Crop and Pasture Report
South Australia

2018-19 SPRING CROP PERFORMANCE

NOVEMBER 2018
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State Summary

WEATHER

- Growing season rainfall (1 April to 31 October) has varied from average on the Far West Coast, Lower Eyre Peninsula, western Kangaroo Island and the southern part of the South East, to below to very much below average in all other agricultural districts.

- Areas of the state are drought affected, including eastern and western Eyre Peninsula, upper North, northern Yorke Peninsula, Murray Mallee, eastern Mid North region and North East Pastoral.

- September rainfall was very much below average in most districts. Areas on Eastern Eyre Peninsula, southern Lower Eyre Peninsula and an area in the eastern Mallee received their lowest September rainfall on record.

- October rainfall varied from above average on the Far West Coast and southwestern part of Lower Eyre Peninsula to very much below average in parts of the Upper and Mid North, Lower Murray and Upper South East. Most of Eyre Peninsula received average October rainfall while the eastern part of the State observed below average rainfall.

- In the seven months to the end of October, more than 70% of the North East Pastoral area has received very much below average rainfall with several areas receiving their lowest rainfall on record. More than 50% of the North West Pastoral area has received below average rainfall for this period with a further 10 to 20% being very much below average.

- September rainfall across most of the North East Pastoral was below average to very much below average, with some areas receiving their lowest September rainfall on record. October rainfall varied from above average around Oodnadatta to very much below average in isolated pockets.

- Mean maximum temperatures for September were above average in the Far West and average in most other areas of the State.

- Maximum temperatures for October were above average on Eyre Peninsula, Kangaroo Island and the South East, and very much above average in other districts.

- Minimum temperatures for September were below to very much below average with a large area from Woomera to Bordertown observing their lowest temperatures on record. October minimum temperatures were above to very much above average in most agricultural areas.

- Several strong winds and numerous widespread frosts occurred in late September and early October.

CROPS

- Total State crop production has fallen to an estimated 4.9 mt from 3.5 million hectares, compared to the 5 year average of 8.3 mt from 3.8 million hectares, due to drought, frost and an increased area cut for hay.

- Dry conditions hastened crop development and harvest commenced in mid-October in the Upper North. By the end of October farmers on Western and Eastern Eyre Peninsula, in the Mid and Lower North and Mallee had also commenced harvest.

- Crops in almost all agricultural areas of SA have suffered severe moisture stress, with soil moisture reserves depleted prior to grain fill.

- Yield potential has continued to fall in most districts and yields will be well below average in all districts, except the Lower Eyre Peninsula and South East.

- Some farmers on Eastern Eyre Peninsula, Upper North, Mid North and Southern Mallee will not harvest enough grain to provide seed for next season's crops, but have sufficient seed in storage or will be able to source seed from elsewhere to meet requirements.
• Failed crops in the northern part of the Upper North and parts of the Northern and Southern Mallee have been utilised by grazing livestock.

• Very much above average rainfall in most of Eyre Peninsula during August provided subsoil moisture for crops during September and with average rainfall in most areas of Eyre Peninsula in October, crops on Lower Eyre Peninsula and later-sown crops on Eastern Eyre Peninsula will achieve their potential.

• Widespread frosts occurred in late September and early October, causing significant damage to developing crops in most districts of the State. The worst affected crops have been cut for hay, however in some areas there was insufficient growth to cut or a lack of hay making equipment and contractors, so some frosted crops have been left for reaping or been grazed by livestock.

• Hay yields have been well below average, many only 50% of average yield. Most crops have been cut lower than usual, due to their short height, leaving poor to moderate ground cover in many paddocks.

• The area cut for hay in a number of districts is well above average with an estimated 430,000 hectares cut compared to the five-year average of 230,000 hectares. Despite this there is still likely to be a shortage of hay, given poorer yields and high local and interstate demand.

• Yields of early harvested pulse crops have been well below average, due to a combination of frost, drought and wind damage. Strong winds in mid and late October caused pod losses in ripe lentil crops on Northern Yorke Peninsula and the Upper North, resulting in yield losses of 10 to 80%.

• Barley yields have generally been higher than expected with most crops producing reasonable quality grain.

• Wheat yields have been variable with early-sown crops yielding as good as or better than expected but later-sown crops producing lower yields and high proportions of screenings.

• Windrowing of canola crops began in mid-October, but frost and drought have severely reduced the yield of many crops.

• Faba bean and lupin crops are very short in many districts and there are likely to be high grain losses during harvest in many of these crops.

• Native budworm larvae were present in relatively low numbers but caused significant damage to developing pulse and canola crops. Many crops were sprayed to reduce damage.

• Fungal disease levels were relatively low in most districts, due to the dry spring conditions.

• Septoria tritici caused damage to wheat crops in the South East where the disease was not managed earlier in the season.

PASTURES

• There is still some pasture feed remaining in paddocks on Kangaroo Island, the South East and areas of Eyre Peninsula. In other districts pasture feed and soil surface cover are very low.

• Most livestock producers have cut hay to replenish on-farm supplies where possible. In areas of poor crop growth farmers will have to buy hay or sell stock.

• Significant areas of summer forage crops (millet and sorghum) were sown on Eastern Eyre Peninsula, following rain in mid-October to provide some surface cover and potentially summer feed. These crops germinated well but strong winds damaged emerging plants in some areas.

• Farmers will move stock onto crop stubbles as soon as they become available, however cereal stubbles will have limited feed value in many areas.

• In areas where pasture feed is limited, most livestock producers have sold wether lambs and cull ewes and are retaining core breeding stock only.

• Perennial pastures in the South East and Kangaroo Island have produced significant growth and most are still actively growing but in other districts, growth has been limited.
PASTORAL AREAS

- Conditions remain dry in most pastoral areas with low amounts of quality forage available.
- Most pastoralists, both cattle and sheep, have continued to reduce livestock numbers, with some properties totally de-stocking and most having reduced numbers by 40% to 80%.
- Surface water has dried up in the North East Pastoral area and is beginning to dry up in the North West Pastoral area and properties reliant on surface water forced to de-stock or cart water.
- Low lambing percentages and high ewe losses attributed to poor ewe nutrition and high wild dog numbers.
- The low number of lambs will reduce income potential and breeding stock numbers. Most stock have continued to lose weight with many now in poor condition.
- Kangaroo and emus remain in high numbers.

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

- September rainfall was very much below average across most of the district. Rainfall during October was average in the eastern and southern parts of the district and above average in the north-west.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average to above average for September and above average for October.
- Mean minimum temperatures for September were below average in the west to very much below average in the eastern part of the district. A number of light frosts occurred inland.
- Growing season rainfall was below average on the Far West Coast and very much below average in the remainder of the district. Very strong winds experienced across the region.

CROPS

- Yield estimates vary considerably due to patchy rainfall distribution, soil type influences and frost damage. Parts of the district are drought affected, however yield estimates are likely to be 60% to 70% of the long-term average.
- Mild to warm temperatures brought about rapid crop growth during this period. Crops used soil moisture reserves and isolated scattered showers to fill grain.
- Rain in mid-October is likely to only benefit crop yield for very late sown crops.
- Some farmers began harvesting earlier-sown barley paddocks in late October. Early grain samples had good test weights and low screening percentages.
- Hot conditions in the last week of October rapidly ripened crops.
- Frost damage was reported in all districts and estimated yield losses are 10% to 30%.
- Pulse crops (mainly peas) not damaged by frost are expected to have above average yields.
- In many paddocks the tops of sandy rises remain bare and are vulnerable to erosion.
- Native budworm larvae damaged pods in pulse and canola crops and most farmers sprayed crops at least once to minimise the damage. Cabbage aphids were also common in canola crops, particularly those stressed by lack of moisture or frost.
- Army worm caused damage cereal heads on the grey calcareous soils around Streaky Bay and Elliston.
- Crop disease levels during this period were low due to relatively dry conditions from the end of August.

PASTURES

- Most farmers now have adequate feed in pasture paddocks until crop stubbles become available.
- Moderate to poor growth in paddocks will not provide feed for long so most livestock producers are preparing to supplementary-feed stock over summer.
- Most producers have either cut enough hay to provide feed for an ‘average’ summer or bought it from neighbours.
- Some farmers are planning to bale some of their barley straw as an extra fodder reserve over summer.
Lower Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- September rainfall was below to very much below average with the southern tip observing its lowest rainfall on record. October rainfall varied from below average around Port Neill and Butler to above average in the Coffin Bay to Coulter area.
- Mean minimum temperatures for September were very much below average and several severe frosts occurred in the last week of September.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for September and above average for October.
- Growing season rainfall was average across most of the district with areas of below average rainfall along the eastern coast.

CROPS

- Mild weather until mid-October provided good conditions for flowering and grain fill, and crops in most Lower Eyre districts have average to above average yield potential. Some crops around Ungarra, Yeelanna and Cummins have grown very well and are expected to yield well above the district average.
- Frost caused significant damage to crops around Tooligie (100% of some paddocks) and large areas were cut for hay.
- Crops around Cummins, Kapinnie and Ungarra were also affected by frost. In the worst affected areas total crop losses occurred in up to 30% of paddock area and many farmers chose to cut these areas for hay. In most paddocks the area affected was estimated to be less than 5%, of the total crop area and the impact on yield will not be known until paddocks are harvested.
- Around Port Neill to Butler, patchy rainfall at the start of the season resulted in variable yield potential in these districts.
- Windrowing of canola began in mid-October and canola crops are expected to yield close to the long-term average.
- Pulse crops will probably be desiccated for harvest in the first week of November. Despite below average biomass production, crops have flowered and podded well and have above average yield potential in most areas.
- Above average numbers of native budworm in some pulse and canola crops were noted and controlled with insecticide. Canola crops also had high aphid numbers at flowering, but it is not known what effect this will have on yield.
- Armyworm damaged the heads of cereals on the grey calcareous soils near Mt Hope.
- Although disease levels were generally low due to dry spring conditions, low levels of Net Blotch in barley, ascochyta in chickpeas and powdery mildew in wheat were reported in some crops.
- The area cut for hay was above average as livestock producers replenish depleted on-farm supplies.
- The dry start to the season affected the efficacy of pre-emergent herbicides in some paddocks. These weedy areas were cut for hay in some areas, taking advantage of high hay prices.

PASTURES

- Livestock are in excellent condition.
- Good growing conditions have resulted in high amounts of pasture feed.
- Cereal crops have large amounts of biomass and farmers without livestock might bale straw for livestock feed in other parts of Eyre Peninsula.
Eastern Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

• September rainfall was very much below average with Franklin Harbour observing its lowest September rainfall on record. Rainfall for October was average across most of the district and below average in the Kimba/Buckleboo area.

• Mean minimum temperatures were very much below average for September with the eastern part of the district recording lowest temperatures on record. Significant frosts occurred in late September.

• Mean maximum temperatures were average for September and above average for October.

• Strong winds occurred on a number of days during this period.

CROPS

• Parts of the district are drought affected. Yield estimates are highly variable and range from nil to close to average depending on soil type, time of sowing, frost damage and rainfall.

• Crops used most of the soil moisture stored from August rainfall in September.

• Frosts caused widespread damage around Kimba, Buckleboo and Tooligie and large areas of crop including cereals, peas and canola were cut for hay in these districts.

• Other areas experienced some frost and many farmers cut some crop for hay. Most crops with only light to medium frost damage were left to harvest.

• Pulse crops on the flats west of Cleve were affected by moisture stress and damaging winds, and have low yield potential.

• Canola crops not affected by frost in the Cleve Hills/Mangalo districts could yield close to average.

• Good growing conditions from early August allowed crops to establish on swales in the Darke Peak and Rudall districts, however many tops of sandy rises remained bare and vulnerable to erosion.

• Around Darke Peak, Rudall, Wharminda and Mangalo, stored soil moisture enabled yield potential to be maintained during dry conditions in September, and October rains helped later crops fill grain.

• Strong winds throughout this period continued to erode detached and exposed soils in the Verran, Cleve, Darke Peak, Arno Bay and Franklin Harbour districts.

• Following rainfall in early October a number of farmers around Arno Bay re-sowed drifting paddocks. However, regular strong wind events damaged emerging crops and establishment has been patchy.

• Roughening the soil surface by ripping with a tyned implement has reduced erosion and enabled crops to establish in some paddocks near Arno Bay.

• Very high numbers of aphids and native budworm in canola and pulses required at least one spray.

• Crop disease levels were generally low across the district.

PASTURES

• Pasture paddocks in most areas, except for Arno Bay and Franklin Harbour, have enough feed until crop stubbles become available for grazing.

• Cow-pea aphids increased in vetch and medic pastures with some cases of photosensitization reported in livestock grazing on these paddocks. Farmers recognized symptoms early and took effective action.

• Most livestock producers have cut hay to replenish on-farm supplies where possible. In areas of inadequate crop growth, farmers will either have to buy hay or sell stock.

• Significant areas of summer forage crops (millet and sorghum) have been sown to provide some surface cover and potentially summer feed. They generally germinated well but strong winds damaged emerging plants in some areas.
Upper North

WEATHER

• September rainfall was below average to very much below average. Rainfall in October was very much below average in the south east and below average in the remainder of the district.

• Mean maximum temperatures were average for September and above average to very much above average for October. Minimum temperatures were the lowest on record for September and above average for October. Several frosts were recorded in the last week of September and early October.

• Growing season rainfall was very much below average across the district.

CROPS

• Yield potential of most crops north of Gladstone is well below average and considered the most drought affected.

• Some farmers in the northern part of the district will not harvest enough grain for seed but either have sufficient seed on hand or have been able to find seed supplies from other areas.

• Continued dry conditions throughout the district reduced crop yield potential.

• Many crops on heavy clay soils began to die before ripening.

• Frost in the last week of September damaged crops in low-lying areas in the south of the district, with peas, canola and some wheat being affected. Worst affected areas were cut for hay.

• The area cut for hay has increased with approximately 20% of crops in the southern part of the district cut, due to frost and the dry conditions.

• Many failed crops in the northern part of the district have been utilised by grazing livestock.

• Harvest commenced in the western part of the district in mid-October and was mostly completed by the end of October. Pulse yields, affected by drought and wind damage, were well below average. Cereal yields however have been higher than expected, particularly on lighter soils and most crops have produced good quality grain.

• Harvest started on pulse crops and barley in the eastern part of the district in late October. Early harvested pulse crops yielded well below average, due to a combination of frost, drought and wind damage.

• Barley yields have been approximately 50 to 60% of average and of reasonable grain quality.

• Fungal leaf diseases have remained at very low levels in all crops. In higher rainfall areas, farmers applied protective fungicides to pulse crops but very little was applied to cereal crops.

• Most bean and lupin crops are very short and although they have podded well there is likely to be high grain losses during harvest because of their short height.

• Oaten hay crops have yielded well below average with most producing less than half of average yields.

PASTURES

• Pastures have been depleted with most paddocks having poor surface cover levels.

• Farmers will move stock onto crop stubbles as soon as they become available, however cereal stubbles have limited feed value.

• Farmers are continuing to reduce livestock numbers with both old and young ewes being sold and lambs sold at lighter weights.

• Most farmers with livestock have cut additional hay and plan to keep extra grain on farm to enable livestock to be maintained in reasonable condition over the summer and autumn period. Farmers without their own hay or grain are planning to reduce numbers, due to the high cost of buying feed.
Mid North

WEATHER

- September rainfall was very much below average. October rainfall was generally below average with small areas very much below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for September and very much above average for October. Minimum temperatures were the lowest on record for September. Several frosts were recorded in the last week of September and early October.
- Growing season rainfall was below to very much below average across the district.

CROPS

- Crop yields have been further reduced by frost and dry conditions and most will be well below average throughout the district. Parts of the district are drought affected, particularly the Eastern Mid North (Eudunda to Worlds End).
- The worst affected areas have been cut for hay but there are still significant areas of frosted crops that were not cut, due to poor growth, unavailability of hay making equipment or unwillingness by farmers to cut more hay.
- Approximately 20 to 25% of crop area has been cut for hay, with hay yields only 40 to 50% of average.
- Many crops cut for hay have been cut lower than usual because of their short height, leaving much less surface cover in many paddocks.
- Some varieties of lentils were severely affected by frost and drought while others less severely affected.
- Pea crops grew and flowered well despite the dry conditions, but grain filling has been poor, due to a combination of frost and dry conditions.
- Harvest commenced in the early parts of the district in late October with early reports of high levels of screenings (more than 20%) and high protein levels (18%) in wheat.
- Some low-lying areas of canola crops were frosted with the worst areas cut for hay. Reports are that this has made excellent quality hay.
- Faba bean and lupin crops are very short but have podded reasonably well. There is likely to be high grain losses during harvest in many of these crops because they are so short.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed in most paddocks has been exhausted and ground cover levels are poor in many areas.
- Livestock will be moved onto crop stubbles immediately after harvest but most stubbles will have limited feed value.
- Many sheep producers have sold wether lambs and cull ewes to reduce numbers to core breeding animals.
- Cattle numbers have been significantly reduced with low numbers remaining throughout the district.
Lower North

WEATHER

• September rainfall was very much below average. October rainfall was very much below average in the Avon to Owen area and below average in the remainder of the district.

• Mean maximum temperatures were average for September and very much above average for October. Minimum temperatures were the lowest on record for September and above to very much above average for October. Several frosts occurred in late September and early October.

• Growing season rainfall was very much below average across most of the district.

CROPS

• Dry conditions during September stressed crops and yield potential continued to decline; wheat is expected to yield 45 to 50% of average, barley 45% and pulses 30%.

• Frost in late September caused severe damage to crops in the Avon, Long Plains and Mallala area and many farmers cut affected wheat, barley and even lentil crops for hay. Crops in other parts of the district were also affected but not all frosted areas were cut for hay.

• Approximately 30% of the crop area has been cut for hay, due to frost, drought stress or estimated better returns from hay compared to grain.

• At the end of October most crops had ripened, with only a few crops in the later eastern district remaining green.

• Harvest commenced in the western part of the district, around Two Wells, Mallala and Wasleys, in late October and the eastern part of the district is likely to commence in mid-November.

• Early indications from the small amount of barley harvested is that grain quality is reasonable.

• Despite the large area of hay cut, yields have been less than 50% of normal and most of it has either been stored for on-farm use or sold so hay could still be in short supply.

• As crops were much shorter than normal hay was cut lower than usual leaving much less surface cover.

• Given the earlier than normal start to harvest, the high amount of hay that has been cut and the low yields, it is expected that most farmers will have completed harvest by the end of November, which is two to three weeks earlier than normal.

• Some straw will be cut to supply bedding for pig and poultry enterprises, however yields will be much lower than normal and many stubbles will be too short for cutting and baling. If buyers remain unwilling to pay higher prices than usual for the straw, producers will be unlikely to bale it, which could result in a shortage of straw for intensive animal industries.

PASTURES

• Most pasture paddocks have no useful feed remaining.

• Farmers with livestock have either cut additional hay or bought in hay to ensure they have sufficient feed for the livestock.

• Livestock producers have sold lambs, culled ewes and other livestock and kept their core breeding stock.

• Farmers will move stock onto crop stubbles as soon as harvest is completed but most stubbles have low feed value.
Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER

- September rainfall was below average to very much below average. Rainfall for October was average in the Moonta to Weetulta area and below average in the remainder of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for September and above average for October, while mean minimum temperatures were the lowest on record in northern and central Yorke Peninsula and very much below average in southern Yorke Peninsula.
- Several frosts occurred in late September and early October.
- Strong winds were recorded in late October.
- Growing seasonal rainfall was very much below average at Kadina and below average in the remainder of the district.

CROPS

- Yields are expected to be 20 to 25% below average. Northern Yorke Peninsula has suffered the most, with decile 1 to 2 growing season rainfall and parts of this area considered drought affected.
- Harvest started in the last week of October for a small number of farmers.
- In most areas cool day and night temperatures in late October slowed crop ripening so most farmers will not start harvest until November.
- Frost in late September caused damage to later-sown wheat crops on northern Yorke Peninsula and some wheat and barley crops on central and southern Yorke Peninsula, resulting in up to 2% of the cereal area cut for hay. More cereal could have been cut for hay but was too mature to make good quality hay.
- Fungal disease in cereal crops has been extremely low, with no impact on yield.
- Disease in pulse crops has been minor. Ascochyta infection was present in lentil crops earlier in the season but dry conditions stopped its development. Botrytis grey mould that normally has the greatest impact on yield was not present, due to the dry spring.
- Several strong wind events in late October caused pod losses in lentil crops close or ready to harvest on Northern Yorke Peninsula, with yield losses of 10-50%.
- Yield of all pulses will be 30-50% below average with coastal areas likely to have suffered the most from the dry spring, particularly the eastern side of the Yorke Peninsula. Frost also reduced yield potential with up to 40% yield loss in severely affected crops.
- Canola crops have adequate pod development. Yields are expected to be 25% below average but oil content is expected to be reasonable because of the mild spring.
- Oaten hay crops yielded well below average, but quality is excellent as a result of the dry season and good conditions for curing.

PASTURES

- There is little or no pasture left in paddocks on the northern and coastal areas of the peninsula. In the higher rainfall areas there has been adequate soil moisture to prolong pasture growth.
- Hay is being fed to stock to make up for the shortfall in pasture feed on Northern Yorke Peninsula.
- Oaten hay yields have been well below average (4-6 T/Ha), with wheaten hay cut after the frost yielding 2-3.5 T/Ha.
- Livestock are in average condition.
Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula & Kangaroo Island

WEATHER

- September rainfall was below average on western Kangaroo Island and very much below average in the remainder of the district. October rainfall was average on western Kangaroo Island and below average in the rest of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for September and above to very much above average for October. Mean minimum temperatures were very much below average during September and average to above average for October.

CROPS

Central Hills/Fleurieu
- Crops are rapidly maturing. In areas with minimal to no soil moisture, crops are haying-off with little grain formed.
- There has been minor frost damage to crops.
- Approximately 20% of crops have been cut for hay or grazed.
- Harvest is likely to commence in the second week of November.
- Grain yields will be significantly below average, possibly up to 50%.

Kangaroo Island
- Stored soil moisture is average for the higher rainfall western end of Kangaroo Island and declining rapidly in the lower rainfall eastern portion of the Island.
- Crop maturity is similar to an average season with grain fill occurring in cereals, beans at early pod development and canola at mid to late pod fill.
- There has been minor frost to crops; one winter crop of seed potatoes was badly affected with up to 30% yield loss.
- The area of crops cut for hay or grazed is very minor (less than 5%).
- Harvest is likely to commence in December as usual.
- Grain yields are likely to be average except for beans and lupins which will be up to 30% below average.
- There have been high aphid numbers in crops and pastures, and high cow pea aphid levels in beans. Most susceptible crops have been treated to reduce damage.

PASTURES

Central Hills/Fleurieu
- Pasture feed and soil surface cover levels sparse and stubble feed will be of low quality and quantity.
- Hay and grain supplies for supplementary feeding are low.
- Livestock are average to below average in condition.
- Perennial pastures have limited bulk.

Kangaroo Island
- Pasture feed is average for the lower rainfall areas and above average in the higher rainfall areas. Stubble feed in cereals will be average and below average in pulse crops.
- More hay than usual has been cut and is of good quality and there should be adequate feed grain supplies after harvest.
- Livestock are in good condition.
- Perennial pasture availability is average. Some newly sown kikuyu pastures are becoming moisture stressed.
Lower Murray

WEATHER

- Rainfall for September was very much below average. October rainfall was very much below average in the southern part of the district and below average in the northern part.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for September and very much above average for October.
- Minimum temperatures were very much below average for September and the northern part of the district observed lowest temperatures on record. Frosts occurred in late September and early October.
- Growing season rainfall has been below average to very much below average across the district.

CROPS

- Most crop across the district are likely to yield well below average with the whole district considered to be drought affected.
- Rainfall in mid-October was too late to benefit most crops but did aid some later-sown crops on the eastern side of the river.
- Cereal crops had ripened by the end of October and harvest will commence in early November.
- Many crops were cut for hay or grazed with livestock as the lack of moisture or frost dramatically reduced yield potential.
- Pulse and canola crops worth harvesting are being desiccated.
- Low to moderate levels of native budworm larvae in pulses and canola have caused significant damage to some crops and some have been sprayed.
- Well managed crops on well structured, deep soils have performed well and should yield close to average.
- Late-sown crops suffered moisture stress and those with very low yield potential have been grazed.
- Additional areas of hay have been cut where growth was adequate.
- Most hay crops were thin, short and well below average yield potential.
- Oaten hay has been most affected by the dry conditions.

PASTURES

- Pastures are poor in growth and very short, but still of reasonable quality.
- Mid-October rain helped maintain a small amount of green growth, but did not create additional pasture growth.
- Livestock are generally in reasonable condition as most lambs have been weaned early to allow ewes to build condition ready for mating.
- A large percentage of lambs have been sold as stores and any excess old stock have also been sold to conserve feed reserves for core breeding stock during summer and autumn.
- Irrigated river flats have been productive with many cut for hay and some will be planted to summer crops to try to fill the feed gap for dairy cows.
- Livestock numbers have been reduced by approximately 25% compared to average.
- Farmers are buying hay now to secure a supply, driven by the likely need to feed earlier and longer than usual.
Northern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- September rainfall was very much below average, with areas in the south east of the district recording their lowest rainfall on record. October rainfall was average in the east and below average in the west.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for September and very much above average for October. Minimum temperatures were the lowest on record for September and above average for October with numerous frosts recorded over the period.
- There were numerous days of strong winds recorded with some raised dust.
- Growing season rainfall has been below average to very much below average across the district.

CROPS

- The whole of the district is considered to be drought affected with well below average yields.
- In the Waikerie area there is considerable variation between soil types and times of sowing, cereal yields are expected to average between 0.2-0.6 t/ha (approximately 25% of the district average).
- Loxton and Alawoona received slightly higher rainfall and cereal yields are likely to average between 0.6 to 0.1 t/ha (around 50% of district average), when harvest commences in early November.
- All crops are quickly maturing due to the lack of subsoil moisture and rainfall, and the onset of hot weather.
- Cereals are generally trying to fill grain on any remaining soil moisture.
- Harvest of some early-sown crops has commenced in the Waikerie area.
- Slight frost damage caused minor crop yield losses.
- Many farmers have crops, or areas within crops, that will not be harvested due to poor crop growth.
- Pulse crops and vetch, which were sown more in the eastern and southern area of the district, are only expected to yield around 0.3 t/ha average (around 30% of district average). Very little insect or fungicide spraying was required in these crops this season.
- Canola will yield poorly at around 0.3-0.4 t/ha (about 40% of average). Native budworm caused late damage in numerous crops with most being sprayed, to reduce damage.
- Little hay has been cut as there was little bulk in the foliage of crops.

PASTURES

- Paddock feed levels are extremely low after a second year of low rainfall.
- Farmers are providing supplementary feed to stock and many are considering or starting to implement confinement feeding. Hay will be bought from other regions, depending on price.
- There is an increased erosion risk due to the lack of surface cover on sandy soils. Farmers are weighing up the feed value of crop stubbles for livestock against the erosion risk of baring off sand hills.
- While some farmers have grazed failed crops with livestock, others are looking to make the most of high grain prices by reaping better areas of the crop before grazing.
Southern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Rainfall was very much below average for September with areas in the east of the district receiving their lowest rainfall on record. October rainfall was average to below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for September and very much above average for October. Minimum temperatures were the lowest on record in September and above average for October.
- Strong winds were recorded through the period. Numerous frosts were recorded in late September and early October.

CROPS

- Crops have suffered a dramatic yield reduction since the beginning of September due to unfavourable conditions for grain fill and parts of the district are drought affected.
- Crops in the Southern Mallee are highly variable depending on soil type, time of seeding, summer weed control and utilisation of stored moisture reserves.
- Strong winds caused some days of high dust and further wind damage to areas of crop on soils with insufficient surface cover.
- Soil moisture levels throughout September and October were critically low and crops on poorer soils were severely moisture stressed or died off.
- September frosts caused crop damage throughout the region, although reports of damage were highly variable ranging from worst damage ever seen to only minor damage.
- Hay cutting and baling has continued as frost damage becomes more visible; some crops were cut for hay earlier in expectation of poor grain yields and to stockpile fodder.
- Pulse crops have been desiccated in preparation for harvest.
- Some crops have failed to produce grain and farmers have chosen to graze these with livestock, with over 30% being grazed in some parts of the district. Many were oat crops that performed poorly in the dry conditions.
- There has been a high number of reports of insect damage to pulse crops, despite relatively low insect numbers. Most crops have been sprayed to reduce damage.
- A large percentage of canola crops have been cut for hay.
- Hay quality is excellent with high sugar levels, but this made curing more difficult taking longer than normal.

PASTURES

- Livestock are generally in reasonable condition, although most are lighter than normal.
- A large percentage of lambs have been sold as stores with only a few producers keeping lambs to finish in paddocks or feedlots.
- Moisture stressed grassy pastures have poor growth and are drying off rapidly.
- Producers are using grain self-feeders in paddocks to start providing supplementary feed to lambs.
- Hay and grain reserves are much lower than normal and expected to run short if summer remains dry. Farmers wanting to buy hay and grain are finding it difficult to source fodder and are competing with demand from the eastern states.
- Permanent pastures such as veldt grass and lucerne have poor growth.
- Many farmers have sold off excess stock and lambs to try and keep breeders through the summer. Most farmers in the district have not reduced breeding stock numbers yet.
Upper South East

WEATHER

- September rainfall was very much below average and October rainfall varied from average in the Coomandook to Tintinara area and along the Victorian border, to very much below average around Padthaway.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for September and above average for October. Mean minimum temperatures were very much below average with numerous frosts in late September and early October.
- Growing season rainfall varied from very much below average at Cooke Plains to average south of Bordertown and Willalooka.

CROPS

- Soil moisture is low and most profiles are dry to 40-50cm. Loam soils have more available moisture than heavy clay and light sandy soils.
- Canola will be desiccated or windrowed in early November.
- Bean and barley crops will be harvested in late November and wheat will be harvested in early to mid-December.
- Most cereal crops are still green, filling grain and starting to mature.
- Approximately 20% of canola has been frosted, most grazed or cut for hay.
- Isolated paddocks of early barley and wheat crops were frosted and cut for hay.
- Approximately 80% of crops have between 10% and 60% frost damage, with an average loss of 20% over all crop types that will be reaped.
- Wheat crops with high ryegrass levels that would normally have been cut for hay will be reaped for grain due to current high grain prices.
- Overall 80% of crops will produce grain yields below average with remainder average yields, largely determined by rainfall.
- Native budworm larvae are present in pulse crops but threshold numbers for control have not been reached in many crops.
- Aphids have been present in canola.

PASTURES

- Pastures were slow early in the season and spring growth only occurred for a short period before pastures entered reproductive growth stages due to moisture stress, limiting biomass production.
- Around 15 to 20% of crop area replaced by pasture, due to high livestock returns.
- Pastures on light soils types have dried off.
- Livestock are in excellent condition.
- Dryland lucerne stands are still actively growing as their deep root systems accesses moisture at depth.
- Pasture hay is being cut and baled. More ryegrass hay than usual was cut as many cereal crops that were originally sown for hay will be reaped instead.
Lower South East

WEATHER

- September rainfall was below average to very much below average and October rainfall varied from average in the northeast to below average in the remainder of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for September and above average for October. Mean minimum temperatures were below average to very much below average for September. Several frosts occurred in late September.
- Growing season rainfall was average across the district.

CROPS

- Soil moisture is good but declining with the top 10 to 15cm of soil beginning to dry out.
- Most cereal crops are at the milky dough stage of grain fill and late-sown crops are still flowering.
- Canola is either flowering or has finished flowering and windrowing will commence in mid to late November in the northern parts of the district.
- Faba bean crops have finished flowering and windrowing or crop topping will commence in mid-November.
- Broad beans are still flowering.
- Harvest will continue after Christmas, which is normal for the southern parts of the Lower South East.
- A frost occurred in late October with damage still to be assessed.
- Overall most crops will produce average to above average yields.
- Early water-logging damage and a dry September reduced yield potential.
- Chocolate spot in bean crops was treated with fungicides to reduce its spread.
- Most native budworm larvae in pulse and canola crops were sprayed to reduce crop damage.
- In wheat crops where Septoria tritici was not managed earlier in the season, the disease has continued to spread after rainfall events. Leaf rust in some wheat crops was successfully controlled.
- Bean grub and army worm have also caused damage in isolated crops.
- Some wheat crops that originally were sown for hay will be reaped for grain instead given current high grain prices.

PASTURES

- Green peach aphid has damaged fodder brassicas.
- Red-legged earth mite has been in high numbers in some pastures.
- Pastures have high amounts of quality feed and livestock are in excellent condition.
- Annual clovers have remained green, providing a quality legume base in pastures.
- Silage is being baled and hay cutting has commenced.
- Surplus pasture is being cut for hay.
Pastoral Areas

- Conditions remain dry in most pastoral areas with very low amounts of quality forage available. The North East Pastoral area is considered drought affected.

- Most pastoralists, both cattle and sheep, have continued to reduce livestock numbers, with some properties totally de-stocking and most having reduced numbers by 40% to 80%.

- Surface water has dried up in the North East Pastoral area and beginning to dry up in the North West Pastoral area and properties totally reliant on surface water have been forced to de-stock or cart water.

- A few properties south of the Barrier Highway and towards the NSW border received isolated, heavy dam-filling rains in September that have alleviated water concerns but not resulted in much feed growth.

- Low lambing percentages and high ewe losses are being attributed to poor ewe nutrition and high wild dog numbers.

- The low number of lambs will reduce income potential and breeding stock numbers.

- Most stock have continued to lose weight with many now in poor condition.

- Kangaroos and emus remain in high numbers.