

# Crop and Pasture Summary

PIRSA

## Issue 5 Season 2021-22: Harvest Summary – January 2022

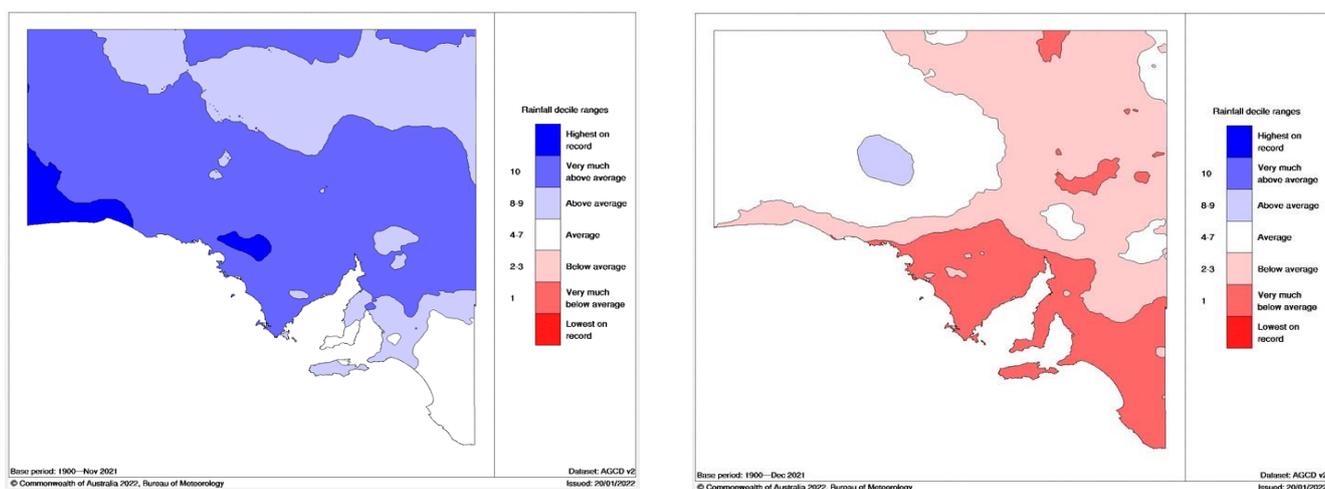
### Summary

Almost all the 2021 growing season rainfall fell in a six-week period from mid-June to the end of July, plus the month of October, resulting in below average to average rains. November rainfall was also above average. The State's grain harvest commenced on the Eastern Eyre Peninsula mid-October, but the above average spring rains in October and November (Figure 1) regularly interrupted harvest operations in the early finishing districts but provided a yield boost in green crops in later districts. Rain was well above average particular in the west, ranging to average for the southern Yorke Peninsula and South East – which provided ideal crop finishing conditions in those normally wetter districts. A dry December (Figure 2) allowed uninterrupted harvest operations across the State.

Crops sown dry before the opening rains established poorly with many instances of weeds germinating the same time as the crop. Once the rains started, good growing conditions prevailed, with some waterlogging in the wetter areas. The rainfall also replenished soil moisture providing important reserves for crop growth during the drier August and September. Hot winds early September followed by spring frosts damaged crops, in some districts severely, but the high grain prices discouraged cutting crops for hay. Rain on unharvested crops caused quality issues in some districts.

While growing conditions fluctuated during the season with many challenges, crops performed better than expected. Crop performances were generally best in the west grading to poorer in the northern Mallee (graph below). Overall, harvest outcomes have exceeded expectations to be above the ten-year average production at 8.3 million tonnes. With high global grain prices, this crop returns a record high Farm Gate Value of \$3.2 billion.

**Figure 1. South Australian Rainfall: October/ November Spring Rain Deciles (left) and December 2021 Rain Deciles (right).**  
Distribution based on Australian gridded climate data.



### Sown crop area and production for previous six seasons

Seasons	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 <i>estimated</i>
Area sown (ha)	3,894,000	3,565,000	3,572,000	3,898,000	4,003,000	3,907,000
Production (t)	11,145,000	6,921,000	5,795,000	6,467,000	9,135,000	8,320,000
Farm gate value	\$2.2 billion	\$1.7 billion	\$1.7 billion	\$2.0 billion	\$2.5 billion	\$3.2 billion

Next update for release March 2022 – Final Summary and Estimates  
 Information accurate as at 2 February 2022.



Government of South Australia  
 Department of Primary Industries  
 and Regions

## The season so far...



**RAIN** – 2021 annual rainfall varied from above average on western parts of the Eyre Peninsula to a small area of well below average in the north mallee. 2021 annual rainfall across the pastoral districts was average to above average. Almost all rainfall occurred in summer, June, July, October, and November. The cereal zone April to October growing season rainfall varies from average to a small area of well below average in the north Mallee.



**SUBSOIL MOISTURE** – Winter rainfall filled soil profiles, but crops and pastures utilised most of this moisture during late winter and spring to finish. Summer rainfall has since refilled soil profiles except in the South East.



**CROP MIX** – The area of wheat was near average. Farmers opted to use barley in place of longer season pulse crops due to the late season opening. Barley area sown increased to above average but was a smaller area than the previous season. High canola prices provided an incentive to stay with the crop despite the late start. Export hay areas were reduced due to a decline in export hay demand.



**SEEDING** – Farmers commenced dry sowing during April, with seeding into dry soil during May into early June. For some cropping districts, as much as 70% of the crop was sown into dry soil. The late arrival of opening rains and dry seeding of crops before weeds germinated resulted in weedy crops, successfully treated with herbicides.



**LIVESTOCK CONDITION AND FEED** – Slow early season pasture growth with poor feed availability improved after the opening rains. Dry hot early spring conditions limited the spring flush so many producers continued to handfeed supplements until harvest allowed movement of stock onto stubbles. Most livestock are in good condition. In the dry mallee, lack of paddock feed requires farmers to feed livestock in confinement areas to reduce erosion risk. Grain and hay reserves are generally sufficient to cover needs until the new season opening starts pasture growth.

## Outlook for the year

**RAINFALL OUTLOOK** – The Bureau of Meteorology's most recent season outlook update for the three-months February-April (issued 27 January 2022), shows the South Australia's cereal zone to have equal chances of above or below median rainfall except for a drier outlook on western Eyre Peninsula. It is more likely that maximum temperatures for this period will exceed the median in southern coastal regions. Warmer minimum temperatures are more likely for the whole State.

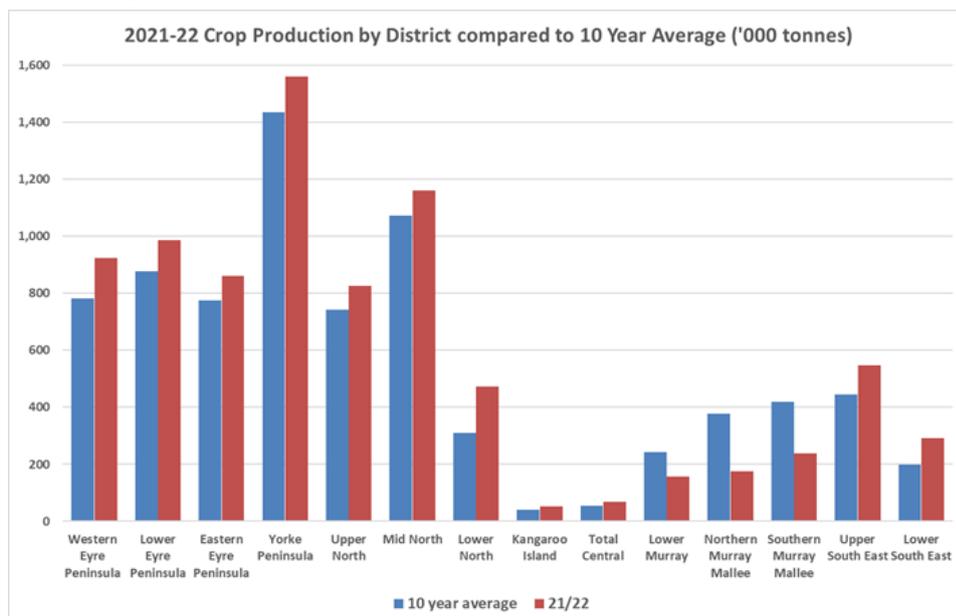
## Challenges and opportunities

**PESTS AND DISEASES** – The crop did not have significant pest or disease issues. Mice were successfully baited to control numbers and minimise crop damage. Grain left on the ground by last year's severe spring storms and spilt during harvest will provide a good food source for mice.

**ADVERSE EVENTS** – Severe 2021 spring storms resulted in some production losses from hail and strong winds. Further severe storms in late January caused significant widespread flooding damage including rail and road infrastructure on the Eyre Peninsula, parts of the northern districts and Kangaroo Island as well as throughout the Pastoral districts.

**MARKET DRIVERS** – Australian grain harvest prices paid to growers capitalised on reduced northern hemisphere exports. Elevated global grain prices are supporting the record high farm gate value estimate of \$3.2 billion for this year's above average production crop.

**REGIONAL ISSUES** – Widespread flood damage and soil erosion in paddocks will increase paddock preparation work for cropping especially on the Eyre Peninsula. Hail damage from the spring 2021 storms was largely covered with insurance.



May 2021	July 2021	Sept 2021	Nov 2021	Feb 2022	Apr 2022
				This update	Next Update
Seeding intentions	Seeding and crop establishment	Winter crop performance	Spring crop harvest	Harvest	Final summary and estimates