Crop and Pasture Report - South Australia
This is a bi-monthly report prepared by Rural Solutions SA, for the Agriculture, Food and Wine Division of Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA).

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ALL ENQUIRIES

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State Summary

WEATHER

- March rainfall varied from average to very much below average across agricultural areas of the State.
- April rainfall was average on Western Eyre Peninsula and below average to very much below average in all other agricultural districts. There was an area in the Lower North that observed its lowest April rainfall on record.
- In the pastoral region, March rainfall was average to very much above average in the North East Pastoral Zone and below average to very much below average in the North West Pastoral Zone.
- April rainfall varied from average to very much below average across the pastoral region, with an area in the southern North East Pastoral Zone having its lowest rainfall on record.
- Areas of the state are drought affected, including eastern and western Eyre Peninsula, upper North, northern Yorke Peninsula, Murray Mallee, eastern Mid North, north east and north west Pastoral.
- Mean maximum temperatures for March ranged from average on Western Eyre Peninsula, South East and parts of the Upper North to very much above average in the northern part of the North West Pastoral Zone.
- April temperatures were above average in the South East and parts of the North East Pastoral Zone and very much above average in the remainder of the State.
- Mean minimum temperatures for March and April were average to above average across the State.

CROPS

- Below average rainfall and above average maximum temperatures has resulted in minimal moisture in soils across most of the State, with annual crops and pastures being totally reliant on growing season rainfall.
- There has been minimal summer weed growth requiring significantly less spraying.
- Strong winds on several days during April resulted in severe dust storms across many districts. Moderate winds on numerous occasions raised dusts from exposed soils in a number of districts.
- An increasing number of Mallee farmers have deep-ripped deep sandy soils before sowing to reduce compaction.
- In most districts, some farmers began dry-sowing crops in the third week of April but most started towards the end of April.
- Farmers with bare, sandy soils have been reluctant to sow dry as soil disturbance will increase the risk of erosion.
- The potential for carryover of herbicide residues due to the dry conditions in 2018 and over summer has caused some farmers to change their crop plans for 2019.
- Farmers with non-wetting sands are waiting for good opening rains before beginning to sow their crops.
- Drifting areas of soil will be sown as soon as enough rainfall is received to establish plant cover for erosion protection. Seeding rates will be increased on many of these areas to increase plant density.
- Farmers in many districts have reduced the planned area to been sown to canola, given low soil moisture and a lower forecast canola price.
- There had been a significant increase in the planned area to be sown to barley, however the lower forecast grain price has tempered this increase.
- Farmers in many of the lower rainfall districts have reduced the area to be sown to pulse crops, particularly chickpeas and lentils.
• Farmers in some districts have increased the planned area of hay for their own use, plus for domestic and export markets.

• Numbers of mice and snails are generally low due to hot and dry conditions.

PASTURES

• Paddock feed supplies are extremely poor in all areas, except the Lower South East; most producers are supplementary-feeding livestock with hay and grain.

• Most producers have removed animals from paddocks with vulnerable soils; to either stubble paddocks with less erodible, heavier-textured soils or containment feeding areas.

• In many districts, livestock producers began dry-sowing cereals and vetch in mid-April to provide early pasture feed.

• Most producers have kept or bought adequate supplies of hay and grain to feed livestock, but these are rapidly being depleted and many are likely to be exhausted by the end of May.

• Supplies of hay available for sale have been exhausted in most areas of the State.

• Dry warm conditions have severely stressed dryland perennial pastures.

• The percentage of lambs marked from early-lambing ewes has been well below average in most districts.

• Most dams have dried up and farmers have either moved livestock to other areas or are carting water.

PASTORAL AREAS

• Conditions remain dry in most pastoral areas with very low amounts of quality forage available, except for the Far North East.

• Most producers, both cattle and sheep, have reduced livestock numbers, with some properties totally de-stocking and others continuing to reduce numbers.

• Most properties have mated ewes and there are reports of very low pregnancy scanning rates (less than 30%) on some properties, due to the poor condition of ewes.

• Some properties have not mated ewes and will have a second year without replacing any breeding ewes.

• There have been significant reports of wild dog sightings and evidence wild dog damage in the pastoral areas south of the dog fence.

• Surface water has dried up in most regions in the Pastoral Zone and properties totally reliant on surface water have been forced to de-stock or cart water.

• There have been reports of bores drying up in the eastern districts (east of Burra).

• Kangaroo and emu numbers have reduced but are still higher than normal.

• In the north east corner of the State, floodwaters from Queensland have partially filled Lake Eyre and water is continuing to flow in the Diamantina River and Warburton Creek. The waters have generated considerable amounts of feed on flood-out country.

KEY LINKS TO OTHER INFORMATION


Bureau of Meteorology - Weather and rainfall observations: www.bom.gov.au
NOTES ON CALCULATION OF CROP ESTIMATES

Crop estimates for the current year assume average rainfall and temperature conditions for the remainder of the growing season.

Grain estimates are for total grain production and include grain delivered for immediate sale and warehousing plus grain retained on farm for seed, feed and future sale.

Hay estimates are for total hay production and include all pasture, cereal and other crops cut for hay, both dryland and irrigated.

The estimates are based on information provided by Rural Solutions SA District Reporters from a variety of sources and are updated throughout the season as conditions change and further information becomes available. They are intended to provide an indication of crop potential at the time the report is prepared.

The estimates are updated using ABS census data when available.
District Reports

Western Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- March rainfall was average to below average.
- Although April was mostly dry, two storm events on April 21 and 30 resulted in most of the district recording close to the monthly average rainfalls.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for March and very much above average in April.

CROPS

- Continued dry conditions limited summer weed growth, with most farmers only requiring one herbicide application following harvest.
- Very strong winds on April 5 and 15 resulted in dust storms across the region.
- Recent rains resulted in some surface soil moisture for seeding, however most soil profiles have minimal stored subsoil moisture.
- Some farmers began dry-seeding in the third week of April but most only started towards the end of April, due to poor soil moisture.
- Rainfall at the end of April provided good conditions for seeding but follow up rains will be required for farmers to be confident to complete seeding.
- Many farmers intend to sow a paddock or two for hay to replenish supplies depleted by supplementary-feeding stock through late summer and autumn.
- The potential for carryover of herbicide residues due to dry conditions in 2018 and over summer caused some farmers to change their crop plans and it is likely that more paddocks will be sown to a second year of barley.
- The area sown to canola is likely to reduce, with a corresponding increase in the area of barley.
- Drifting areas of soil will be sown as soon as sufficient rainfall is received to establish plant cover for erosion protection. Seeding rates will be increased on many of these areas to increase plant density.
- Deep nitrogen tests indicate that there has been little mineralisation of nitrogen due to the very dry conditions.
- Numbers of mice and snails are generally low due to hot and dry conditions.

PASTURES

- Livestock are mostly in good condition.
- Farmers began dry sowing oats and vetch for feed in mid-April to maximize the amount of early pasture feed available.
- All livestock producers are providing supplementary feed to stock. Most have removed animals from paddocks with vulnerable soils; to either stubble paddocks with less erodible, heavier-textured soils or containment feeding areas.
- Most farmers have some grain and hay reserves but will run short by the end of May, if dry conditions continue and there is no or poor growth of pastures.
Lower Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- March rainfall was below average across the district.
- April rainfall was below average across most of the district with the north east corner being very much below average. A cold front on the 30 April brought falls of up to 25 mm.
- Mean maximum temperatures during this period were above average, and a number of hot days above 35°C were recorded in both March and April.

CROPS

- Persistence of dry conditions resulted in little weed growth during this period and reduced the need for knock-down herbicide applications prior to seeding.
- Severe winds on April 5 resulted in widespread dust storms across the region.
- Many soils have some moisture in deep subsoil layers, but surface and subsurface layers are mostly very dry.
- Farmers with large areas to be cropped began sowing canola and pulses in mid-April, but most farmers waited for opening rains to start seeding.
- Extremely dry summer and autumn conditions increased the risk of herbicide residue carryover, causing some growers to adjust their crop plans.
- Whilst the area of crop sown in the region will be close to the long-term average, the dry start combined with low stored soil moisture is likely to result in a slight reduction in the area of canola and a corresponding increase in the area of barley.
- Most farmers have applied seed treatments to at least a portion of their cereals to protect crops against Russian wheat aphid.
- Numbers of mice and snails are generally low due to hot and dry conditions.

PASTURES

- Livestock are in good condition.
- Feed supplies in paddocks are poor with most producers supplementary-feeding stock, either in stubbles or in containment areas.
- Most producers have supplies of feed grain on farm and are hoping for good growth of early-sown feed paddocks to relieve pressure on these supplies.
- Farmers began dry-sowing vetch or cereal for pasture feed in mid-April, to provide early livestock feed and allow pastures to get well established before grazing.
- Many producers plan to sow crops for hay to replenish on farm reserves but there is only a slightly larger area than usual intended to be cut for hay.
Eastern Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

• March rainfall was below average in most of the district. Rainfall for April was below average to very much below average.
• The only significant rainfall was recorded on April 30 when a cold front brought widespread rains of 10-20 mm across the region.
• Mean maximum temperatures for January were very much above average. February mean maximum temperatures were above average.

CROPS

• Continuation of dry conditions resulted in little growth of summer weeds and volunteer crops, limiting the need for knock-down herbicide applications.
• Soil surface cover in the region is very poor; a number of days of strong winds, particularly April 5 and 15, eroded exposed soils and caused dust storms across the district.
• Soil profiles contain little stored moisture.
• A small area of canola and pulses were dry-sown in late April around Cleve.
• Farmers with non-wetting sands are waiting for good opening rains before beginning to sow the majority of their crops; drifting areas will be sown as soon as sufficient rainfall is received to establish plant cover for erosion protection. Seeding rates will be increased on many of these areas to increase plant density.
• The dry conditions of 2018 have increased the risk of herbicide residue carryover affecting this year’s crops so some farmers have changed their crop plans resulting in more paddocks to be sown to a second year of barley.
• The area of dry sowing has been reduced because of poor subsoil moisture; it is likely that the area of canola will be reduced slightly and the area sown to pasture feed and barley increased. This will provide some flexibility to either graze or harvest crops, depending on how the season progresses.
• Many farmers intend to sow a paddock or two for hay to replenish supplies depleted by supplementary-feeding livestock during summer and autumn.
• Mice and snail numbers are generally low due to hot and dry conditions.

PASTURES

• Livestock are in generally good condition.
• Paddock feed supplies are extremely poor. All livestock producers are providing supplementary feed to stock. Most have removed animals from paddocks with vulnerable soils; to either stubble paddocks with less erodible, heavier-textured soils or containment feeding areas.
• Most farmers have some grain and hay reserves but will run short by the end of May, if dry conditions continue and there is no or poor growth of paddock feed.
• Some vetch and cereals were sown dry for livestock feed in mid-April.
• Many dams in the Cleve Hills are dry with many producers needing to cart water for livestock.
Upper North

WEATHER

- March rainfall was average across most of the district. Rainfall in April was below average to very much below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average to above average for March.
- Mean maximum temperatures in April were very much above average.

CROPS

- Soil moisture levels are very low with minimal amounts of plant available water.
- Strong winds on several days during April raised dust from exposed areas.
- Despite the poor season last year, some farmers have applied reasonable levels of lime to ameliorate acidic soils.
- Farmers began dry-sowing wheat in the western part of the district in early April but farmers in other parts of the district waited until the third week of April before starting dry-sowing of crops.
- Oaten hay, vetch, peas, lupins and some wheat and barley were sown by the end of April, mainly in the northern part of the district.
- Less canola will be sown this year.
- The area of barley sown is likely to increase, despite its lower forecast price.
- The area of beans is likely to remain similar to last year, but the area of peas will continue to decline, mainly due to increased frost and bacteria blight damage in recent years.
- Lack of rainfall over summer and autumn has increased the potential for carryover of herbicides so many farmers have changed their cropping rotations to avoid crop damage.

PASTURES

- Pastures and stubbles have been grazed and there is little cover remaining on many pasture and legume stubble paddocks.
- Producers have been either confinement-feeding or supplementary feeding livestock in paddocks for several months.
- Farmers began dry-sowing vetch and other pasture feed in early to mid-April.
- Ewes have started lambing but there are reports of below average lambing percentages in many flocks.
Mid North

WEATHER

• March rainfall was below average across the district.
• April rainfall was below average to very much below average.
• Mean maximum temperatures were above average for March and very much above average for April.

CROPS

• Soil profiles are very dry with moisture only present very deep in the profile.
• Farmers began dry-sowing beans, oaten hay, durum and some canola in late April and many are likely to continue sowing, despite marginal soil moisture levels.
• Some farmers applied gypsum and lime prior to seeding, however the amount applied has been far less than normal.
• Some stubble paddocks have been burnt, mainly by windrow burning, to reduce weed seed levels.
• Strong winds continued to raise dust across the district from bare soils.
• Some farmers have reduced the area of canola to be sown by 50% or more with slight reductions in the area sown to peas and beans because of poor soil moisture and the lack of early opening rains.
• The area sown to barley will be slightly reduced (5%) due to lower forecast prices and replaced by either wheat or vetch for livestock feed.
• There is likely to be an increase in the area sown to oaten hay of approximately 10% because of the shortage of hay reserves across the country.

PASTURES

• Pasture and stubble feed supplies have been depleted and many paddocks have poor levels of cover.
• Producers are supplementary-feeding livestock either in paddocks or containment areas.
• Farmers began dry-sowing pasture feed, mainly vetch and cereals, in mid-April.
• On-farm supplies of hay and grain are rapidly being depleted; some producers are likely to run out in mid to late May and forced to sell some stock.
• Lambing rates have been highly variable ranging from 30% to 90% but generally well below normal levels.
Lower North

WEATHER

- March rainfall was below average.
- April rainfall was very much below average with part of the Barossa receiving its lowest rainfall on record.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for March and very much above average for April.

CROPS

- Soil moisture levels across the district are very low.
- Strong winds raised dust from exposed soils on numerous days through the period.
- There has been minimal stubble burning as most cereal stubbles were cut and the straw baled.
- Farmers began dry-sowing oats and wheat in late April with many likely to continue seeding through May, despite minimal soil moisture.
- The area planned to be sown to canola has been significantly reduced by 80% or more.
- There has also been a large reduction in the planned area of beans and chickpeas, and lentil area reduced by 30 to 40%. The area sown to field peas is likely to remain similar to last season.
- There is great uncertainty regarding the marketing of feed barley reflected by its forecast price being relatively low, however most farmers are still likely to sow barley and there is potential for the area to increase.
- Viable wheat seed is still present in wheat stubbles following the dry summer and autumn, causing concern that barley sown into these paddocks will have high levels of wheat contamination.
- There has been an increase in the planned area to be sown to oats for hay; farmers are also likely to cut some wheat and barley crops for hay, depending on markets and seasonal conditions.
- Given marginal soil moisture levels, farmers are not using herbicides reliant on moisture for effective weed control, following poor weed control under similar conditions last season.
- Many farmers have reduced fertiliser (down 25%) and seed (down 10%) inputs following last year’s poor season and marginal soil moisture.

PASTURES

- Pasture and stubble feed have been exhausted and farmers are providing hay and grain to stock, mainly in paddocks with heavier soil types.
- Most livestock producers have enough hay and grain for their current livestock numbers.
- All of the major hay traders have run out of hay supplies.
- Farmers began dry-sowing pasture feed, mainly cereals, in late April.
- A few producers have sown ryegrass for pasture hay.
- Most ewes are at mid to late pregnancy and are in reasonable condition.
Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER

• March rainfall was below average.
• April rainfall was below average to very much below average.
• Mean maximum temperatures were above average for March and very much above average for April.

CROPS

• There has been widespread soil erosion, regardless of soil type, in paddocks that have poor surface cover as a result of overgrazing, burning or failed crops.
• Snail control has been most successful where baiting was performed immediately after any rain when the humidity was around 80-90% for a few days. Follow-up baiting occurred in mid to late April following dewy mornings and isolated showers.
• Farmers with large cropping areas began dry-sowing in mid-April. A few more farmers started dry-sowing in the last week in April when rainfall was forecast for the region.
• Subsoil moisture is extremely low and farmers will be very reliant on a wet winter or a kind spring for optimal yields.
• There has been little change in canola area for the coming season and this is unlikely to change unless dry conditions continue throughout May and the ideal sowing period closes.
• Initially a large increase in the area of barley to be sown this year was expected however, market indicators related to Chinese trade conditions, and herbicide tolerance levels in Japanese and South Korean markets, has reduced the predicted area of planned barley sowings. The area of barley is still likely to increase by 10%.
• The area sown to wheat will remain similar to last year.
• Little spring and summer rainfall increased the potential for carryover of chemical residues into this season. As a result, lower-yielding, herbicide-tolerant wheat varieties will be sown in many paddocks to avoid crop damage.
• The area of chickpeas will be similar to or slightly lower than last year. There is reduced demand for old season's grain and farmers are reluctant to increase the area sown.
• The area to be sown to lentils is likely to be similar to the 2018 season.
• Oaten hay area will increase approximately 10% this year due to shortages in supply throughout the country. Oaten hay also provides an alternative weed control option to growing pulses and canola.

PASTURES

• The dry summer and start to autumn have resulted in bared out paddock feed and surface cover, and soil erosion on windy days.
• Sowing of pastures started in mid-April.
• Livestock condition is average to below average and farmers have been feeding hay and grain out for many months now to supplement what little stubble is left. Stock will continue to require supplementary feeding for some time.
• On-farm feed supplies are very low.
• Producers have slightly increased livestock numbers and area of pasture, as predicted gross margins for sheep are higher than for some other break crops.
Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula & Kangaroo Island

WEATHER

- March rainfall was average to below average and April rainfall was below average to very much below average across the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for March and very much above average in April.

CROPS

Central Hills/Fleurieu
- Stored soil moisture levels are low.
- Strong winds created dust storms in April.
- The area sown to high-cost crops (i.e. canola, chickpeas and lentils) may be reduced if opening rains are not received until after mid-May.
- The area sown to barley is unlikely to change as it is a relatively low-cost crop and can be cut for hay or silage if its grain price drops.

Kangaroo Island
- Farmers began dry-sowing crops in late April.
- Stored soil moisture levels are low.
- Strong winds created dust storms in April.
- The area sown to hay is likely to increase.
- There are no other indications of any other changes to crop type or area.
- Despite the low forecast barley prices, the area sown to barley is unlikely to change as it is predominantly grown for on-farm use.

PASTURES

Central Hills/Fleurieu
- The area of hay is unlikely to change, although some barley crops might be cut for hay, depending on grain prices.
- Amounts of feed on farms (pasture, hay and grain) are very low.
- The total area sown to pasture will depend on the timing of the seasonal break. The area sown to cereals for grazing may increase as it is a lower-cost option compared to pasture renovation.
- Livestock are generally in reasonable condition considering the season.

Kangaroo Island
- The area sown to hay is likely to increase by 10 to 20%.
- Amounts of feed on farms (especially hay) are very low and a late break will exacerbate the situation. The area sown to kikuyu in spring might increase as there has been little or no soil erosion occurring on paddocks with established kikuyu.
- There will also be an increase in areas sown to cereals and ryegrass for pasture feed.
- Livestock are generally in reasonable condition considering the season.
- Due to current reliance on grain feeding, livestock producers may need include mineral supplementation to avoid hypoglycaemia.
Lower Murray

WEATHER

• Rainfall was below average for March and below average to very much below average for April.
• Mean maximum temperatures were above average for March and very much above average for April.
• Moderate to strong winds occurred throughout March and April.

CROPS

• Subsoil moisture levels are very low with any remaining moisture is now very deep in the profile.
• Some farmers began dry-sowing fodder and grain crops in late April, but most are still waiting for the break of the season.
• There is very little mice activity in stubbles paddocks.
• Farmers are considering reducing the area sown to canola and other high-risk crops and increasing the area of cereals to quickly establish soil cover on bare paddocks.
• Hay producers have very low stocks with most remaining hay already committed.
• Soil is drifting in some paddocks on many farms.
• Paddocks with significant soil erosion will require rehabilitation such as levelling and smoothing of eroded areas and establishment of thick, vigorous plant growth, to stabilise the soil.

PASTURES

• Pasture residues are very thin providing little ground cover.
• Dry warm conditions have severely stressed dryland perennial pastures.
• Most livestock have slipped in condition, despite high amounts of supplementary feed.
• Ewes have started lambing and early reports indicate lambing percentages will be below average.
• Irrigated river flats are starting to be prepared for winter crops.
Northern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- March rainfall was below average in most of the district. April rainfall was below average in the west and very much below average in the east of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for March and very much above average for April.
- Moderate to strong winds occurred on numerous days.

CROPS

- The lack of autumn rainfall has resulted in very limited summer weed growth, with only a few areas in some paddocks sprayed to control scattered caltrop and melons.
- Many farmers are now using optical weed-sensing sprayers, which have generally reduced summer herbicide use to less than 10% of previous use.
- There appears to be very little plant-available stored moisture, increasing the risk of crop failure the longer opening rains are delayed.
- There were several days of strong winds with raised dust.
- Soil cover across the district is at its poorest in more than a decade following two seasons of very low crop and pasture growth.
- Many legume stubbles or heavily grazed paddocks are extremely bare and vulnerable to wind erosion.
- There has been slightly less dry-sowing of crops and pastures than in previous years, as farmers are wary of the erosion risk, which could prove extremely damaging on lighter soils particularly with a late opening to the season.
- Many farmers have already decided not to sow canola, chickpeas and lentils this season, choosing instead to chemically fallow these paddocks later in the season or possibly sow to barley, depending on the timing and amount of opening rains.
- The intended area to be sown to cereal crops is currently similar to last season.
- Fertiliser inputs are not expected to be greatly reduced this season, as farmers have fertiliser on hand and will need to encourage strong early crop growth, particularly if crops germinate in colder soils.

PASTURES

- There is very limited pasture feed available with livestock producers, providing hay and grain to livestock in paddocks or in confinement feeding areas.
- There is an increased erosion risk due to the lack of soil cover, particularly on areas with increased grazing pressure.
- Some farmers have reduced livestock numbers as feed supplies have dwindled.
Southern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Rainfall for March was below average. April rainfall was below average to very much below average across the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for March and very much above average for April.
- Moderate to strong winds occurred on numerous days.

CROPS

- The dry summer and autumn have resulted in minimal germination of summer weeds so very little spraying was required.
- There is now very little subsoil moisture remaining due to the hot, dry conditions of the last four months.
- Moderate, regular winds have continued to raise dust on a weekly basis.
- Many farmers started dry-sowing pasture feed or hay crops; those with adequate soil cover began sowing grain crops in late April.
- An increasing number of farmers deep-ripped deep sandy soils before sowing to reduce compaction.
- Farmers are reducing the area of canola and pulses due to the later opening rains and low subsoil moisture.
- Stubble cover is extremely low so farmers are reluctant to dry-sow as the soil disturbance will increase the risk of erosion, particularly on non-wetting sands.
- Soil erosion is continuing on vulnerable paddocks, particularly in areas that failed to cover last season.
- In the worst eroded paddocks, soil has moved onto adjacent roads and fence-lines.

PASTURES

- Most ewes have lost condition as their nutritional requirements increase during late pregnancy and lactation; most are totally reliant on supplementary feed.
- Marking of early lambs has started; lambing percentages are well below average.
- Supplementary feeding is continuing in paddocks where ewes are lambing, and dry sheep are still being held in containment lots.
- Hay and grain reserves are at critically low levels with off-farm supply difficult to find and extremely expensive.
- Lucerne and veldt grass pastures are very dry and producing little feed.
- Buying hay, grain or straw is getting very difficult for farmers as little is available from local producers who have sold all their stocks; hay is now being brought in from the South East.
Upper South East

WEATHER

- March rainfall was average to below average. Rainfall for April was below average to very much below average.
- Most areas of the Upper South East are reporting their second driest year in 100 years for the period of September to April.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average to above average for March and above average for April.

CROPS

- Most soils profiles are very dry, apart from some soil moisture below 40cm in some soils.
- Farmers have commenced dry-sowing bean and canola crops. Some farmers with a large area to sow or paddocks with few weeds commenced seeding in mid-April.
- Some farmers are dry-sowing cereals but most are waiting for a germination of weeds, particularly in situations where cereal is being sown into cereal stubble.
- Grazing has diminished ground cover in many areas, unless paddocks are conservatively stocked and there are isolated areas of soil erosion in the north of the Upper South East.
- Some farmers have removed canola from their cropping program, due to the lower forecast price and high cost of production.
- Later opening rains will cause more canola and beans to be taken out of cropping programs and replaced with barley as a dual grain or graze option.
- There has been an increase in the sowing of oats for hay. The area of milling oats planned to be sown has also increased with good contract prices being offered.
- The area to be sown to lentils and chickpea crops has decreased and replaced by beans. Many producers are finding lentil yields too variable and too prone to frost and weather damage. Chickpeas have performed poorly and have limited uses and value for livestock.

PASTURES

- There is little pasture remaining. Livestock condition, particularly cattle, has started to decline.
- There are still reasonable reserves of on-farm grain, but hay supplies are limited. Most producers have enough feed reserves to last until the end of June. No rain before the middle of May will lead to feed shortages through the winter.
- Farmers have commenced dry-sowing pasture feed, including cereal rye, barley, oats, vetch, clover and ryegrass. Many producers intend to use these paddocks for grazing before cutting for hay.
- The start of lambing and calving has increased animals' nutritional demands and consumption of supplementary feed. Most producers would normally have some ‘green pasture’ available in paddocks to satisfy these requirements.
- Large hay producers in the Upper South East have very little hay left and are holding remaining stocks for their own use.
- Irrigated lucerne paddocks that would normally be rested have been irrigated to produce additional feed for livestock or hay (where excess irrigation water remains). Lucerne seed yields were excellent for both dryland and irrigated stands but the price has been relatively low.
- Few ewe losses are being reported during lambing. Most producers are feeding ewes adequately due to the value of meat and wool. However, conception rates have been variable in sheep flocks and are being reported to be as low as 40-50%.
Lower South East

WEATHER

- March rainfall was average for most areas.
- Rainfall for April was below average to very much below average across the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for March and above average in April.

CROPS

- There is some soil moisture below 10 cm but overall the soil profile is relatively dry.
- Dry sowing will increase if rain is not received by mid-May.
- Most producers will wait until a minimum of 15mm of rain is received before they commence sowing.
- Paddocks are being prepared with the usual amount of stubble burning.
- The area and type of crops to be sown remain unchanged.
- Most farmers have no plan or are not prepared for a late break as this rarely occurs; most are sowing long season varieties which may not yield as well if there is a late break.
- Slugs and snails are at higher numbers than normal, due to green growth over summer in some southern parts of the district.
- Weed numbers were higher than normal over summer. Some were sprayed but most were grazed by livestock.

PASTURES

- Dry pasture feed has been moderately grazed in most areas of the district.
- Producers have started dry-seeding some pasture feed paddocks in the northern parts of the district to cereals, annual and perennial pastures.
- Livestock remain in good condition.
- Ewes have commenced lambing and cows are calving.
- On-farm reserves of hay and grain are adequate but little surplus is available for sale. What little hay is available for sale is generally of poorer quality.
- Most producers will have enough feed on hand to feed livestock comfortably until the end of June if rain is not received before then.
Pastoral Areas

- March rainfall was average to very much above average in the North East Pastoral Zone and below average to very much below average in the North West Pastoral Zone.
- April rainfall varied from average to very much below average across the Pastoral Zone, with an area in the southern North East Pastoral Zone having its lowest rainfall on record.
- Conditions remain dry in most pastoral areas with very little quality forage available.
- Most producers, both cattle and sheep, have reduced livestock numbers; some properties have totally de-stocked and others continue to reduce numbers.
- Most sheep properties have mated ewes and there are reports of very low pregnancy scanning rates (less than 30%), due to the poor condition of ewes.
- Some properties have not mated their sheep and will have a second season without replacing breeding ewes.
- Some sheep producers have sold pregnant ewes.
- There have been significant reports of wild dog sightings and evidence wild dog damage in the pastoral areas south of the dog fence.
- Surface water has dried up in most regions of the Pastoral Zone and properties totally reliant on surface water have been forced to de-stock or cart water. Where possible, pastoralists have installed additional water infrastructure and undertaken maintenance.
- There have been reports of bores drying up in the eastern districts (east of Burra).
- Many properties have installed new water infrastructure where bores and dams have run dry.
- Kangaroos and emus remain in high numbers where feed and water are still available.
- In the north east corner of the State, floodwaters from Queensland have partially filled Lake Eyre and water is continuing to flow in the Diamantina River and Warburton Creek. The waters have generated considerable amounts of feed on flood-out country.