

Crop Seeding Intentions

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Crop and Pasture Report

Prepared by Rural Solutions SA for
PIRSA Industry Development and Renewal
Grains Industry Development



Government of South Australia
Primary Industries and Resources SA

CROP AND PASTURE REPORT

CROP SEEDING INTENTIONS

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Report Compilation

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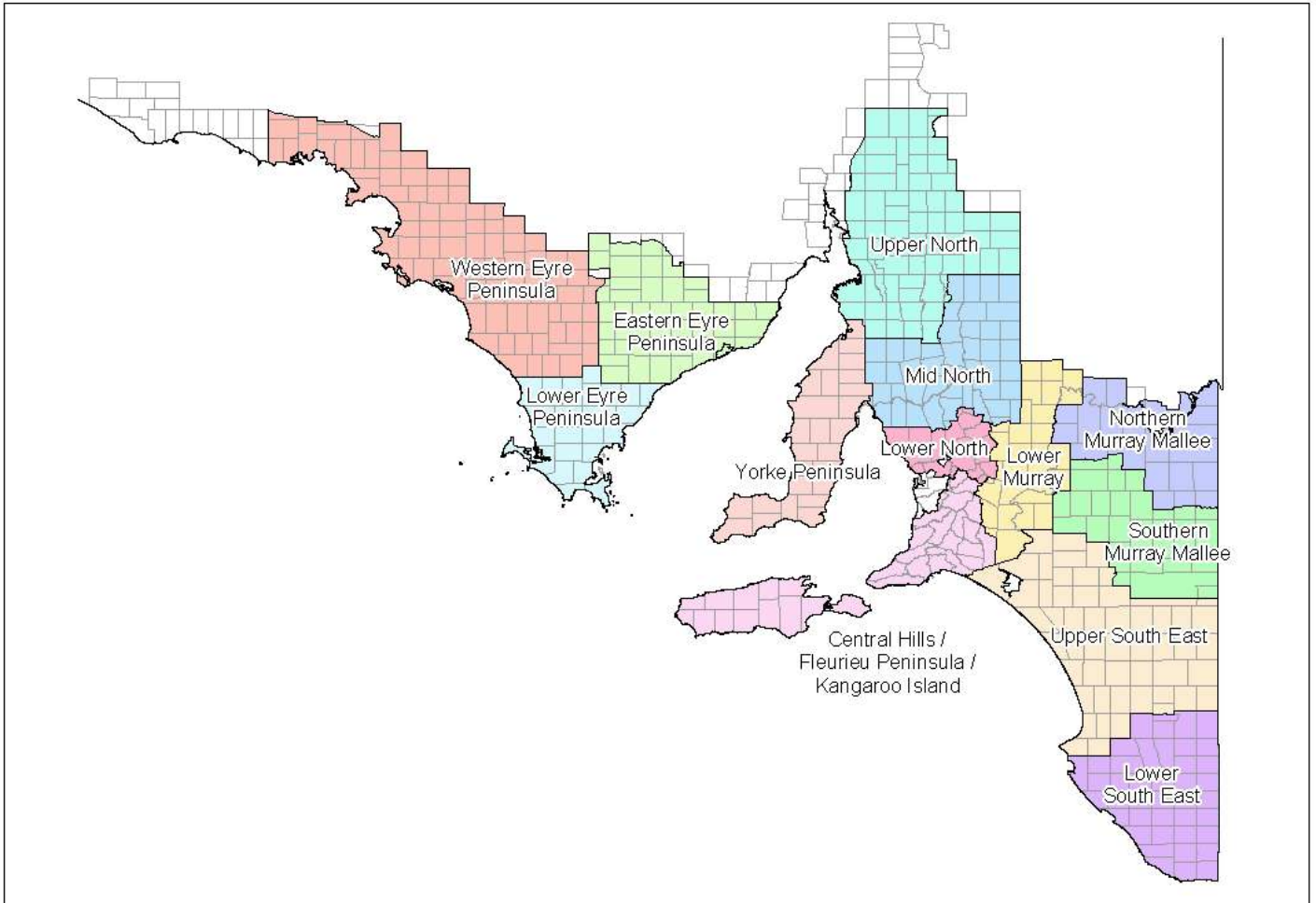
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Crop Reporting Districts



KEY LINKS TO OTHER INFORMATION

South Australia Land Condition: <http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/dwlbc/land/monitoring/index.html>

Summary of Crop and Pasture Conditions in South Australia

Crop Seeding Intentions

WEATHER¹

South Australian rainfall data for the last month is available from the Bureau of Meteorology website:

<http://www.bom.gov.au/weather/sa/observations.shtml>

- Mild to occasionally warm during March; daily maximum temperatures mostly well below average and daily minimum temperatures average to slightly above average.
- Mostly mild during April; daily maximum and minimum temperatures near average.

RAINFALL

- March rainfall was well above average as a result of two significant rainfall events on the 7th-8th and 20th-21st, with many centres having their highest March rainfall on record.
- April rainfall was generally below average in central and eastern districts and near average on much of Eyre Peninsula.
- Second wettest first four months of the year (January to April) on record, following the wettest January to March period on record.

CROPS

- Widespread rainfall during March followed by lighter, patchy falls during April gave farmers a good opportunity for early weed control in preparation for seeding.
- There has been far more cultivation and burning off this autumn than in recent years as farmers try to manage heavy stubbles and control weeds, snails and mice.
- With good subsoil moisture levels in all districts, relatively light falls will be sufficient to get the season underway.
- Farmers started seeding in late April in some areas, particularly on Eyre Peninsula, utilising existing soil moisture plus recent light falls and many will probably continue unless topsoils start to really dry out; others will start on the next rain to ensure sowing into a moist seedbed.
- Crops sown to date include cereals for feed, canola, beans, chickpeas and oaten hay.
- High mice numbers have been reported in many districts and baiting is already occurring.
- Locust activity has subsided but will need monitoring in spring.
- Snail numbers are high in many areas and farmers will need to bait when conditions are suitable.
- Wheat area is likely to remain largely unchanged this season.
- Barley and canola areas are likely to increase as farmers seek to take advantage of improved prices and high levels of subsoil moisture.
- Field pea and oaten hay areas are expected to decrease, although for many growers oaten hay is an integral part of herbicide resistance management.

PASTURES

- Pastures have generally established well over the last two months and there are currently very good supplies of paddock feed.
- There has been a reduction in the amount of cereal sown for feed in some districts.
- Livestock numbers are on the rise in many areas as a result of drought recovery and better financial returns, with many growers holding onto as much breeding stock as they can to build up flock numbers and capitalise on good prices.
- Livestock are in good condition and recent lambing percentages have been high.

¹ Acknowledgment

Weather information:- Climate and Consultative Services Section of the Bureau of Meteorology: Internet: <http://www.bom.gov.au>

DISTRICT REPORTS

Western Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Temperatures throughout this period have been generally mild.
- Days and nights began to be cooler in the latter half of April.

RAINFALL

- March rainfall was well above average throughout the district; this led to high moisture levels stored in the subsoil.
- April rainfall was slightly below average which resulted in some drying of the topsoils, however there were useful falls on the last day of April and the first day of May.

CROPS

- Summer weed control was the key priority for most growers in March, with some growers cultivating paddocks around Poochera and Kyancutta in early April.
- Some oat and feed crops were sown in the second half of March.
- There has been some burning of stubbles.
- Many growers were waiting for good rains in early May to ensure sowing into a moist seedbed; falls at the end of April and beginning of May have allowed seeding to get underway in many areas.
- Mice levels are still reasonably high in central Eyre Peninsula. Many growers have cultivated in order to destroy burrows and limit damage at seeding.
- Early reports are that crop areas are expected to be similar to that for 2010.

PASTURES

- Continued rainfall has encouraged weed growth which has led to a high level of green feed in paddocks.
- Stock are in excellent condition.

Eastern Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Daytime temperatures were mild to warm in March and cool to mild in April.
- Nights were generally cooler towards the end of April.

RAINFALL

- March rainfall was well above average which has resulted in high levels of stored subsoil moisture.
- April rainfall was generally below average which resulted in drier topsoils, however there were some useful falls on the last day of April and the first day of May.

CROPS

- Growers in the Cleve Hills and Franklin Harbour districts have cultivated paddocks for weed control ahead of this cropping season.
- There has been a significant level of stubble burning during this period in order to manage the high residue loads from the 2010 harvest and also as a tool for managing mice and snail numbers.
- Weed control was the main priority for growers during this period.
- There has been some dry sowing of low input cereals around Rudall and Darke Peak to provide early stock feed.
- Mice numbers remain high in the Kimba, Cowell and Arno Bay district with some growers cultivating paddocks to destroy burrows.
- Many growers were able to start seeding during the Easter period, with falls at the end of April and beginning of May allowing seeding to continue in many areas.
- Crop areas are expected to be similar to that for 2010.

PASTURES

- Pasture paddocks have a high level of green feed resulting from continuing rainfall events.
- Stock are in excellent condition.

Lower Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Temperatures have been generally cool to mild with cool to cold nights in late April.

RAINFALL

- March rainfall was well above average which has resulted in high levels of stored subsoil moisture.
- Topsoil moisture levels are low in northern parts of the district, however paddocks south of Cummins are moist.
- April rainfall was generally below average, however there were useful falls on the last two days of the month.

CROPS

- Weed control was the main priority for growers during this period.
- Heavy rain in March had made stubble management difficult with a combination of herbicides, slashing, prickle chains, cables and offset discs being utilised.
- There has been significant burning of stubbles both to control the heavy residue load from last season and also to control snails and weeds.
- A few canola and bean paddocks were dry sown in late April.
- Most growers are waiting for good rains in early May to ensure that the topsoil is moist for sowing into, however useful falls at the end of April have allowed seeding to get underway in many areas.
- Crop areas are expected to be similar to that for 2010.

PASTURES

- Continued rainfall has encouraged weed growth which has led to a high level of green feed in paddocks.
- Perennial pastures and some opportunity summer crops have responded well to rains and have produced a high level of feed during this period.
- Stock are in excellent condition.

Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER

- Mild to occasionally warm during March; daily maximum temperatures well below average and daily minimum temperatures near average.
- Mostly mild during April; daily maximum and minimum temperatures near average.

RAINFALL

- March rainfall was well above average with several centres having their highest March rainfall on record; totals ranged from 35.8 mm (Stansbury) to 111.8 mm (Edithburgh).
- April rainfall was below average; totals ranged from 4 mm (Ardrossan) to 16 mm (Curramulka).

CROPS

- Widespread, heavy rainfall during March was followed by light, patchy falls during April giving farmers an ideal opportunity to get early weed control in preparation for seeding.
- A few growers have commenced seeding on existing soil moisture plus recent light falls and will probably continue, while others will start on the next rain.
- With good subsoil moisture levels throughout much of the district relatively light falls during May will be sufficient to get the season underway.
- Crops sown to date include canola, chickpeas and oaten hay.

- There has been a lot more burning off this autumn with some estimates up to 20% of all paddocks, as farmers attempt to manage heavy stubbles and control weeds, snails and mice.
- High mice numbers have been reported in many areas, with farmers likely to bait at seeding in the worst affected paddocks.
- Snail numbers are high in many areas and farmers will need to bait when conditions are suitable.
- Wheat and lentil areas are likely to drop slightly, particularly given the very substantial increase in lentil area last season.
- Field pea area could drop significantly as a result of high snail numbers and lower gross margins.
- Barley, canola and chickpea areas are expected to increase significantly to take advantage of improved prices and high levels of subsoil moisture.

PASTURES

- Pastures have emerged over the past two months and there are currently good supplies of paddock feed.
- Perennial pastures continue to provide feed in some areas.

Lower North

WEATHER

- Mild to occasionally warm during March; daily maximum temperatures well below average and daily minimum temperatures near average.
- Mostly mild during April; daily maximum and minimum temperatures near average.

RAINFALL

- March rainfall was well above average with several centres having their highest March rainfall on record; totals ranged from 60.8 mm (Robertstown) to 141.5 mm (Truro).
- April rainfall was below average; totals ranged from 2.2 mm (Two Wells) to 14.8 mm (Eudunda).

CROPS

- Widespread, heavy rainfall during March was followed by light, patchy falls during April giving farmers an ideal opportunity for early weed control in preparation for seeding.
- Large areas were cultivated following the heavy March rainfall, particularly on the Adelaide Plains.
- There has been considerably more burning off this autumn as farmers manage heavy stubbles and control weeds, snails and mice.
- A few growers commenced seeding in late April on existing soil moisture plus recent light falls and will probably continue, while others will start on the next rain.
- With good subsoil moisture levels throughout the district, relatively light falls during May will be sufficient to get the season underway.
- Crops sown to date include oats for hay as well as canola and beans.
- Mice numbers are high, especially in northern parts of the district.
- Some farmers have been spreading bio-solids such as chicken and pig manure as well as gypsum and lime.
- Wheat and pea areas are expected to decrease slightly while barley and canola areas are likely to increase, as farmers seek to take advantage of improved prices and high levels of subsoil moisture while reducing pest and disease risks.

PASTURES

- Pastures have emerged over the past two months and there are currently good supplies of paddock feed.
- Perennial pastures continue to provide feed in some areas.

Mid North

WEATHER

- Conditions during March were generally mild with below average temperatures and near record rainfall in most of the district.

- April has been mild and dry with cool nights.

RAINFALL

- Rainfall over the period was still above average, despite the dry April.

CROPS

- Good subsoil moisture levels across the district have given growers good optimism for the coming season, however the topsoil has now dried out.
- Most growers will wait for 10 mm of rain before commencing their seeding program.
- Large areas have been sprayed to control summer weeds and self-sown crops, with many paddocks requiring several herbicide applications.
- With heavy stubble levels an increased number of growers have burnt stubbles to control weeds, aid seeding operations and reduce feed source for mice.
- Mice numbers have remained high and paddocks will need to be monitored closely and baited immediately after sowing where necessary.
- The late harvest has reduced the time available between seeding and harvest, increasing time pressure on farmers.
- Some dry sowing occurred during late April, particularly canola, beans and pasture.
- Some canola crops have already emerged, however without good rains in early May the small seedlings may not survive.
- The wheat area is likely to remain similar to last year, however there should be an increase in the area of barley.
- The area sown to canola could increase given reasonable rains in the first two weeks of May, due to the extra stored soil moisture.
- The area of oaten hay may be reduced due to low prices, however for many growers it is an integral part of their herbicide resistance management.
- There is likely to be a slight increase in the area sown to lentils and beans, probably at the expense of field peas.

PASTURES

- The dry conditions during April are beginning to stress pastures, reducing feed availability.
- Ewes are in good condition and lambing percentages have been high.
- Locust numbers have remained high in isolated areas and have laid eggs.

Upper North

WEATHER

- Conditions for March and April were relatively mild with cooler than average maximum daily temperatures, although some warmer days were experienced toward the end of April.
- Nightly temperatures were below average with a number of cold nights and dewy mornings.

RAINFALL

- Rainfall totals for March were well above average across the district.
- March rainfall for selected locations (monthly averages in brackets): Appila 74 mm (19), Hawker 74 mm (16), Melrose 80 mm (25), Orroroo 45 mm (16), Pt Pirie 75 mm (18), Yongala 50 mm (16).
- April totals were generally below average.

CROPS

- Soil profiles across the district have generally been full of moisture, although the topsoil is beginning to dry out following minimal rain for April. This is especially the case for the heavier soil types north of Appila.
- Some farmers west of the ranges with lighter soil types near Pt Pirie and Pt Germein started seeding in the second week of April.
- One grower near Pt Germein has completed his seeding programme for 2011, while others are over half way through.

- With little rain during April the topsoil has dried and most growers stopped sowing in late April.
- Some growers around Booleroo Centre and Appila have made a start by sowing feed.
- Many paddocks north and east of Booleroo Centre have been worked up to control summer weeds and conserve moisture following good rains in February and March. Some paddocks have been worked back, with lack of cover causing some concerns for potential soil erosion.
- A great deal of stubble burning has taken place during March / April due to heavy stubble loads from 2010; the area burnt is a lot higher than normal.
- Stripe rust and stem rust are expected to become an issue in 2011 so growers are encouraged to grow more resistant varieties this season.
- With a bumper season in 2010 growers should be aware their fertiliser requirements for the 2011 season will be higher than for recent seasons, especially if they are trying to meet specific protein content to achieve certain grades.
- High numbers of mice have been reported in paddocks throughout the district particularly east of the ranges, causing concern for sowing the 2011 crop.
- Some locusts are present in the district, but will likely be more of a problem in spring than at seeding.
- With the break to the season looking like it will come a bit later than early May, some growers might begin to reduce planned cropping area for 2011.

PASTURES

- Good summer rains have been a blessing for many graziers as the poor stubbles from 2010 could have meant hand feeding in many cases.
- Germination of screened grain has provided high quality green feed for livestock right through the typical feed-gap period.
- Livestock have been unable to keep up to the feed in many cases.
- Self-sown cereals have provided high quality and abundant stock feed in many paddocks throughout the north. Most of these are now out in head and are still being grazed.
- One paddock of self-sown cereal near Jamestown has been cut for hay.
- Medic and clover pastures have had an early germination following good rains in February / March, with many plants now well established.
- Many growers are holding onto as many breeding ewes as they can to build up their flock numbers and capitalise on good prices.
- Livestock are in excellent condition, and for those lambing in the last few months good sized lambs have been born.

Central Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island

WEATHER

- Daily maximum temperatures well below average for March and slightly below average for April; daily minimum temperatures near average for both March and April.

RAINFALL

- March rainfall was well above average with a few centres on Kangaroo Island having their highest March rainfall on record, ranging from 30 mm (Victor Harbor) to 161.2 mm (Kingscote).
- April rainfall was mostly near average on Kangaroo Island and below average on Fleurieu Peninsula, ranging from 16.6 mm (Penneshaw) to 54 mm (Parawa).

CROPS

- Rainfall for the first four months of the year was above average, resulting in good levels of soil moisture throughout the district.
- Farmers have been busy with cropping preparations for the coming season.
- Some cereals and annual pastures have been sown for stock feed.
- Earlier locust activity reported in the eastern Mount Lofty Ranges will need to be monitored come spring.

PASTURES

- Paddock feed availability is excellent.
- Livestock are in good condition.
- Fertiliser spreading carried out on many pasture paddocks as producers take advantage of good growing conditions and improved commodity prices.

Northern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Average maximum temperatures have been -2.2°C and 0.2°C about the long-term average for March and April respectively.

RAINFALL

- Loxton received 23.0 mm and 6.4 mm of rain for March and April respectively, which is 2.3 mm above long-term average for these two months.
- Rainfall for this year to the end of April is 177.7 mm, whereas Loxton's long-term average is 83.7 mm for the same period.

CROPS

- After an extended harvest and summer spraying program growers are striving to catch up on their seeding plans.
- Some early feed crops have been sown as well as canola and some Clearfield tolerant cereal varieties.
- Soil moisture through the whole profile remains good and the topsoil appears to wet up easily with small rainfall events.
- Significant summer weeds were heliotrope, melons, innocent weed and caltrop. Increased populations of the weed fleabane and Rhodes grass are proving difficult to control.
- Locust bands were still being sited in the southwest Mallee in March, but these populations are becoming less obvious.
- Growers are urged to be vigilant and to monitor and make every effort to control all bands of locusts on their properties.
- Mice are a significant threat across the Mallee this season and baiting is being conducted across most of the region; this is proving a very expensive exercise with the large populations.
- A number of growers have resorted to cultivation or burning to control mice numbers and reduce the feed supply; there are some reports of mice beginning to eat each other.
- A significant number of growers will be spreading bait immediately before or after seeding.
- Growers are urged to test their grain for germination before sowing to ensure its viability.

PASTURES

- Excellent levels of pasture feed across the Northern Mallee, with large stubble loads and summer weeds with some summer grasses.
- No reports of hand feeding to date.

Southern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Mild weather for March and April with warm days and cool to cold nights.

RAINFALL

- Excellent rainfall led to above average rainfall totals in March, with well below average rainfall received in April.

CROPS

- Good subsoil moisture levels as a result of excellent summer rains have given farmers confidence to begin seeding, despite the dry April conditions.
- Feed crops have been sown early as a result of wet March conditions.
- Paddock activities have included working of paddocks, summer weed spraying and baiting for mice and snails.
- Reports of damaging mice numbers across the district, although the severity has varied from farm to farm.
- Reports of locusts egg-laying across the district with concern that there may be problems once locusts hatch.
- It is expected that the area sown to crop will be similar to last season, however if conditions remain dry in May the actual cropped area may decrease.

PASTURES

- Livestock numbers are slowly on the rise as a result of drought recovery and excellent financial returns.
- An early germination of medics this year and green pick in pastures has provided good early fodder.
- Feed cereals are also providing some feed as well as some supplementary feeding.
- Stock are in good condition.

Lower Murray

WEATHER

- Daily maximum temperatures well below average for March and slightly below average for April; daily minimum temperatures near average for both March and April.

RAINFALL

- March rainfall was well above average with some centres having their highest March rainfall on record, ranging from 53.4 mm (Morgan) to 187.8 mm (Palmer).
- April rainfall was below average to near average, ranging from 1 mm (Swan Reach) to 17.7 mm (Murray Bridge).

CROPS

- Widespread, heavy rainfall during March was followed by light, patchy falls during April giving farmers an ideal opportunity for early weed control in preparation for seeding.
- There has been quite a bit of cultivation and burning off this autumn as farmers try to manage heavy stubbles and control weeds, snails and mice.
- Some farmers commenced seeding in late April on existing soil moisture plus recent light falls and will probably continue, while others will wait until the next rain.
- With good subsoil moisture levels throughout the district, relatively light falls during May will be sufficient to get the season underway.
- Crops sown to date include cereals for feed and quite a bit of canola.
- High mice numbers have been reported and baiting may be required during seeding.
- Locust activity has subsided but will need monitoring in spring.
- Barley and canola areas are likely to increase somewhat, while the area sown for hay is expected to decrease.

PASTURES

- An early germination of medics and green pick in pastures has provided good early fodder.
- Cereals are also providing some feed as well as some supplementary feeding.

Upper South East

WEATHER

- Mean temperatures have been slightly below the long-term average.

RAINFALL

- Rainfall was well above average for March and below average for April.
- Heavy rains in early March continued to keep the soil profile wet, however only small follow-up rains since have seen topsoils start to dry out, although there is plentiful subsoil moisture.

CROPS

- Lots of burning has taken place to reduce stubble loads with the added bonus of controlling mice and snail numbers.
- Some ground has been worked up to further reduce mice numbers.
- Mice numbers will continue to be monitored with many landholders expected to bait at seeding.
- Locust numbers are currently not causing any problems.
- Potential risks with root diseases due to the extensive green bridge that has been present over summer.
- With the price of canola remaining high it is expected that the area of canola is likely to increase this year with a drop in the area of pulse crops such as lupins and peas.
- Overall cropped land will be about the same as last year.

PASTURES

- Plentiful pastures have seen a reduction in the amount of cereal sown for feed and the amount of pasture sown this year.
- Lambing is well underway with few problems.
- Water damage has lowered the quality of much of the export hay that has been left in paddocks.

Lower South East**WEATHER**

- Mild to occasionally warm during March; daily maximum temperatures well below average and daily minimum temperatures near average.
- Mild to cool during April; daily maximum and minimum temperatures slightly below average.

RAINFALL

- March rainfall was above average in coastal areas to well above average further inland; totals ranged from 21.4 mm (Kingston) to 88.3 mm (Penola).
- April rainfall was below average to near average in southeastern areas; totals ranged from 12 mm (Lucindale) to 54.2 mm (Mount Gambier).

CROPS

- Widespread rainfall during March followed by lighter, patchy falls during April effectively signaled a start to the season and gave farmers a good opportunity for early weed control in preparation for seeding.
- There has been far more cultivation and burning off this autumn than in recent years as farmers try to manage heavy stubbles and control weeds, snails and slugs.
- With very good subsoil moisture levels throughout the district farmers started seeding in late April.
- Crops sown to date include pastures, small seeds, early wheat and canola.
- High numbers of crickets have been reported on deep, cracking soils with farmers spraying and baiting to protect pastures and emerging crops.
- Crop area may come back slightly, particularly for pulses, as farmers cut back on cropping paddocks most prone to waterlogging which may have been cropped in the recent run of drier seasons.

PASTURES

- Paddock feed remains prolific as a result of the summer / autumn rains with stock not able to keep up with the very rapid growth of both perennial and annual pastures.
- Some of the land cropped in recent years will be sown back with pasture or left to regenerate.
- Livestock numbers continue to increase locally as well as with lambs brought in from Western Australia.

Crop Production Estimates

Crop production estimates will resume with the Seeding and Crop Establishment report due out early July 2011.