Issue 1 Seeding Intentions – May 2019

Summary

Rainfall for the first four months of 2019 was well below average across the state, with lowest on record on parts of Eyre Peninsula, Yorke Peninsula and Lower North, including Adelaide. Dry seeding of cereals commenced in late April in some districts, mainly for a quick germination of feed on the first rains for livestock. Rains commencing on the last day of April into first few days of May, again on 8 May, followed by regular rain systems for the rest of May, has enabled normal seeding operations. At time of writing, farmers in many districts were close to finished their seeding programs, except in the Cowell - Arno Bay district and northern parts of the Murray Mallee where falls during May were lighter and lack of soil cover would leave tilled paddocks vulnerable to erosion.

The extremely dry soils has resulted in farmers reducing areas of higher risk crops including canola and some pulses, especially lentils and chickpeas. The barley area is expected to increase significantly, but a poor price outlook, driven largely by China’s investigations in Australian barley may have tempered grower’s enthusiasm to increase barley area further. The area of wheat is likely not to change significantly, but given the state wide depletion of hay stocks, many farmers are sowing hay to replenish stocks used or sold during 2018.

Sown crop area and production for previous five seasons

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area sown (ha)</td>
<td>3,899,000</td>
<td>3,821,000</td>
<td>3,894,000</td>
<td>3,565,000</td>
<td>3,503,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production (t)</td>
<td>7,667,000</td>
<td>7,211,000</td>
<td>11,144,000</td>
<td>6,920,000</td>
<td>5,584,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm Gate Value</td>
<td>$ 2.0 billion</td>
<td>$ 1.6 billion</td>
<td>$ 2.2 billion</td>
<td>$ 1.7 billion</td>
<td>$ 1.9 billion</td>
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Next update release July 2019 – Seeding and Crop Establishment

Information accurate as at 28 May 2019.
The season so far...

RAIN – Well below average rainfall and above average maximum temperatures across the state in March and April, but rain in many parts of the state on several occasions in May have allowed seeding of crops in all but eastern parts of the state.

SUBSOIL MOISTURE – Subsoils across the state are dry. Successful cropping this year will depend on regular rainfall to sustain production potential.

CROP MIX – Increase area sown to barley and hay crops but declines in canola and pulses. Area sown to wheat likely to remain similar to 2018–19.

SEEDING – Dry sowing, mainly wheat crops and cereals for paddock feed commenced late April in most districts. Reluctance to dry-sow canola or pulses given the low subsoil moisture levels. Rains in southern and coastal districts of the cereal zone in May allowed seeding to be close to complete in those areas, while in drier parts of the Murray Mallee, seeding is still in progress or delayed.

LIVESTOCK CONDITION AND FEED – Paddock feed levels are extremely low, but new feed will germinate with recent rains. High levels of livestock supplementary feeding. Many farmers have sown cereals for early quick germinating paddock feed. Hay supplies have been exhausted in the state with high prices for supply brought in from interstate (where available).

Outlook for the year

WINTER RAINFALL OUTLOOK – Bureau of Meteorology latest update is for a high chance of drier than normal conditions for June-August winter period which will potentially reduce crop yield and total crop.

Challenges and opportunities

PESTS AND DISEASES – The drought conditions of 2018 has reduced risk of mice, other pests and disease for this season. Increased snail activity prior to last harvest was confined to the Yorke Peninsula, otherwise dry conditions limited snail breeding. May rainfall has provided ideal conditions for baiting, providing effective control to-date.

ADVERSE EVENTS – Strong winds, dry conditions in early autumn and exposed soil has resulted in regular soil erosion and dust storms. Since rains started in early May, dust storms have become confined to the drier parts of the Murray Mallee.

MARKET DRIVERS – Weather issues affecting northern hemisphere wheat and feed grain crops are supporting higher export prices. Australia’s drought affected feed grain demand, driving domestic price premiums over export pricing, has eased recently with rains expected to improve paddock feed availability.

REGIONAL ISSUES – April rainfall was very much below average across the state with record low rainfall in a number of districts for January to April. The eastern and western Eyre Peninsula, upper North, northern Yorke Peninsula, Murray Mallee, eastern Mid North region and the Pastoral zones remain drought affected and even with recent May rainfall in some parts, recovery of these districts will depend on rain continuing through winter 2019.