Summary

The May–June rainfall was below average, continuing the dry trend of 2018 to date. Seeding continued following timely rains in May and June allowing completion in early July. Farmers have overall sown more crop area than last year, but slightly less than average due to the patchy opening. The crop mix has changed with more barley at the expense of canola and some pulses. In the rangelands, the dry conditions have continued, particularly in the northeast pastoral zone. Stockfeed is limited across the state. Early crop production estimates for this year are below long-term averages, but this will be reviewed as the season progresses.

Sown crop area (ha) for previous four seasons and the new crop.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area sown (ha)</td>
<td>3,899,000</td>
<td>3,821,000</td>
<td>3,894,000</td>
<td>3,565,000</td>
<td>3,783,000</td>
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Next update release September 2018 Winter Crop Performance

Information accurate as at 4 July 2018.
The season so far...

RAIN – Below average rainfall and near average maximum temperatures, below average minima with a number of frosts overnight across the State, especially late June.

SUBSOIL MOISTURE – Soils in all districts have low moisture at depth except the South East and parts of the Southern Mallee where soil moisture is near average.

CROP MIX – Area sown to wheat is near average. The area sown to barley has increased compared to last season as expected, at the expense of lentils, beans and peas. The anticipated canola increase did not occur, instead also adding to the barley increase.

SEEDING – Crop seeding is now finished across the State. With the patchy season opening and lack of subsoil moisture, farmers decided to reduce crop area, especially on Eyre Peninsula.

LIVESTOCK CONDITION AND FEED – Across all districts, paddock feed levels are extremely low. High levels of livestock supplementary feeding. Many farmers have sown an increased area of pasture, feed crops and hay. Pastoral region feed is critically short particularly in the northeast. Stockfeed (grain and hay) is becoming more difficult to procure.

Outlook for the year

RAINFALL OUTLOOK – Bureau of Meteorology latest update is for higher chance of drier than normal conditions for the August-October late winter-spring period, potentially reducing crop yield and total crop production.

Challenges and opportunities

PESTS AND DISEASES – Mice numbers reported earlier as high in parts of Yorke Peninsula, Mid North, the Northern and Southern Mallee and South East have fallen with baiting and adverse conditions. Snail activity eased across most of the State with post-seeding baiting providing effective control to date.

ADVERSE EVENTS – Strong winds in June have resulted in soil erosion in paddocks on Eyre Peninsula and in the Murray Mallee with dry soil surface and no plant residue cover. The soil erosion has also damaged young emerging crops. Severe frosts in late June has slowed growth rates of pasture and crops in most districts.

MARKET DRIVERS – While reports of unfavourable weather for the northern hemisphere wheat crops has eased, global grain stockpiles are near average, buffering the impacts of weather on markets. Increased tariffs remain in place for grain and pulses into India.

REGIONAL ISSUES – Persistent deficiency in growing season rainfall to date is affecting agricultural production from Streaky Bay to Cowell on the Eyre Peninsula and Northeast Pastoral.

Explanatory notes: 2018–19 Crop Area changes (ha).

Barley area increased by 14% on last season, but the new crop remains 6% below the 10-year average barley area.

Lentil area declined by 22% on last season, but strong growth over the last decade means that despite the decline, this 2018–19 crop is still 40% above the 10-year average lentil area.

A decline in pea crop area by 30% on last season is an escalation of the long-term trending 36% decline in pea crop area observed over the last decade.