no reportable crop cycle, rather than a failure to report. In Clearwater, you will create a Management Unit placeholder by selecting “No complete crop cycle to report” as the crop type and entering the applicable irrigated acres. You will complete all Management Practices questions and enter zero for all Nitrogen and Yield fields.

Going forward, annual crop growers will report all crop cycles that completed harvest during the prior calendar year, regardless of when the crop was established.

## Q: What happens if I miss the March 1, 2026, deadline for submitting my INMR?

March 1, 2026, is the official deadline set by the Regional Board and remains the expected submission date for all growers.

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Regional Board staff have indicated that VCAILG may provide a 1-month grace period to support growers who are experiencing challenges during this first year of reporting. It is strongly recommended that you contact VCAILG as early as possible if you anticipate difficulties. Early communication ensures we can provide guidance and assistance before the grace period ends, when our capacity to help may be limited.

If an INMR is not submitted, VCAILG is required to report the landowner/grower's completion status in its Annual Monitoring Report to the Regional Board. VCAILG's goal is to help growers complete their reporting successfully. Reaching out early ensures we can provide support while assistance capacity is available.

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## Ranches & Management Units

### **Q: What is the definition of a “Ranch” for reporting purposes?**

A Ranch is a contiguous area of land operated by the same primary grower.

Contiguous land means parcels that share a common boundary or would share a common boundary except for separation by a farm road, public roadway, or right-of-way. Parcels separated only by such roads or rights-of-way are considered contiguous.

A Ranch may include one or several parcels, and may support one or multiple crops, provided the land is contiguous.

### **Q: What if I farm parcels that are not contiguous?**

If you farm multiple parcels and they are not contiguous, you will account for them by creating multiple Ranches. Each grouping of contiguous parcels can be considered a single Ranch.

### **Q: What is a Management Unit?**

A Management Unit is the same crop within the same Ranch that is irrigated and fertilized in the same ways, using the same inputs and overall management practices.

For perennial crops, Management Units must also be grouped by crop age. The age brackets used for perennial crops are:

- 0–3 years
- 3–10 years
- 10+ years

Areas with the same perennial crop that fall into different age brackets should be reported as separate Management Units.

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For annual crops, phased plantings of the same crop within a Ranch may be reported as a single Management Unit if they are managed similarly. Establishment dates should reflect the first planting, and harvest dates should reflect the final harvest.

Each Management Unit should be given a unique name by the grower, and that name should be used consistently for the same crop in future years.

**Q: Do I have to re-create Ranches and Management Units each year?**

No. Your Ranches and Management Units will automatically carry over from the previous reporting year. You do not need to re-create them annually.

Each year, you can make updates as needed to reflect current operations. This includes adding or removing parcels from a Ranch, as well as adding new Management Units or temporarily deactivating existing ones within a Ranch.

Management Units should only be deleted if you are certain you will never grow that crop again on the given Ranch.

Similarly, since parcels can be added to or removed from a Ranch as operations change, Ranches should not be deleted unless you will no longer operate on the entirety of a Ranch.

Even though Ranches and Management Units carry over year to year, you are still required to review and update key information each year, including nitrogen application and harvest yield, to ensure your INMR accurately reflects the current reporting year.

**Q: What if I have a carry-over Management Unit for a crop I didn't grow last year but might grow again in the future?**

You may deactivate the Management Unit and reactivate it when the crop resumes. Deleting the Management Unit should only be done if you are certain the crop will not be grown again.

For example, if you grew celery last year but do not plan to grow it for the next two years, you can deactivate that Management Unit and reactivate it when you resume planting the crop.

If you are certain you will never grow that crop again, you may delete the Management Unit. This option should only be used when you are confident the crop will not be planted in the future.

**Q: What if I only grew on a Ranch for part of a year?**

If you only grew on a Ranch for part of the year, you are still required to report for the time period when you were the grower on that Ranch. Any management units you were associated with during that year must be included in your INMR, even if you are no longer farming the parcels at the time of submittal.

If another grower took over the Ranch later in the year, each grower is responsible for reporting their own portion of the year. If the Ranch was not farmed for the remainder of the year, you would still report for the period when you were actively growing.

If you are no longer listed as the primary grower in Clearwater and cannot access the Ranch to complete your reporting, contact VCAILG for assistance so we can help determine the correct reporting approach.

**Q: Can I make changes to a Ranch after creating it?**

Yes. Once you've created a Ranch in Clearwater, you can still update the Ranch to reflect any changes such as adding or removing parcels, editing irrigated acreage, and updating the Ranch name.

**Q: What if I am a grower but also sublease land to another grower?**

If you are the primary grower for a parcel in Clearwater but have portions of land subleased to another grower, you have two options for INMR reporting:

1. Delegate reporting to the subleasing grower by adding them as a Data Reporter in Clearwater.
2. Collect the INMR data from the subleasing grower and complete the reporting on their behalf.

**Q: How do I authorize a CCA or farm manager to report for me?**

The primary grower, as designated in Clearwater, must first establish Ranches in the INMR module for all parcels where they are listed as the primary grower. Once the Ranches are created, the grower can authorize one or more Data Reporting Partners- such as a Certified Crop Advisor (CCA), farm management company, or other trusted party- to assist with reporting.

Data Reporting Partners can then create Management Units and complete the INMR reporting for the assigned Ranch(es) on the grower's behalf.

**Q: How do I add a Data Reporter in Clearwater?**

To add a Data Reporter in Clearwater, follow these steps:

1. Confirm the Data Reporter has a Clearwater account. If they do not, have them contact [VCAILG@farmbureauvc.com](mailto:VCAILG@farmbureauvc.com) to set up an account and receive login credentials.
2. Add the Data Reporter to your Partner library. Log in to Clearwater, go to the Partners tab, and add the Data Reporter to your library.
3. Assign the Data Reporter to your Ranch. Once added, the Data Reporter will appear in the Ranch Data Reporting Partners dropdown. Select the Partner you wish to assign and click Add.

After being assigned, the Data Reporting Partner will be able to create Management Units and assist with INMR reporting for that Ranch.

**Q: Do I need to report on parcels that are fallow?**

Yes. Any parcel enrolled in VCAILG must still be reported, even if it is fallow for the year.

When creating a Management Unit for a fallow field, select "Fallow" from the crop type dropdown list. Once the Management Unit is created, you will need to:

- Complete every question in the Management Practices section, and
- Enter zero for all questions in the Nitrogen and Yield section.

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## Nitrogen & Irrigation Reporting

### Q: How can I calculate the amount of nitrogen applied from my fertilizer?

You can use the [Applied Nitrogen Calculator](#). The calculator allows you to enter your fertilizer type and application rate to calculate the total amount of nitrogen applied in pounds per acre. Instructions on how to use the calculator are included within the tool.

### Q: How can I quantify nitrogen from my irrigation water?

The [Applied Nitrogen Calculator](#) can also be used to calculate nitrogen from irrigation water. The calculator includes a separate tab specifically for irrigation water, where you can enter your water's nitrogen concentration and irrigation application rate to determine the total nitrogen applied in pounds per acre. Instructions are included in the calculator to guide you through the process.

### Q: What is “A only” reporting?

Alternative (“A only”) reporting requires reporting of all nitrogen and irrigation applications but does not require reporting of harvest yield. Growers who meet one of the following qualify for INMR alternative reporting:

1. Growers that (1) operate in areas with evidence of no or very limited nitrogen impacts to surface water or groundwater, (2) have minimal nitrogen inputs, and (3) have difficulty measuring yield (Note: Because nitrogen-related TMDLs apply in the Ventura River, Santa Clara River, and Calleguas Creek Watersheds, growers operating in these areas are unlikely to qualify for this option. Before selecting this option, please contact the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board at (213) 878-7906 or [RB4-IrrigatedAg@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:RB4-IrrigatedAg@waterboards.ca.gov) to confirm eligibility).
2. Diversified socially disadvantaged growers, as defined by the Farmer Equity Act of 2017, with (1) a maximum total acreage of 45 acres, (2) gross annual sales of less than \$350,000, and (3) a crop diversity greater than 0.5 crops per acre (one crop for every two acres)
3. Growers with (1) a maximum total acreage of 20 acres, and (2) a crop diversity greater than 0.5 crops per acre (one crop for every two acres).

This means all INMP and INMR requirements still apply, with the exception of having to report harvest yield for a crop.

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# INMP Certification & Training

## Q: Do INMPs need to be certified?

Yes. In most cases, INMPs must be certified using one of the following options:

1. **CCA:** INMP worksheets may be certified by a Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) certified by the American Society of Agronomy
2. **Self-Certification:** To be eligible to self-certify INMP worksheets through the CDFA training program, a grower must complete the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Training and Exam and participate in continuing education courses. Once a grower has taken the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Training and passed the exam, they are eligible to self-certify INMP worksheets for their farming operation(s).
3. **NRCS:** Certified by a Technical Service Provider certified in nutrient management in California by the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

An exemption from INMP certification is available for growers with a total farming operation of 10 irrigated acres or less, provided they have not been identified as an outlier in a previous reporting year. Growers who qualify for this exemption are still required to develop an INMP and submit an INMR; only the certification requirement is waived.

## Q: How do I self-certify my INMP(s)?

Growers may self-certify their INMP worksheets by completing one of the following training options and passing the associated exam:

- **VCAILG INMP Self-Certification Workshop**

Attend both days of a VCAILG INMP Self-Certification workshop and pass the exam administered at the end of the workshop. Information on upcoming workshops is available on the VCAILG Education webpage.

- **CDFA Online Training**

Complete the CDFA online Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Training for Grower Self-Certification and pass the exam at the end of the training:

<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/ffldr/frep/training.html>

*Note: Be sure to select the Ventura County Training and Exam link.*

To remain eligible to self-certify INMP worksheets, growers must complete 3 hours of continuing education every 3 years. Eligible courses focus on irrigation and/or nitrogen management and must be approved by the California Department of Food and Agriculture. Approved courses will be identified as "INMP Self-Certification CEUs." A list of approved online courses is available at:

[https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/ffldr/frep/continuing\\_education.html](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/ffldr/frep/continuing_education.html)

**Q: Can I hire a qualified professional to help me with my INMP and INMRs?**

A Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) can help develop and certify your plan for you. If you'd like to work with a CCA, you can find a list of local CCAs on the VCAILG Nitrogen Management Planning webpage, or using the [link here](#).

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## Data Accuracy & Reporting Practices

**Q: What if I don't apply fertilizer to my crop?**

If you don't apply any fertilizer to your crop, you would report your fertilizer inputs as 0.

Please note, you are still required to submit an INMR and account for nitrogen from irrigation water, any organic amendments, and management practices related to irrigation and nutrient management.

**Q: Can I use estimates or approximations if I don't have exact data?**

Yes, it's acceptable to use your best estimates if exact records aren't available. However, growers are encouraged to use measured data whenever possible to support accurate reporting and informed management decisions.

**Q: How do I know what information from the INMP is required for the INMR?**

Information from the INMP worksheet that transfers to the INMR is marked with an asterisk (\*) or highlighted in green in the Excel version.

**Q: Where can I find the INMP templates, instructions, and workbook?**

All INMP and INMR related resources can be found on the VCAILG Nitrogen Management Planning webpage. Additionally, an Excel version of the INMP is available for growers who prefer an electronic format and need to create multiple Management Units.

**Q: Is my data public when it's submitted to Clearwater?**

No. VCAILG compiles and anonymizes your INMR data prior to submitting it to the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

**Q: Where do I submit my INMR?**

All growers are required to submit their INMRs online through the Clearwater portal, which is the only accepted method for INMR submittal. Paper or emailed reports are not accepted.

Growers who need assistance are encouraged to schedule office hours with VCAILG staff before visiting the Farm Bureau office for in-person support.

**Q: After submitting my INMR, how can I get a copy for my records?**

Clearwater serves as the repository for your submitted INMRs. You can log in at any time to view the INMR(s) you have submitted.

Starting next year, Clearwater will also allow you to view INMRs from prior reporting years by selecting the desired year from a dropdown menu.

Please note that the information in your INMR comes from your completed INMP(s). All growers are required to maintain their INMP(s) onsite as part of their compliance documentation under the Ag Order.

**Q: What if I realize I made a mistake after submitting my INMR?**

If you've already submitted your INMR and need to correct information, contact VCAILG to request assistance with un-submitting your INMR so corrections can be made.

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## Outliers & Compliance

**Q: What does it mean if my Management Unit is identified as an outlier?**

To determine outliers, VCAILG will compare your field's nitrogen application to other growers' data for the same crop type. A Management Unit is considered an outlier if the nitrogen applied per unit of harvest yield is significantly higher than most other growers of that crop.

Being identified as an outlier means your nitrogen use is unusually high compared to similar fields and serves as a prompt to review your nitrogen management practices to ensure efficiency and compliance.

**Q: Is there a penalty for being an outlier?**

Being identified as an outlier is not associated with any penalty; rather, it is an early indicator that certain management units have nitrogen application rates above typical ranges. The purpose is to provide feedback and access to educational resources to help growers improve nitrogen management practices.

Growers with one or more outlier Management Units may be subject to additional requirements, which could include:

- Indicating "previously identified as outlier" on their INMR
- Attending education meeting focused on nitrogen management
- Losing the INMP certification exemption for operations under 10 acres
- Other requirements as determined by the Regional Water Board

These requirements are intended to support the principle that you cannot effectively manage what you do not measure, and to encourage growers to use research-informed recommendations in their fertilization plans, thereby optimizing nitrogen use and reducing potential losses to the environment.