Crop and Pasture Report
South Australia

2017-18 SEEDING INTENTIONS AND CROP ESTABLISHMENT

JULY 2017
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).

Information current as of 7 July, 2017.


ALL ENQUIRIES

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State Summary

WEATHER

- May rainfall was below average in the central and western agricultural districts and average to above average in the eastern districts.

- June rainfall was below to very much below average across all agricultural districts with areas on Eyre Peninsula, Kangaroo Island, Adelaide Hills and Upper South East, recording their lowest rainfall on record.

- For the four months to 30 June most of Eyre Peninsula and Central Yorke Peninsula received the lowest 5% of rainfall on record and parts of Lower and Central Eyre Peninsula have had their lowest rainfall on record for this period.

- Mean maximum temperatures were above average on Lower and Western Eyre Peninsula, Kangaroo Island and Southern Yorke Peninsula and average in other districts for May, and above to very much above average across all districts for June.

- Mean minimum temperatures for May were average to below average across all agricultural districts.

CROPS

- Dry conditions prolonged seeding in many districts. Topsoils across most areas of the State are extremely dry but there is a large variation in the level of sub-soil moisture present, depending on the amount of rainfall received in April and May.

- The districts most severely affected by the dry conditions have been Eyre Peninsula, Lower North, Central Hills and Central Yorke Peninsula.

- Seeding was completed by early June in districts that received good rainfall in late April.

- Seeding in areas that only received light April rains was into semi-dry or dry soils.

- Some farmers have held off sowing, waiting for more rain.

- With only small rainfall events in most parts of the State, farmers in a number of districts reduced their cropping area or changed their crop type.

- There has been a reduction in the area sown to canola and some pulse crops with some of this likely to be replaced with wheat or feed barley.

- The area sown to wheat so far has been reduced by 30%, barley by more than 35% and canola by almost 30% on Eyre Peninsula. Given reasonable rainfall in early July, more sowing is likely, particularly on Lower Eyre Peninsula.

- In the Lower North, Mid North, Central Hills and Fleurieu districts, farmers have also reduced the area planned to be sown to canola. Most is likely to be replaced by wheat and barley with some left for pasture.

- Seeding was delayed in a number of districts as farmers waited for follow-up rain or for mice baiting to reduce numbers.

- Growers are changing from longer season crops like canola and pulses to short season barley due to the dry start. The decline in barley area is now likely to be less than first anticipated.

- The area sown to lentils and chickpeas have both increased but are less than planned, due to dry conditions and poor seed quality of chickpeas.

- The area sown to oaten hay has been significantly reduced as fewer export contracts are available, combined with the dry start to the season.
Crop emergence has been variable with good emergence in the Upper, Mid and Lower North, and Mallee but patchy in many parts of Eyre Peninsula, Lower North and Central Yorke Peninsula.

The staggered germination has resulted in a large variation in crop growth stages, making choice of herbicide application more difficult.

Snail numbers have remained high in some districts and baiting has continued.

Mice numbers remained high in isolated areas of some districts, particularly where crops had been affected by storm damage prior to harvest. Affected areas have been baited numerous times both before and after seeding with reports of some paddocks being baited eight to 10 times.

Some small areas damaged by mice have been re-sown.

Russian wheat aphids have been identified at low levels in newly emerged crops in a number of districts but have not caused significant damage at this stage. No aphids have been found in crops where cereal seed was treated with an insecticidal seed dressing.

Other pests such as Red-legged earth mite, Lucerne flea, slugs, slaters, earwigs and millipedes have caused damage to emerging crops in isolated areas.

PASTURES

Pastures have germinated in most areas but growth is very slow due to frosts and dry conditions.

Livestock are being supplementary fed with hay and grain in most districts.

Hay supplies are of variable quality but in reasonable quantities and adequate amounts of grain are still available.

There are high amounts of pasture feed in the Southern Mallee and South East.

Large areas of Lucerne pasture have been renovated in the South East with good establishment.

Red-legged earth mite and Lucerne flea are causing significant damage to pastures that are already hampered by poor growing conditions.

Poor control of Red-legged earth mites in areas of the State have raised concerns that they are resistant to insecticide. Samples have been sent interstate for assessment.

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 as available.
## TABLE 1: CROP ESTIMATES BY DISTRICT

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District Reports

Western Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

• May rainfall was below average to very much below average and June rainfall was very much below average, with some centres including Coorabie and Warramboo receiving their lowest June rainfall on record.
• Mean maximum temperatures were above average for May and above average to very much above average for June.
• Mean minimum temperatures were average for May and very much below average for June, with multiple frosts in inland districts.

CROPS

• Although most soil profiles contain some moisture at depth, topsoils are generally extremely dry.
• The amount of crop sown per property varies widely across the district.
• Continued dry conditions from Streaky Bay south to Elliston have resulted in very little crop being sown except for some barley on lighter soils.
• Early-sown crops north of Wirrulla have grown well and still have good yield potential providing there is an average finish to the season. There is a large degree of variability in crop germination and growth in other parts of the region.
• It is estimated that around 60% of the intended crop area has been sown in the central part of the district around Koongawa, Kyancutta and Warramboo.
• Some early sown crops in the Kyancutta area are suffering severe moisture stress.
• As there has been limited opportunity for a germination and knockdown of grassy weeds, farmers are concerned that there will be limited option to control grassy weeds in crop when rain is received.
• Farmers are waiting for good rains before sowing lighter, non-wetting sands that are prone to drift.
• Germination of canola and cereal crops sown around Wudinna has been patchy.
• Germination of pulse crops seems to be less variable because the larger seed makes them more robust and able to absorb more moisture before germinating thus avoiding the risk of a false start.
• The dry conditions and frequent frosts have slowed crop growth.

PASTURES

• Pasture feed supplies are very low.
• Many farmers are supplementary-feeding stock in paddocks, particularly ewes with lambs at foot.
• Some farmers have removed livestock from paddocks with lighter textured soils to avoid overgrazing vulnerable areas. Pasture feed is running out as stubble feed declines and new growth is slowed by dry and cool conditions.
• Most farmers have exhausted their on-farm reserves of hay and grain and are buying more feed. Prices have increased substantially since mid-June as stocks are depleted.
• Many livestock producers have already made arrangements to sell excess stock due to concerns about the potentially low amounts of dry matter in paddock at the end of spring.
Lower Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Rainfall was below to very much below average in May and very much below average for June. A large area in the centre of the district received its lowest June rainfall on record.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average to very much above average for May and very much above average for June.
- Mean minimum temperatures were average to below average for May and very much below average for June, with the western part of the district observing its lowest temperature on record.

CROPS

- Continued dry conditions have resulted in extremely dry topsoils. Although there is some moisture below 40 cm, the dry surface soils have resulted in many crops not germinating, even eight weeks after sowing.
- Dry conditions have halted seeding in many parts of the district.
- Only about 20% of farmers had finished sowing their crops by the end of June. These tended to be farmers who sow large areas of crop.
- It is estimated that most farmers had only sown around 65-75% of their intended crop by the end of June. Following rains in early July, it is likely more will be sown.
- The only major change to cropping intentions has been a reduction of around 10-20% of canola area sown. This has largely been replaced with wheat with some small increases in the areas of pulses and barley.
- Most farmers are unlikely to significantly change their rotations as this has long term implications for herbicide, weed and disease management.
- In areas that received more rainfall, such as around Butler, Moody and near Point Bolingbroke, crops have emerged and are growing well.
- In other areas emergence is patchy, however the impact of this will not be fully known until 15-20 mm more rain is received to stimulate further germination.
- There have been reports of mice eating dry-sown pulse crop seed near Butler, however mice numbers and relatively low and it will be difficult to tell how much damage has been done until crops germinate.
- There are isolated reports of earwigs and millipedes damaging germinating crops but insect pest numbers are generally low.
- Russian wheat aphid have been reported on the Tumby Bay flats but numbers have generally been low.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed supplies are extremely low across the district.
- Most farmers with soils vulnerable to erosion are now feeding hay and grain to stock in stubble paddocks or in containment areas.
- Many farmers consider that they have sufficient grain and hay on hand to continue feeding livestock for a further four to six weeks.
- A high proportion of farmers have bought extra hay and grain from outside of the district to top-up supplies.
- Farmers are also considering reducing stock numbers, however many have ewes with lambs at foot and will wait until the lambs are weaned before selling.
Eastern Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- May rainfall was below average throughout the district.
- June rainfall was below average in the east of the district and very much below average in the west of the district, with an area in the south west receiving its lowest rainfall on record.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average to above average for May and above average to very much above average for June. Mean minimum temperatures were average to below average for May and very much below average for June.

CROPS

- Seeding completion and crop growth stages vary dramatically between and within districts depending upon where rains have fallen.
- Canola crops vary in growth from cotyledon leaf to early budding stage, whilst wheat varies from one leaf to early stem elongation stages.
- Some very early sown wheat is already at stem elongation, the tillering growth shortened due to moisture stress.
- Most soils contain some stored moisture below 40 cm depth but topsoils remain extremely dry.
- Crops around Mitchellville, Port Neill, and Cleve have established well, with cereals at mid to late tillering stage.
- Many farmers around Wharminda and Lock have not sown any crop.
- Crops around Kimba sown after rain in late April are becoming moisture stressed, particularly on heavier soil types. However, if average rainfalls are received for the remainder of the growing season, these crops have good yield potential.
- Established crops have been getting some benefit from small (<3 mm) rainfall events.
- Soil moisture probes indicate that cereal crops around Buckleboo are drawing moisture from 40 cm beneath the surface.
- There has been some spot form of net blotch and boron toxicity reported on barley crops near Kielpa.
- Low levels of Russian wheat aphid have been reported around Darke Peake and Mangalo.
- Mice numbers have generally been at low levels across the district.
- Large mobs of kangaroos are grazing emerged crops around Buckleboo and this is likely to increase if conditions remain dry.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed supplies are generally low across the district.
- Vetch and medic pastures sown for feed have been very slow to germinate and grow.
- A large number of farmers have bought more hay and grain as their supplies have been depleted.
- The price of feed grain and hay has increased substantially during June as supplies contracted.
- Some growers are supplementary-feeding stock in containment areas to provide an opportunity for annual pastures to germinate and grow before grazing.
- Livestock producers have started to reduce stock numbers anticipating low pasture production by the end of spring.
Upper North

WEATHER

- Rainfall for May was below average in the south west and average in the rest of the district. June rainfall was below average in the south west and very much below average in the remainder of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for May and above to very much above average for June. Mean minimum temperatures were below average for May and very much below average for June, with numerous frosts in inland areas.

CROPS

- Despite the dry conditions most seeding was completed by early June, with good crop emergence.
- Topsoils have dried with the lack of rain. However, most of the district still has good levels of sub-soil moisture remaining.
- Early-sown crops have grown well and roots have reached sub-soil moisture. Later sown crops have emerged slowly with the dry, cold, frosty conditions and their root systems have not developed well enough to enable them to access moisture deeper in the soil profile.
- Crops sown into bare paddocks that were burnt or heavily grazed have had slow or patchy emergence in drier soil, compared to paddocks with good stubble cover.
- There are high mice numbers in areas affected by storms before harvest and farmers have baited several times prior to seeding to reduce numbers. In most of the district mice are at low levels with only small areas of high numbers requiring baiting.
- Most canola and pulse crops have been sprayed to control grassy weeds. Very few cereals have been sprayed as weed germination has been slow. Most farmers are waiting for a further germination, before applying post-emergent herbicides.
- Some crops that were sown early into cereal stubbles are showing signs of nitrogen deficiency and a few farmers applied nitrogen in late June ahead of forecast rainfall. Most are waiting for forecast of good rainfall, before applying additional nitrogen.
- The area sown to canola has increased by 25% with most farmers able to sow early into moist soil.
- The area sown to lentils has increased by 30% and the chickpea area has more than doubled, from a low base.
- The area of barley has been reduced by 10% or more and oaten hay by 40%.
- Slugs have been identified in the higher rainfall areas for the first time, with farmers baiting to reduce crop damage.
- Russian wheat aphids have been observed at low levels in a few crops but are not causing significant damage at this stage.

PASTURES

- Sown pastures have germinated but growth has been slow with the frosty, dry conditions.
- Self-regenerating pasture grew well in May but frosts and dry weather stressed plants and slowed growth.
- Most farmers are continuing to provide hay and grain to livestock in paddocks to maintain livestock condition.
- Livestock are in reasonable to good condition.
Mid North

WEATHER

- Rainfall was below average for May and below to very much below average for June.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for May and very much above average for June.
- Mean minimum temperatures were average to below average for May and very much below average for June, with frequent frosts.

CROPS

- There are still good levels of sub-soil moisture below 15 cm but the topsoil is dry and will require 20 mm or more to wet the profile.
- Farmers continued seeding during May and dry-sowed a portion of their later-sown crop. Most completed seeding but a significant number stopped to wait for more rain to finish seeding.
- Approximately 90% of the planned crop area has been sown but there are some farmers who have only sown 75% of their intended area.
- Crops that have not been sown include canola, chickpeas and some lentils. Once it does rain there may be an increase in the area sown to barley to replace these crops.
- The planned area to be sown to barley was 30% lower than last year, however this is now only likely to be down by 10%.
- The area sown to oaten hay may be further reduced, from an already low area.
- Most wheat has been sown with some sown into dry soil.
- Mice numbers remain high, despite baiting, particularly in areas affected by hail prior to harvest.
- Some farmers delayed sowing because of high mice numbers, baiting twice before sowing and again after sowing. There have been reports of poor mice control with bait. Possibly the bait is being deactivated by moisture (dew) before being eaten by mice.
- Some patches within crops have been re-sown where they were damaged by mice.
- Sowing into dry, clayey, less friable soils has resulted in poor seed-soil contact and poor germination.
- Snail numbers are still high in some areas and are being baited to reduce numbers.

PASTURES

- Pastures have germinated in most areas but growth is very slow due to frosts and dry conditions.
- Livestock are being supplementary fed with hay and grain in most areas of the district.
- The quality of hay supplies is variable but in reasonable supply.
- Adequate amounts of grain are still available for livestock feed.
- Non arable hills with permanent pasture have little plant growth.
- Livestock have remained in reasonable to good condition.
Lower North

WEATHER

- Rainfall was below average for May and very much below average for June.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for May and very much above average for June.
- Mean minimum temperatures were average for May and very much below average for June.

CROPS

- Topsoils have dried out but there are still good levels of sub-soil moisture at depth.
- Seeding has been prolonged as a result of the dry conditions, with many farmers halting seeding in early June waiting for follow-up rain. Most farmers completed seeding by the end of June.
- Initial germination and emergence of crops was patchy and 15 to 20% of later sown crops had not emerged by the end of June.
- Pest populations are relatively low with only a few reports of Russian wheat aphids; most cereal seed was treated with insecticidal seed dressing prior to sowing.
- With the dry conditions, low numbers of weeds have germinated in-crop and the effectiveness of pre-emergent herbicides may be reduced.
- The staggered germination of crops will make post-emergent herbicide decisions more difficult as plants within crops will be at various growth stages.
- Some farmers in more reliable areas applied moderate rates of nitrogen in late June ahead of forecast rainfall.
- Mice were baited, significantly reducing numbers. Some on-going baiting will be necessary as there is evidence of plant damage around mouse holes.
- There has been a 50% reduction in the area sown to barley and a 40% reduction in the area sown to faba beans. This has been replaced mainly by wheat, lentils and peas, with a 15% increase in lentil area.
- The area sown to chickpeas is likely to double, due to their current high price.
- The area of oaten hay grown for export markets has been reduced but farmers supplying domestic markets will maintain their hay area.

PASTURES

- Pasture paddocks have germinated but growth has been slowed by frosts and dry conditions.
- Sown pasture paddocks have very poor growth.
- Farmers are feeding hay and grain to livestock. There are high amounts of hay available and adequate supplies of grain, although prices have increased significantly since early June.
- Sitona weevil are damaging medic seedlings, further slowing pasture growth.
Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER

- Rainfall was below average for May and below average to very much below average for June. Central Yorke Peninsula has received very much below average growing season rainfall (April to June).
- Mean maximum temperatures were average to above average for May and very much above average for June. Mean minimum temperatures have been below average for June with a high number of frosts.

CROPS

- This has been the driest start to a season that most farmers have experienced.
- The dry and semi-dry conditions during sowing throughout May and June resulted in staggered germination of crops, with a large variation in growth stage of plants within paddocks.
- A number of farmers stopped sowing in May or didn’t even start because of dry conditions. Most farmers finished seeding by the end of May or the first week of June, however a number were seeding up to the end of June.
- Some crops have not yet emerged, although seeds have germinated. Plant populations in these crops have been affected.
- Areas with slightly more soil moisture such as under heavy stubble cover in header rows, germinated earlier.
- There is large variation in crop growth and germination, depending on how quickly summer weeds were controlled in January and February to conserve moisture.
- Some crops have grown well but a large number of crops are up to a month (in some cases two months) behind the normal growth stage due to low soil moisture conditions. Plant growth and yield potential in most crops were affected by moisture stress and frosts during June.
- Russian wheat aphid were found in low populations during the last two weeks of June.
- Canola emerged well in the southern area of the district but plant establishment has been poor in the remainder of the district, which could reduce yield potential.
- The dry conditions did not change many farmers’ cropping plans.
- Mice numbers are high with damage to the majority of paddocks and extensive baiting required, a large percentage requiring multiple applications. The highest numbers are in areas affected by hail or where crops were harvested late.
- Only a few damaged crops have been re-sown but more would have been re-sown if soil moisture levels were adequate to allow for the crop to germinate.
- Dry-sown lentils were damaged by pre-emergent herbicides, reducing plant numbers. This is unlikely to have a significant effect on yields at this stage.
- Very limited amounts of nitrogen fertiliser have been applied after seeding. Soil nitrogen levels following very productive pulse crops were higher than normal but levels following cereals were low.
- Slaters and millipedes damaged some newly emerged crops, requiring re-sowing of a few crops.
- There has been very little post-emergent weed control undertaken to date as dry conditions prevented weeds from germinating.

PASTURES

- Pasture growth has been poor and unable to keep up with the livestock requirements.
- Supplementary feeding of stock is continuing in Central and Northern Yorke Peninsula but there is adequate pasture growth on Southern Yorke Peninsula.
- Lucerne flea were sprayed in a small number of pasture paddocks in late June.
Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula & Kangaroo Island

WEATHER

• Rainfall was below average for May and very much below average for June.
• The eastern half of Kangaroo Island and the northern part of the Adelaide Hills recorded their lowest June rainfall on record.
• Mean maximum temperatures for May were average. Maximum temperatures for June were above average but minimum temperatures were below average with more frosts than normal in all districts.

CROPS

Central Hills/Fleurieu

• Seeding was delayed in many areas as farmers waited for significant rainfall.
• Early-sown crops have established well and their roots are accessing sub-soil moisture conserved following above average summer rainfall.
• Later-sown crops have emerged poorly or are beginning to wilt due to moisture stress.
• Only about 50% of the intended 2017 crop area has been sown, with farmers waiting for follow up rain to decide on what and how much to sow.
• The lack of rain will likely result in a reduction in the area sown to canola and pulse crops and an increase in feed barley and paddocks left for pasture.

Kangaroo Island

• There has been an increase in the area sown to canola and a decrease in wheat and barley area.
• Seeding was almost complete by the end of June. There has been patchy germination and growth on lighter textured soils that have limited subsoil moisture.
• Some minor areas of crop may need to be re-sown, due to poor emergence.
• The seeding period has been longer than usual as farmers either seeded early or waited for follow up rains.
• Russian wheat aphid has been reported at low levels and mice numbers are above average.

PASTURES

• Pasture growth has slowed due to cold weather, lack of rain and some frost damage to plants.
• Supplementary-feeding of livestock is continuing and farmers still have adequate levels of hay and grain on both Kangaroo Island and Central Hills/Fleurieu Peninsula.
• Livestock are in fair to good condition in the Central Hills/Fleurieu Peninsula, depending on the amount of supplementary feed and residual pasture growth and good condition on Kangaroo Island.
• High livestock prices may favour more hay cutting or paddocks left for pasture than crops in mixed farming businesses.
• Pastures are still growing from summer and early autumn rains in most areas but growth has slowed significantly. Pastures are beginning to die on lighter soils.
• Pastures on Kangaroo Island are green as early rains resulted in a good germination but dry conditions have slowed growth. Isolated areas received rainfall from thunderstorms and still have reasonable pasture growth.
• Red-legged earth mite and other mites are causing more damage than normal as pastures are moisture-stressed.
Lower Murray

WEATHER

- Rainfall during May was average in the east of the district and below average in the west of the district. June rainfall was very much below average across the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for May and very much above average for June.
- Mean minimum temperatures were average for May and very much below average for June, with frequent frosts.

CROPS

- Subsoil moisture levels are good across the district, enabling excellent crop establishment and early growth.
- Farmers have reported they are on track for an average or above average season.
- There has been an increase in the area sown to pulse crops with reasonable forecasted prices and rainfall in late April enabling timely sowing.
- Most seeding was completed by the end of May.
- Frequent frosts and dry conditions during June slowed crop growth.
- Mice numbers vary across the district and are reported to be under control after a large and rigorous baiting program during and after seeding.
- Farmers applied nitrogen fertiliser after sowing ahead of forecast showers in late June. Ideally this would have occurred earlier however conditions were unfavourable.
- Pulse and canola crops have been sprayed to control grassy weeds.
- Insect pests have been at low levels.
- Snail control has continued and numbers will require monitoring due to the build-up from the wetter-than-average spring and summer.
- Hay crops are growing well and have the potential for above average yields.

PASTURES

- Livestock are in fair to good condition and starting to graze sown cereal feed crops.
- Many farmers are continuing to give supplementary feed to livestock to ensure they maintain good condition.
- Many farmers have high stocks of hay and grain on-hand.
- Farmers with stock on the river flats have increased supplementary feeding as frosty mornings have dramatically reduced pasture growth.
Northern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

• Rainfall was average for May and below average to very much below average for June.
• Mean maximum temperatures were average for May and above average for June.
• Mean minimum temperatures were average to below average for May and very much below average for June, with regular frosts throughout the districts.

CROPS

• Good rainfall in late April resulted in favourable sowing conditions through May and most seeding was completed by early June.
• Earlier-sown crops on the better soil types are performing well, despite the dry June conditions, with roots penetrating into the subsoil moisture.
• Later-sown crops on deep sands or shallow stony soils are beginning to show early signs of moisture stress.
• Lack of rain and dry soil surfaces has increased frost frequency.
• Despite dry conditions in June, most of the district still has average to above average yield potential, due to good subsoil moisture levels.
• The area sown to lentils, chickpeas and canola has continued to increase this season.
• Farmers were generally able to achieve good weed control at seeding, however, there has not been adequate rainfall since to stimulate further germination.
• Farmers have been controlling grass weeds in pulse and canola crops.
• While mice numbers have been higher this season, and some baiting has been required, there have not been reports of serious crop damage or the need to re-sow crops.
• Russian wheat aphid has been found on many crops that did not receive insecticide seed protection but conditions have not been favourable for numbers to increase.

PASTURES

• Pasture feed growth has slowed significantly with the frosty mornings and dry conditions. However, there is generally sufficient feed available for livestock at present.
• If good rainfall is received during early July, pastures should respond rapidly and provide adequate feed.
Southern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to above average for May and very much below average for June.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for May and above average for June.
- Mean minimum temperatures were average to below average for May and very much below average for June, with numerous frosts.

CROPS

- There was an increase in burning of paddocks to manage high stubble loads during seeding.
- Most farmers finished seeding by early June with only a few farmers who use more conventional tillage still sowing in late June.
- Subsoil moisture and crop establishment has generally been good following May rains.
- Topsoils dried out during an extended dry period in June combined with a large number of frosts.
- Most farmers applied herbicide to control grass weeds in pulse and canola crops and have begun planning early fungicide applications in cereal crops.
- Mice numbers are highly variable across the district. Stubble paddocks that were grazed by livestock have had far lower mice numbers with minimal baiting required but ungrazed paddocks have required extensive baiting.
- The total cropping area is similar to last season. However there is expected to be an increase in the area sown to lentils, chickpeas and canola at the expense of cereals.
- Farmers have been monitoring rainfall forecasts to have suitable conditions for nitrogen applications to crops. Some urea was broadcast prior to showers in late June.
- Legume crops have been rolled to push stones into the soil to aid harvesting.
- There have been some reports of low levels of Lucerne flea and Russian wheat aphid. They are not causing significant damage at this stage given the good crop establishment and vigour.

PASTURES

- Pasture growth has slowed with the dry June conditions and frosty mornings.
- Livestock will be moved onto sown cereals once crops are well established.
- A large percentage of ewes have lambed with excellent birth rates following exceptional spring and summer conditions.
- There has been an increased amount of supplementary feeding of livestock which will continue until there is adequate pasture growth.
Upper South East

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to above average for May and very much below average for June.
- An area in the north east of the district received its lowest rainfall on record.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for May and above average for June.
- Mean minimum temperatures were below average for May and very much below average for June, with numerous frosts in early June.

CROPS

- Despite the drier conditions in June, there is good surface and subsoil moisture from regular, light rainfall.
- Drier conditions in June benefitted crop and pasture growth.
- There is abundant subsoil moisture in the south of the district, due to heavy April and May rain.
- Winter crops have germinated well and appear healthy. There was a very small amount of re-sowing, owing to poor germination (waterlogging) and some pest damage (birds and insects).
- Weed control in crops has commenced.
- Fertiliser and fungicide applications are planned for late July.
- Mice numbers are higher than normal but no crop damage has been reported. Farmers and agronomists are closely monitoring numbers.
- Russian wheat aphid has been detected widely throughout the district on cereals that were not seed treated with insecticides. Aerial and ground applications of insecticides on crops and pastures has been implemented.
- Producers in the region are optimistic for a good year ahead, reporting the “best start since 1983”.

PASTURES

- Ground cover is dense throughout the district and feed supplies are plentiful.
- Broadleaf weeds germinated early and are quite advanced and spraying to control these has continued.
- Livestock condition is exceptional and numbers have remained high in the district, owing to high prices and abundant feed.
- Renovation of pastures has been widespread and stands have established well, due to favourable soil and weather conditions.
- Red-legged earth mite populations are high and have been controlled with aerial and ground insecticide applications, with varied success.
Lower South East

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to above average for May and very much below average in June.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for May and average to above average for June.
- Mean minimum temperatures were below average for May and below average to very much below average for June, with numerous frosts.

CROPS

- Despite rainfall being below average, the district received widespread, regular, light falls throughout June and soil profiles are close to full of moisture.
- Dry conditions during June dried out waterlogged soils; rising water-tables have steadied and flow in the drainage network has eased in recent weeks.
- Farmers have sown all of the anticipated cropping area although seeding was delayed for a few weeks due to a lack of seed supplies and wet soils. Crops were slow to germinate as a result.
- Most fertiliser, herbicide and fungicide programs will not be implemented until late July or early August.
- There is a high probability of an increased area being sown to spring barley and pasture legume seed crops.
- Russian wheat aphid is present but being managed with insecticides.
- Slug and snail numbers are higher than normal and have caused some crop damage. Baiting has been undertaken in these areas.
- Mice have been observed but are not causing crop damage.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed is abundant across the district.
- Renovation of pastures has been extensive and stands have established well.
- Winter lambing is underway and livestock are in good condition.
- Red-legged earth mite are in high numbers and have been difficult to control. Concerns have been raised as to the development of insecticide resistant populations and samples have been sent interstate for assessment.
- Lucerne fleas have recently emerged and are being closely monitored.