

Crop and Pasture Summary

PIRSA

Issue 6: Season 2019-20 Final Outcome - April 2020

Summary

After a record dry January to April of 2019, May to June rainfall was average to above average, providing a timely season opening, normal crop establishment and a return to an average crop area, but the rains did not persist into the second half of the growing season. Growing season rainfall from April to October (Figure 1) was below average to well below average across the cereal zone and well below average to record low for the pastoral zones. Frequent frosts in early spring damaged crops in a number of districts. Harvest proceeded without weather interruptions and was completed in most districts by the end of December, the last area to finish being the South East early in 2020.

Crop performance varied greatly across South Australia. The lack of spring rain across the State reduced crop yields although in several districts were better than last year's crops. Crops harvested better than expected in the southern Murray Mallee, parts of the Yorke Peninsula and Lower North. Lower Eyre Peninsula had significant crop losses from strong winds in December reducing grain production estimate to around 7% above the long-term average. Crops and pasture performed poorly in drought-affected areas on the eastern Eyre Peninsula parts of the Upper North and Northern Murray Mallee with yields low and some crops not harvested. However, the final estimate of the total crop production for the State is 6.47 million tonnes, compared with 5.79 million tonnes of 2018-19.

Figure 1. South Australian Rainfall Deciles 1 April to 31 October 2019
Distribution based on gridded data

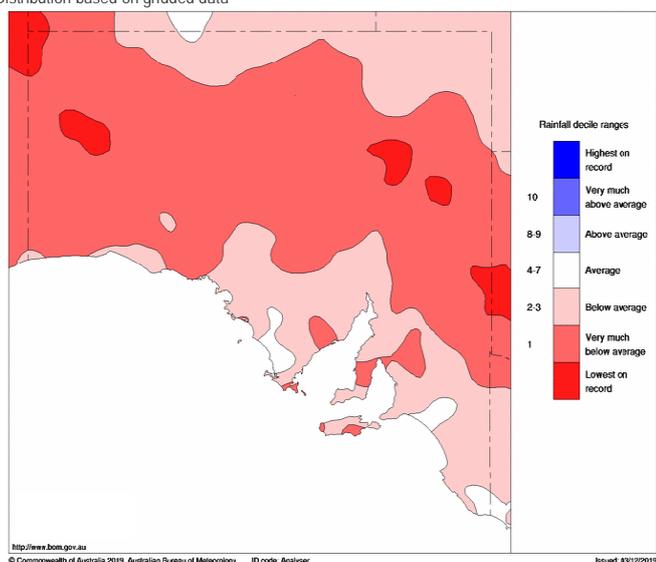
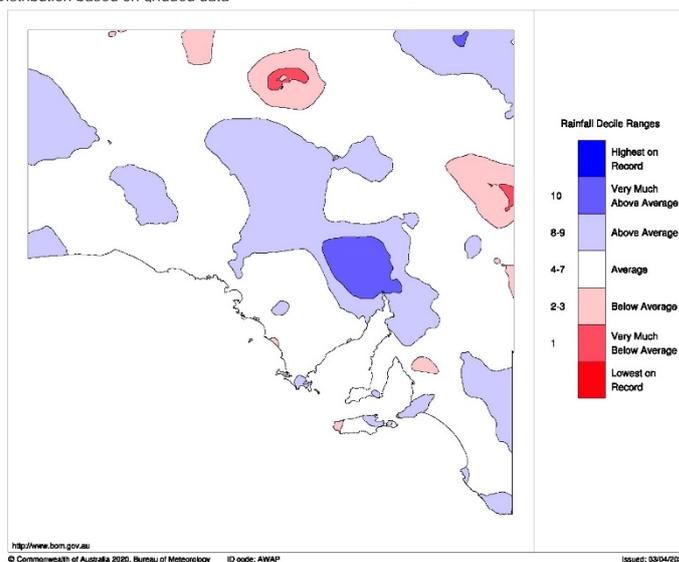


Figure 2. South Australian Rainfall Deciles 1 January to 31 March 2020
Distribution based on gridded data



Crop area and production for previous five seasons and the new crop

Seasons	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20 Final
Area sown (ha)	3,899,000	3,821,000	3,894,000	3,565,000	3,572,000	3,898,000
Production (t)	7,667,000	7,211,000	11,145,000	6,921,000	5,795,000	6,467,000
Farm gate value	\$2.0 billion	\$1.6 billion	\$2.2 billion	\$1.7 billion	\$1.7 billion	\$2.0 billion



Next update for release May 2020 – Seeding Intentions 2020-21

Information accurate as at 10 April 2020.

The season so far...



RAIN – Early growing season rains established the crop performance potential for the season. The growing season rainfall (Figure 1) in the cereal zone was below to well below average and both pastoral zones were below average to lowest on record. Some rain in pastoral zones during early 2020 has provided some relief to drought conditions.



SUBSOIL MOISTURE – While early winter rains wetted seedbeds providing good conditions for crop seeding and early crop establishment. Subsequent dry conditions and crop growth depleted soil moisture.



CROP MIX – Area sown of 3.9 million ha was a return to average crop size. Area of wheat, barley and other cereals increased at the expense of canola and most pulses due to the dry subsoils. Frost damaged cereal grain crops were cut for hay instead of leaving for harvest of grain.



CROP GROWTH – Dry conditions across the state from the middle of July, combined with frost, high temperature days in September hastened crop ripening, allowing early completion of harvest producing 6.5 million tonnes of grain.



LIVESTOCK CONDITION AND FEED – Paddock feed levels are low in the driest areas but some districts have good pasture bulk and crop stubbles. Paddocks without plant cover are vulnerable to wind erosion. Farmers have increased area of pasture and cut more hay to replenish farm hay supplies and to capitalise on a hay market with good prices. Frosted grain crops, cut for hay added to the hay supply.

Outlook for the year

RAINFALL OUTLOOK – The Bureau of Meteorology's most recent (9 April 2020) update of the season outlook for the April to June period shows an increased chance of above median rainfall, an improvement on the last two seasons' April-June outlooks. However, outlooks at this time of the year (April) have proven less reliable for South Australia.

Challenges and opportunities

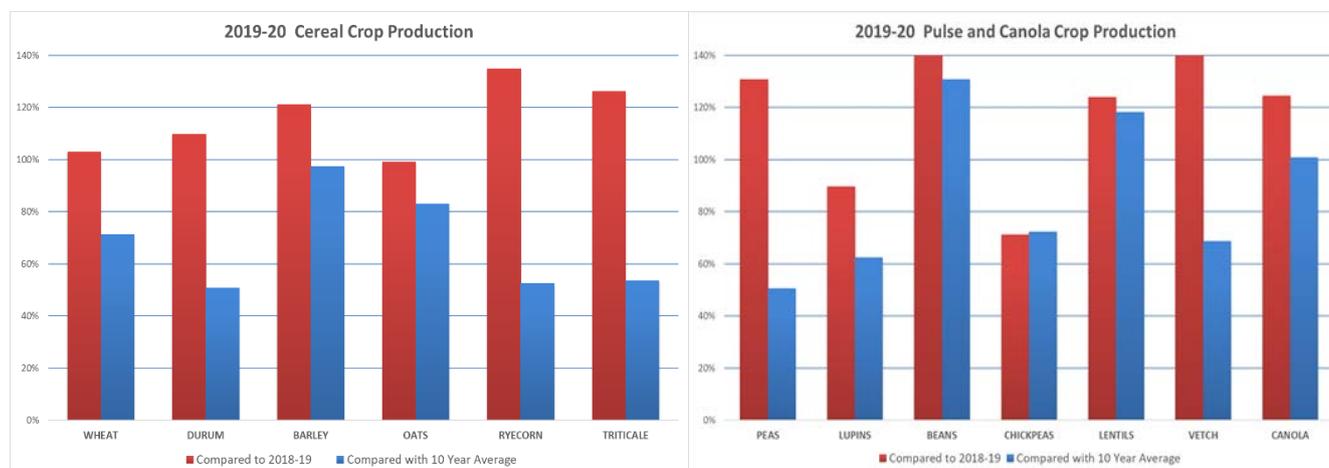
PESTS AND DISEASES – There was less snail activity due to the dry conditions last season. Baiting after autumn rain will reduce numbers where needed.

ADVERSE EVENTS – Strong winds continue to cause soil erosion and raised dust where soil surface is dry and there is no plant residue cover. Significant rainfall is required to reverse the long-term ongoing rainfall deficiency due to the dryness of the last two seasons.

MARKET DRIVERS – An above average northern hemisphere grain crop harvest is contributing to increased global stocks of major grains, except for the Black Sea. Grain prices are slightly down on last season but remain above average. Domestic demand driven by eastern state drought conditions continues to provide domestic price premiums for fodder and feed grains. This demand will ease as rain in the drought areas will allow paddock feed growth and reduce need for supplementary feeding.

REGIONAL ISSUES – There has been below average crop and pasture production with feed and fodder shortages for animals. Rain in some parts will allow paddock feed to establish, providing some relief from hand feeding. Dust storms are still occurring with strong winds, in districts not receiving recent rains. Communities continue to recover from the severe bushfires in the South East, Yorke Peninsula and on Kangaroo Island.

Figure 2. 2019-20 Crop Production Estimates Compared to 2018-19 and the 10-year Average (percent difference).



May	July	Sept	Nov	Jan 2020	Apr 2020
Next update					This update
Seeding intentions	Seeding and crop establishment	Winter crop performance	Spring crop harvest	Harvest	Final summary and estimates