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State Summary

WEATHER

- January rainfall varied from average to very much below average across the State. There were areas on Lower Eyre Peninsula, Adelaide Hills and Southern Mallee that recorded their lowest January rainfall on record.
- February rainfall was average to below average.
- In the pastoral region, January rainfall was average in most of the North West Pastoral Zone and the central part of the North East Pastoral Zone and below average to very much below average in the remainder of the region.
- February rainfall was below to very much below average across most of the pastoral region, apart from some pockets which received average rainfall.
- Mean maximum temperatures for January were very much above average across the whole State with large areas of the northern and North Eastern Pastoral areas, Murray Mallee, Fleurieu Peninsula and Southern Yorke Peninsula observing the highest mean maximum January temperatures on record.
- Maximum temperatures for February were average to above average in the agricultural areas and average to very much above average in the pastoral areas.
- Mean minimum temperatures for January were above average to very much above average across the State.

CROPS

- Total SA crop production for 2018/19 is estimated at 5.6 mt grain from 3.5 million hectares crop area, compared to the five-year average of 8.3 mt grain from 3.84 million hectares crop area. Drought and frost reduced grain yields and large areas of crop were cut for hay.
- Like grain yields, grain quality across the State varied considerably between districts, but overall, more wheat than normal made premium grade segregations, and more malting barley than normal met malting specifications.
- Subsoil moisture content is very low in most areas of the State, due to hot conditions and lack of summer rainfall.
- Some summer weeds germinated in many parts of the State following November and December rainfall, however hot weather in January and February stalled growth.
- Some farmers sprayed summer weeds in January to conserve soil moisture, while others used livestock to control weeds, particularly where weed numbers were low.
- Most cereal stubble paddocks still have adequate soil cover, but cover is much lower than normal due to less biomass production, increased amounts of straw baled, higher stubble palatability and consumption by livestock.
- Soil surface cover on paddocks that had pasture or pulse crops last year are very sparse, and in a number of districts, bare sandy rises continue to erode during windy weather.
- Hot weather during this period has enabled farmers to successfully cable, chain or roll paddocks to control snails.
- Farmers are carting and spreading bio-solids, chicken litter, gypsum and lime in a number of districts. There has been an increase in the amount of lime spread in a number of districts.
- In districts where yields were well below average in 2018, many farmers are considering reducing their fertiliser inputs for this year’s crops, particularly phosphorous.
• There has been a much larger area than normal of straw cut and baled because of poorer biomass production, forcing buyers to source straw from a larger area across the State, including Lower Eyre Peninsula and the South East.

• Unless there is significant rainfall before the end of April, farmers in a number of districts will reduce the area sown to canola.

• Farmers in most districts are likely to start sowing cereals, vetch and other pastures in mid-April, regardless of rainfall events.

• In the South East many farmers have increased their livestock numbers and are planning to reduce their crop area and increase their pasture area.

**PASTURES**

• There is still adequate quantities of stubble and pasture feed on Lower Eyre Peninsula and the South East, but the amount of paddock feed is very low in all other districts.

• Most farmers are supplementary feeding livestock with hay or grain, either in paddocks or in containment areas.

• Most farmers have retained or bought enough hay and grain or have reduced livestock numbers to ensure they have sufficient feed available, based on an average break to the season.

• If the season break is later than average, some farmers will not have sufficient livestock feed to maintain livestock in adequate condition.

• Most districts are reporting that there is very little hay available for sale, as most producers are keeping hay to feed their own livestock.

• The warm dry conditions severely stressed dryland perennial pastures; rain is urgently needed to enable these to recover.

• 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.

• 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.

• 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).

• Kangaroos and emus remain in high numbers where feed and water is still available but there have been reports of high kangaroo deaths in some areas due to very hot weather and/or water supplies drying up.

• In the north east corner of the State, floodwaters from Queensland are flowing in the Diamantina River and Warburton Creek towards Lake Eyre. The waters are expected to generate considerable amounts of feed on flood-out country while the surrounding land remains dry.
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.
### Crop Estimates

**TABLE 1: CROP ESTIMATES BY DISTRICT**

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District Reports

Western Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

• January rainfall was average in most of the district except for the southern area, which was below average.
• Rainfall during February was generally below average with some areas of average rainfall.
• Mean maximum temperatures for January were very much above average with all observation stations recording their hottest day on record on January 24. February maximum temperatures were above average in the south east of the district and average in the remainder of the district.

CROPS

• Most farmers completed harvest before the end of December.
• Crop yields varied greatly depending on rainfall distribution and soil type but were generally better than expected given well below average growing season rainfall.
• Wheat grain quality was high with good grain protein levels and test weights.
  • Early indications are that the Freight Charges at Outer Harbour (high comparative cost of rail vs trucks) – Dave L / Ben H
• area of crop sown in 2019 will not be significantly different from previous years based on an average break to the season.
• Some summer weeds germinated following December rainfall but growth stalled with dry conditions in January and February.
• Stored soil moisture levels are very low across the district.
• Stubbles from last year’s crops are providing quality feed and adequate surface cover for protection against erosion. However, surface cover levels on paddocks that had pasture last year are very low, and exposed sandy rises continue to erode with strong wind events.
• Farmers chained and rolled paddocks on hot days during this period to control snail numbers.
• Mice and insect pest numbers are generally low.

PASTURES

• Although stubbles contain high quality feed, biomass amounts are less than normal due to low production in 2018, and many farmers are supplementing paddock feed with hay or grain.
• Some farmers have moved stock to containment feeding areas to maintain soil cover and protect vulnerable soils from wind erosion.
• Livestock are generally in good condition and, assuming a normal autumn break to the season, most farmers have adequate supplies of grain and hay stored on-farm to continue supplementary feeding until pastures are established.
Lower Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- January rainfall was very much below average across the district with a small area on the southern end of the Lower Eyre Peninsula recording its lowest rainfall on record. February rainfall was average on the tip of the peninsula and below average in the remainder of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures for January were very much above average and all districts experienced their hottest day on record on January 24. February mean maximum temperatures were above average.

CROPS

- Damp conditions in December delayed harvest so many farmers did not finish until the middle of January.
- Despite average to below average growing season rainfall, yields were average to above average and grain quality was generally high. There were some reports of exceptionally high yielding wheat crops (above 7 t/ha).
- Pulse and canola yields were generally well above average.
- Summer weeds germinated following harvest rainfall and most farmers began spraying them immediately after harvest. Weed growth was stalled by the dry conditions in January and February.
- Assuming good opening rains in autumn, the area of crop sown in 2019 is not expected to be significantly different from previous years.
- Soil moisture content is very low.
- Soil sampling for deep soil nitrogen testing is being undertaken by advisors to assess summer mineralisation and help with nitrogen budgeting.
- Larger amounts than usual of lime and gypsum have been spread to ameliorate soils.
- Mice, snails and insect pest numbers have been generally low. Farmers will bait high risk paddocks at seeding to control snails and will treat at least a portion of crop seed to protect early growth from Russian wheat aphid.

PASTURES

- Stubbles have provided high amounts of quality livestock feed.
- Livestock are in excellent condition and most farmers have good supplies of supplementary feed stored on-farm.
Eastern Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- January rainfall was very much below average in the south and below average in the remainder of the district. Rainfall for February was below average across most of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures for January were very much above average and all observation stations had their hottest day on record on January 24. February mean maximum temperatures were above average.

CROPS

- Damp conditions in December prolonged harvest into the first half of January.
- Crop yields were highly variable depending on where rains fell and soil types.
- Despite well below average rainfall, yields and grain quality were generally better than expected in districts around Kimba - Buckleboo, Lock and in the Cleve Hills, which received average growing season rainfall.
- Yields in the Arno Bay and Franklin Harbour districts were poor, and some crops were not harvested.
- Summer weeds germinated after December rainfall, but their growth was halted by hot dry conditions in January and February.
- Early indications are that crop area for 2019 will not be much different than usual, assuming a normal opening to the season.
- Soil profiles contain very little moisture.
- There have been some reports of Russian wheat aphid on volunteer cereals and cereals sown late to establish ground cover. Most farmers will treat at least a portion of their seed to protect early-sown crops from damage.
- Numbers of other pests including snails and mice are generally low.

PASTURES

- Paddocks contain little biomass so many farmers are providing hay or grain to stock in stubble paddocks on heavier soil types. Some farmers have moved stock into containment feeding areas to protect soils from erosion.
- Assuming an autumn break to the season, most producers have adequate grain and hay supplies stored on farm to feed stock until pastures become established.
- Water supplies are very low on farms in areas of the Cleve Hills not connected to mains supplies; and many farmers are carting water for livestock.
- Small areas of summer forage crops sown following October and November rainfall established well and provided surface cover for erosion protection but did not grow large amounts of biomass due to a lack of moisture.
- Livestock are generally in good condition.
Upper North

WEATHER

• January rainfall was average in the north and below average in the remainder of the district. Rainfall in February was average in most of the district.
• Mean maximum temperatures were very much above average for January.
• Mean maximum temperatures in February were above average in the west and average in the east.

CROPS

• Harvest was completed by the end of December and yields were well below average.
• Frost damage was severe in parts of the district with the worst affected crops or crop areas cut for hay. Frost damage in many crops was worse than expected and significantly reduced grain yields in some paddocks.
• Some summer weeds were sprayed in early January, but most were grazed with livestock.
• Soil moisture reserves are very low with only minimal moisture at depth.
• Most farmers are planning to reduce crop fertiliser inputs, particularly phosphorus.
• There is minimal soil cover on numerous paddocks and strong winds have been raising dust in exposed paddocks.
• In the lower rainfall parts of the district, there is likely to be a reduction in the area sown to pulse and canola crops and an increase in the area of wheat and barley.
• If there is not significant rainfall before the end of April, the area sown to canola will be further reduced, as soils are very dry.
• An increased number of farmers are likely to start sowing crops in the last week of April, given the success of dry-sowing in the last few seasons.
• Hay producers have been carting hay stored on farm to export processors and domestic markets.

PASTURES

• Pastures and stubble feed reserves have been depleted with little soil cover remaining in grazed paddocks.
• Farmers are feeding hay and grain to livestock to maintain them in good condition.
• Many producers have moved livestock into containment areas to maintain some soil cover.
• Farmers have continued to sell any excess livestock to conserve feed for breeding stock.
• Farmers are planning to sow pasture feed early (mid-April) to maximise the benefit of any early rains.
Mid North

WEATHER

- January rainfall was below average to very much below average across the district.
- February rainfall was average across most of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were very much above average for January and average for February.

CROPS

- Harvest was completed by late December with yields well below average.
- Frost damage was worse than expected in wheat and barley, with worst affected areas cut for hay.
- Wheat grain quality was good with high protein and low screenings. A higher proportion than expected of malting varieties made malting grade, despite generally higher grain protein levels.
- Pulse crops generally performed poorly with low yields and small grain size.
- Reasonable amounts of biomass remain in ungrazed stubbles.
- Where stubbles have been grazed, biomass has been significantly reduced.
- Stubbles provided high nutritional value for stock.
- Soil moisture levels are low. Some moisture remains deep in the profile from November-December rains.
- There has been little change to planned crop area with a slight reduction in the area of lentils and an increase in the amount of vetch and cereals sown for pasture feed.
- Most farmers are planning to reduce their fertiliser inputs (mainly phosphorus) because of reduced nutrient removal last season.
- More farmers are likely to commence dry-sowing in mid-April, starting with pastures, oaten hay, canola and beans before moving onto cereals. This has proven successful in the last few years.

PASTURES

- All producers are feeding hay or grain to livestock, either in stubble paddocks or containment areas. There has been a significant increase in the use of containment feeding in recent months.
- Most farmers have sufficient hay and grain on-hand to feed livestock until pastures are established, assuming an average break to the season.
Lower North

WEATHER

- January rainfall was very much below average and February rainfall was average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were very much above average for January and average for February.

CROPS

- Harvest was only completed in the eastern part of the district in mid-January.
- All crops yielded well below average with cereals yielding 45 to 50% of average and pulses 25 to 30%.
- Approximately 30% of the crop area was cut for hay, due to frost damage, drought stress or estimated better returns from hay compared to grain. Hay yields were 40% of average.
- Wheat had high protein and low screenings. Barley grain protein was higher than normal with good grain size and low levels of screenings.
- Stored soil moisture levels are very low across the district.
- Most paddocks still have adequate soil cover but amounts of stubble are less than usual, due to the poorer growing season, a large amount of straw being cut and baled, and grazing of residues.
- Stubbles are thinner as there was less biomass than usual after harvest, even in paddocks that have not been grazed.
- There was only a small germination of summer weeds and these quickly died during hot dry conditions in January and February.
- Contractors with long-term straw markets have been required to source straw from Lower Eyre Peninsula and the Upper South East, significantly increasing costs.
- Farmers are currently spreading bio-solid and chicken manure, although some have reduced the amount of chicken manure being spread.
- An increasing number of paddocks have been pH mapped and farmers are spreading lime on areas with low soil pH.
- There is likely to be an increase in the area sown to cereals, with a reduction in the area of pulses and oilseeds, particularly canola.
- If no significant rain is received before the end of April the area sown to canola and chickpeas, will be further reduced as both require stored soil moisture to achieve reasonable yields.
- There are concerns of herbicide residue carry-over, particularly on soils with lower proportions of clay.

PASTURES

- Medic seed production has only been 40 to 50% of average.
- Pastures contain very small amounts of biomass.
- All livestock producers are currently feeding hay and grain to livestock to supplement pastures. Most have enough feed stores, but some are concerned that they do not have enough to cater for a late break to the season.
- There is currently very little hay available for sale.
Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER

- January rainfall was below average on Northern Yorke Peninsula and very much below average in Central and Southern Yorke Peninsula.
- Rainfall for February was below average in Central Yorke Peninsula and average in the northern and southern parts of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures for January were very much above average with the southern part of the district recording their highest temperature on record. Temperatures for February were average in the north and above average in the remainder of the district.

CROPS

- Harvest was completed in early January and yields across the district were highly variable with yields of most crops on Northern Yorke Peninsula being slightly to well below average.
- Central Yorke Peninsula yields ranged from below average on the coast to average in central areas.
- Yields on Southern Yorke Peninsula were generally average to above average.
- Grain protein levels were variable but screenings were very low in all cereals, except for barley grown on shallower soils.
- A high percentage of malt varieties were classified as malt and most feed varieties were F1 quality.
- Stored soil moisture is very low in most of the district apart from an area between Port Broughton and Bute that has some stored moisture following heavy rainfall in November.
- Most paddocks have adequate soil cover, although a few have been over grazed and are at a higher risk of wind erosion.
- Dry conditions in January and February has not resulted in a further germination of summer weeds.
- Slashing, rolling and cabling of stubbles to reduce snail numbers was undertaken during hot weather in January and February.
- Seed cleaning is being undertaken in preparation for the new season.
- Some residual herbicides have not broken down enough in soils because of insufficient rainfall in spring and summer and this will affect crop selection in the coming season.
- The area sown to wheat in 2019 is likely to remain the same, barley area will be increased by 10 to 15%, canola area increased by 10 to 20%, while the area of lentils could be reduced by up to 10%.
- Without substantial rain before the end of April the area sown to canola and beans is predicted to be reduced and the lentil area could also fall further if it remains dry into May.
- Mice numbers are low and there is a reduced risk of mice damage this season.

PASTURES

- There is little to no quality pasture feed available. Most stubbles had less biomass than usual so less grazing value.
- Some paddocks have been overgrazed, particularly where crops were moisture stressed and died prematurely.
- Farmers are feeding hay and grain to livestock.
- There has been more livestock agisted on Yorke Peninsula than normal, accommodating stock from drought and frost affected areas in the Upper and Mid North areas.
- Livestock are generally in fair condition and numbers have remained relatively stable. Once stubbles have been fully grazed, some producers may begin reducing stock numbers.
Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula & Kangaroo Island

WEATHER

- January rainfall was very much below average across the district with an area in the Adelaide Hills observing its lowest rainfall on record. Rainfall for February was average across the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures for January were very much above average and the Fleurieu Peninsula experienced its highest temperature on record. February maximum temperatures were above average on Kangaroo Island and average in the remainder of the district.

CROPS

Central Hills/Fleurieu

- Cereal yields ranged from 0.25 t/ha in the drier regions to 5t/ha in wetter zones. Canola and pulse yields were well below average.
- Grain quality was also highly variable with good grain quality in average to above average yielding crops, but high screenings in lower yielding crops.
- There is no or little stored soil moisture.
- There is limited soil cover in many areas and soil drift is occurring on exposed sandy soils.
- There is likely to be an increased area of cereals and other pastures sown in early to mid-April to provide feed for livestock.

Kangaroo Island

- Cereal yields were average with some downgrading of grain quality due to rain in mid-December.
- Canola crops yielded above average, but beans were well below average.
- Stored soil moisture levels are very low.
- Without significant rainfall before the end of April, the area sown to canola is likely to increase by 10 to 20% at the expense of broad beans because of the shortened growing season.
- There has been an increase in the area spread with lime to ameliorate soil acidity.

PASTURES

Central Hills/Fleurieu

- Pasture feed amounts are low but of good quality as a result of the dry conditions.
- Livestock have remained in reasonable condition as farmers have reduced numbers.
- Supplementary feeding of livestock with hay and grain commenced earlier than normal.
- Many producers are concerned that ewe nutrition has been inadequate for high lambing percentages in 2019.

Kangaroo Island

- Pasture feed quantity and quality is poor and declining.
- Livestock are in reasonable condition, especially on properties that are providing adequate hay and grain.
- Supplementary feeding is occurring on most properties, however some producers may not have sufficient supplies if opening rains are late. Some stock producers have started or plan to commence containment feeding.
- Livestock water supplies are becoming limited for some farmers along the north coast and eastern portion of KI.
Lower Murray

WEATHER

- Rainfall was very much below average for January and average to below average for February.
- Mean maximum temperatures were very much above average for January with the southern part of the district recording its highest temperature on record. Maximum temperatures for February were average.
- Moderate to strong winds occurred throughout January and February.

CROPS

- Yields were variable across the region, ranging from very poor and not worth harvesting on very hard stony soils, to crops on sandier soils able to fill some grain by drawing on subsoil moisture.
- Subsoil moisture is generally low across the district, although some has been conserved on deeper soils where good weed control was achieved.
- Some farmers have sprayed summer weeds, while others relied on livestock to control weeds as numbers of weeds were low.
- The hot dry conditions have enabled good control of snails by cabling and rolling of stubbles.
- Mice numbers are very low in paddocks.
- Soil cover is very low in some paddocks with wind erosion occurring in the worst affected areas.
- Hay producers have been loading hay for local and interstate markets with most producers reporting that their stocks are very low.

PASTURES

- Pasture biomass amounts are very low and ground cover is very poor in some paddocks.
- The warm dry conditions have severely stressed dryland perennial pastures; rainfall is desperately required to enable these to recover.
- Livestock are generally in reasonable condition and even though quantity of pastures and stubbles feed has been in short supply, it has mostly been of high quality.
- Farmers have started supplementary feeding livestock with grain or hay. Most farmers have sufficient stocks on-hand, but a few have been busy sourcing supplies from other areas as local supplies are limited.
- Pasture production on irrigated river flats have deteriorated during the hot weather, as farmers are reluctant or unable to apply sufficient water.
Northern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

• January rainfall was below average in the north east and very much below average in the remainder of the district. February rainfall was below average in the north east and average in the remainder of the district.
• Mean maximum temperatures were very much above average for January with most of the district observing its highest average temperature on record. Maximum temperatures for February were average.
• Moderate to strong winds occurred on numerous days, raising dust.

CROPS

• Cereal yields varied from 50 to 75% below average, and pulse crops were 60% or more below average.
• Yields were impacted by a combination of drought and frost.
• Most wheat grain was of good quality with high grain protein and average screenings, while most malting variety barley crops were classified as feed, due to high grain protein.
• Subsoil moisture levels across the district are very low.
• Most cropping paddocks were sprayed to control summer weeds in early January and dry conditions have prevented further growth.
• Soil cover levels are very low in some pasture and stubble paddocks with wind erosion occurring on bare sand rises.
• There is likely to be a reduction in the area sown to canola and some pulse crops and an increase in area sown to vetch and other pasture.
• Most farmers are considering reducing fertiliser inputs at seeding, particularly phosphorous.
• There are concerns that residual herbicides will not have broken down sufficiently so farmers will need to adjust their crop selection in some paddocks to avoid crop damage.
• An increasing number of farmers are planning to start sowing crops and pastures for feed in April regardless of rainfall and soil moisture conditions.

PASTURES

• Pasture and stubbles have been heavily grazed by livestock and there is no or limited feed remaining.
• Farmers are feeding livestock with hay and grain, either in paddocks with heavier soil types or in containment areas.
• Most farmers have reduced livestock numbers to ensure they have sufficient hay and grain to keep livestock in good condition.
• There is a high erosion risk where there is a lack of soil cover on sands, particularly where they are grazed.
Southern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Rainfall for January was very much below average with a few areas receiving their lowest rainfall on record. February rainfall was average in most of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were very much above average for January with the whole district observing highest mean temperatures on record. Maximum temperatures for February were average.
- Moderate to strong winds occurred on numerous days, raising dust.

CROPS

- Grain yields were well below average as a result of drought and frost.
- Despite the dry conditions, summer weeds continued to grow, and most farmers sprayed most of their paddocks with some paddocks being sprayed twice.
- The hot dry conditions during January and February resulted in minimal stored subsoil moisture.
- Farmers have been cleaning seed in preparation for the coming season and carting gypsum in preparation for spreading closer to seeding.
- An increased number of farmers are deep ripping sands in some areas of the district, following significant yield increases from ripping in 2018.
- Hay producers have been carting hay to export processors, domestic and some interstate markets.
- Snail and mice numbers are low in most paddocks.
- Soil cover is sparse, and farmers are preparing machinery to sow feed or fodder crops, providing there is enough early rainfall.
- Soil erosion has continued with vulnerable areas in paddocks drifting on a weekly basis.

PASTURES

- Livestock are generally in good condition grazing high quality stubbles. However, this feed supply has now been fully utilised with limited amount remaining.
- Grassy natural pastures have very little biomass.
- Farmers are supplementary-feeding livestock with hay and grain, either in paddocks or in containment areas.
- Hay and grain reserves are at low levels with some finding it hard to buy.
- Lucerne and veldt grass pastures are dry and providing limited feed following the last two months of dry hot conditions.
- Many farmers have reduced livestock breeding numbers due to the poor seasonal conditions.
Upper South East

WEATHER

- January rainfall was very much below average and February rainfall was average in most of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were very much above average for January with the north eastern corner of the district recording highest mean maximum temperatures on record. Maximum temperatures for February were average.

CROPS

- Harvest was completed by the third week of January. Cereal yields were affected by frost and the dry finish to the season; wheat was below average and barley about average.
- Weather damage diminished grain quality, particularly of wheat and beans.
- Top soil is dry but there is still some moisture in the subsoil, particularly on heavier soil types.
- Dry conditions have resulted in lower numbers of summer weeds and targeted spraying of melons and caltrop. In mixed farming systems, most weeds have been grazed by livestock.
- There is likely to be a 5 to 10% reduction in the area sown to canola, due to higher prices being offered for other crops and the higher cost of inputs required.
- Some farmers are planning to reduce the area of crop and increase the area of pasture or hay, due to higher livestock numbers and the need to replenish hay reserves. The majority of pasture sown will be annual pasture.
- This may result in a 15% reduction in the area of crop for grain sown in 2019.
- Most farmers are planning to start sowing in late April to early May, rather than waiting for opening rains.
- More straw than normal has been cut and baled with estimates that 75% of it is being purchased by a pellet mill for stockfeed.
- Straw baled immediately after harvest is of much better quality than that baled in late February.

PASTURES

- There is very little pasture feed remaining and some paddocks, including lucerne pastures, have been over grazed. These paddocks are at risk of wind erosion, particularly on sandy soils or rises where sheep camp.
- High livestock returns have driven increased pasture renovation, particularly ryegrass-based pastures.
- Many producers have adopted containment feeding or feeding in a sacrifice paddock to manage erosion risk and protect paddocks.
- Most producers are now supplementary-feeding all livestock and are paying particular attention to maintaining livestock condition given the current value of sheep and cattle.
- Most livestock are in good condition.
- Hay supplies have begun to tighten and little hay is being sold as producers ensure they retain enough for their own livestock.
- With a late break to the season some producers will not have sufficient hay reserves.
- Most producers opted to sell hay rather than stockpile large amounts given the high hay prices.
- Lucerne seed harvest has commenced with high yields expected but production will be below average due to the reduced area. Rainfall received in December has increased dryland lucerne seed yields to well above average.
Lower South East

WEATHER

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

CROPS

• Most farmers completed harvest by early February (later than normal).
• Broad beans yielded above average and were of excellent size, but staining caused some downgrading.
• High levels of chocolate spot infection in some paddocks required diligent application of fungicide to achieve adequate control and minimise the impact on yield and grain quality.
• Wheat yields were well above average despite high levels of *Septoria tritici* foliar disease infection.
• Some wheat was downgraded because of staining and/or sprouting.
• Canola yields were variable with some farmers reporting record yields, while other crops were severely affected by disease, particularly sclerotinia stem rot. Overall canola yields were above average.
• Chickpeas yielded above average.
• Barley yielded above average despite high disease levels. More feed barley than malt barley was reaped due to weather damage.
• Both oaten hay and grain yields were average.
• Late rains and a mild spring provided ideal conditions for a range of weeds not commonly found in high numbers in the district. These included lesser loose strife, fleabane, heliotrope, fat hen, wire weed, amaranth and convolvulus.
• Paddock preparation has commenced on some properties that do not have livestock. Machinery such as speed tillers are being used to chop and incorporate crop residues.
• Some farmers have started seed cleaning.
• Most farmers have not made significant changes to their cropping plans, although there may be an increased area sown to broad beans as a result of their current high prices.
• High amounts of cereal stubble has been baled into straw this year.

PASTURES

• Hay reserves on farm are good and hay is still available for sale at high prices.
• Sheep and cattle are in very good condition.
• Some producers have commenced supplementary feeding livestock with hay to ensure condition is maintained as paddock biomass decreases.
Pastoral Areas

- Rainfall for January was average in most of the North West Pastoral Zone and average to very much below average in the North East Pastoral Zone.
- February rainfall was below average to very much below average across most of the pastoral region with pockets of average rainfall.
- Conditions remain dry in most pastoral areas with very low amounts of 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 sheep producers have sold pregnant ewes, and more are planning to sell in the near future.
- 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 either undertaken maintenance on existing and/or installed additional water infrastructure.
- 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 is still available.
- There have been reports of high kangaroo deaths in some areas due to very hot weather and/or drying up of water supplies.
- In the north east corner of the State, floodwaters from Queensland are flowing in the Diamantina River and Warburton Creek towards Lake Eyre. The waters are expected to generate considerable amounts of feed on flood-out country while the surrounding land remains dry.