

South Australian Crop and Pasture Report

2023-24 Winter Crop Performance September 2023





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Crop and Pasture Report South Australia

Information current as of 20 September 2023 © Government of South Australia 2023

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All Enquiries

Tamara Rohrlach, Senior Industry Adviser Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) Level 15, 25 Grenfell Street GPO Box 1671, Adelaide SA 5001 T 08 8429 0408 E tamara.rohrlach@sa.gov.au

Key link to Weather information

Bureau of Meteorology - Weather observations and outlooks

Notes on the calculation of crop estimates

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 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.

State Crops and Pastures – 2023/24 Winter Crop Performance

Summary

Below average rainfall has been received in significant areas of South Australia during July and August, which may limit crop potential after a promising start during autumn and early winter. Crop development is progressing well, with cereals, canola and pulses at or past flowering. Pasture growth is good with high amounts of quality feed available. The rainfall and temperature outlook for spring (Figures 1 and 2) remains a concern to growers.

The crop mix prediction for 2023/24 season has been adjusted due to an increase in lentil area being observed, predominantly on Eyre Peninsula at the expense of pasture area. The predicted area of other crop types remains relatively unchanged.

With crops now reaching flowering and grain fill, grain production for 2023/24 is estimated to be 9.0 million tonnes, based on the continued assumption that crop yields will be close to the 10-year average. It should be noted that at this stage of the season, grain crops are highly sensitive to extreme temperatures, and the occurrence of frost and hot winds can significantly impact yield. Rainfall through spring will also be critical for the crops to reach their full potential.

Sown crop area and production for previous six seasons										
Seasons	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 estimated				
Area sown (ha)	3,572,000	3,898,000	4,003,000	3,942,000	3,942,000	4,011,000				
Production (t)	5,795,000	6,467,000	9,135,000	8,445,000	12,788,000	9,010,000				
Farm gate value	\$1.7 billion	\$2 billion	\$2.5 billion	\$3.3 billion	\$4.6 billion					







Figure 2: Max. temp. – change of being the highest 20% of historical range, October to December. (7th Sep 2023)

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Season 2023/24

Weather

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For the three-month period from 1st June to 31st August, total rainfall has been below average for significant areas of the Eyre Peninsula and Yorke Peninsula, plus the Lower, Mid and Upper North regions. Average maximum temperatures for the same period have been above average for the same regions, combining to create some concern over impacts on yield potential. In contrast, parts of the Southern Murray Mallee have received above average rainfall, boosting the confidence of producers in this area.

Season outlook



The Bureau of Meteorology, after having declared El Niño ALERT, has now confirmed the El Niño pattern is active over the Pacific. It also announced that a positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) has developed, which typically leads to decreased rainfall for central and south-east Australia. The BOM climate outlooks predict a hot and dry period throughout spring and leading into summer, especially in the eastern states.

Subsoil moisture



Regional subsoil moisture is variable, but in general is average to below average for this stage of the season. Crops on the poorer soils on the Upper Eyre Peninsula and Northern Mallee showed signs of moisture stress at the start of September, with yield potential starting to reduce. Soil moisture in other regions have maintained good crop development to date, however, warm weather in the second week of September will cause crops to utilise soil moisture at a rapid rate.

Crop mix

Eyre Peninsula lentil areas have been revised upwards due to higher than anticipated sowings. The area of lentils is expected to further increase in the 2024/25 season, with producers intending to reduce sheep numbers and include more lentils in their programs.

The total crop area is estimated to be greater than 4,000,000 hectares and is the largest since the 2013/14 season.

Cropping progress



Early winter rainfall has promoted good crop development over winter. Stages of crop development are varied depending on sowing time and region. Most early sown cereal crops are at head emergence to flowering, canola crops are well into flowering, and pulse crops are flowering and commencing pod set. Crops that were later sown or resown due to waterlogging, have a long way to go. Limited availability of urea during July and August contributed to application delays. These applications are now largely completed.

The season is now at a critical point. In the next few weeks further spring rainfall will see crops on track for average to above average yields. If rainfall events cease, or if heat or frost events occur during flowering and grain fill, yield potential will reduce to below average.

Pastures and livestock condition



Beef and lamb prices have continued to decline over the past few months, prompting a number of producers to retain livestock on-farm, given higher than average pasture growth, rather than accepting low prices at market. If lower livestock prices continue, further scaling back of sheep numbers is expected next season, with mixed livestock/crop producers increasing focus on cropping opportunities instead. Livestock condition throughout South Australia is good due to high amounts of quality feed available.

Challenges and opportunities

Pests and diseases



Wet and windy conditions during June and July have resulted in limited days suitable for spraying operations. Delays in weed control have led to higher levels of ryegrass in a number of paddocks.

High mouse numbers have prompted some producers to undertake aerial baiting in areas of the Eyre Peninsula. Crop damage is limited at present, however the prospect of a resurgence of mouse populations as the weather warms up in spring has growers concerned.

The first signs of stripe rust in wheat and leaf rust in barley have occurred in the past month prompting foliar fungicide applications to protect crop yield potential. Powdery mildew in wheat has some growers concerned across an increasing geographic spread since 2022. With drying spring conditions forecast, yield impacts from the disease are not expected to be as significant as in 2022.

Field slugs have impacted the establishment of significant areas of crops in the Southeast and higher rainfall areas of the Mid North. Baiting programs have mostly addressed the issue.

Aphid numbers are on the rise in many areas as the weather warms, with reports of cereal aphids in wheat and barley, and cowpea aphids in pulses. Some armyworm damage has been reported in cereals.



Regional issues and adverse events

Frost is a key concern over the next few weeks as crops enter flowering and grain fill. Some frost damage has already been reported on Eyre Peninsula. Growers in frost prone areas are nervously waiting to assess the outcome of the widespread frost event experienced on 9th September.

Crop Estimates

TABLE 1 CROP ESTIMATES BY DISTRICT

		Western	Lower	Eastern					
		Eyre	Eyre	Eyre	Yorke	Upper	Mid	Lower	Kangaroo
		Peninsula	Peninsula	Peninsula	Peninsula	North	North	North	Island
Wheat	ha	450,000	145,000	371,000	170,000	241,100	248,000	73,000	5,400
	t	675,000	522,000	742,000	629,000	506,310	719,200	255,500	15,120
Durum	ha	0	0	0	13,600	6,000	5,000	4,200	0
	t	0	0	0	43,520	13,800	13,500	12,600	0
Barley	ha	75,000	67,000	74,000	159,000	91,500	90,000	21,000	2,200
	t	127,500	241,200	148,000	604,200	201,300	279,000	73,500	6,820
Oats	ha	14,100	0	4,600	4,200	5,300	4,400	2,300	1,600
	t	18,330	0	6,900	11,340	9,010	11,000	5,980	4,160
Rye	ha	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	t	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Triticale	ha	400	0	500	1,000	1,200	1,700	400	100
	t	560	0	800	3,100	2,400	4,760	1,200	300
Peas	ha	2,800	2,000	4,200	10,000	10,000	13,900	6,000	400
	t	2,800	4,000	5,040	17,000	12,000	19,460	10,800	600
Lupins	ha	0	10,500	4,800	1,000	2,900	1,800	500	1,000
	t	0	18,900	4,800	1,700	3,480	2,340	900	1,500
Beans	ha	400	10,000	400	11,000	12,200	12,900	3,100	3,400
	t	600	25,000	400	24,200	17,080	21,930	5,890	6,800
Chickpeas	ha	0	0	200	4,000	2,500	2,300	400	0
	t	0	0	200	6,400	3,000	2,760	520	0
Lentils	ha	20,000	10,000	20,000	133,000	12,500	20,000	6,800	0
	t	16,000	25,000	24,000	266,000	17,500	28,000	11,560	0
Vetch	ha	2,400	0	2,000	2,600	5,600	4,200	300	0
	t	1,200	0	2,000	2,600	2,240	2,520	300	0
Canola	ha	5,100	80,000	9,000	14,500	28,300	25,400	4,600	4,200
	t	5,100	176,000	9,900	26,100	39,620	43,180	8,280	9,240
Hay	ha	5,500	6,400	10,000	13,700	22,000	38,000	10,000	7,600
(not in total)	t	13,750	28,800	27,000	61,650	79,200	155,800	40,000	31,920
Total	ha	570 200	324 500	490 700	523 900	419 100	429 600	122 600	18 300
10141	t	847,090	1,012,100	944,040	1,635,160	827,740	1,147,650	387,030	44,540

TABLE 1 CROP ESTIMATES BY DISTRICT (CONT)

		Central Hills	Lower	Nth Murray	Sth Murray	Upper	Lower	State
		& Fleurieu	Murray	Mallee	Mallee	South East	South East	Total
Wheat	ha	8,000	62,500	220,000	130,000	81,000	25,300	2,230,300
	t	22,400	100,000	352,000	286,000	211,410	101,200	5,137,140
Durum	ha	300	500	0	0	7,300	0	36,900
	t	690	625	0	0	16,790	0	101,525
Barley	ha	7,000	55,000	60,000	94,500	39,500	7,000	842,700
	t	20,300	93,500	96,000	226,800	102,700	8,400	2,229,220
Oats	ha	1,500	3,000	2,200	3,500	21,200	4,700	72,600
	t	3,600	4,200	3,520	5,600	50,880	15,510	150,030
Rye	ha	0	1,500	3,500	2,400	1,600	0	9,000
	t	0	1,650	2,800	2,880	1,920	0	9,250
Triticale	ha	500	2,600	1,500	6,200	1,000	500	17,600
	t	1,350	3,640	2,100	9,300	1,900	1,750	33,160
Peas	ha	1,000	4,000	2,000	3,600	2,900	400	63,200
	t	1,800	4,400	1,400	4,320	3,770	920	88,310
Lupins	ha	1,600	2,000	3,000	10,100	11,000	2,700	52,900
	t	2,720	2,000	3,000	14,140	15,400	4,860	75,740
Beans	ha	1,000	1,100	0	1,200	34,500	14,500	105,700
	t	2,200	1,210	0	1,440	70,725	39,150	216,625
Chickpeas	ha	200	3,000	14,500	10,500	600	200	38,400
	t	200	3,000	11,600	12,600	720	300	41,300
Lentils	ha	200	4,000	4,300	6,300	2,900	200	240,200
	t	260	4,000	3,870	8,820	4,060	400	409,470
Vetch	ha	100	4,000	6,700	5,300	1,200	0	34,400
	t	200	4,000	5,360	6,360	1,320	0	28,100
Canola	ha	8,000	6,000	7,800	13,200	39,500	21,600	267,200
	t	13,600	6,000	6,240	16,500	75,050	58,320	493,130
Hay	ha	23,900	7,200	5,000	13,800	28,100	27,100	218,300
(not in total)	t	107,550	25,200	10,000	55,200	123,640	132,790	892,500
Total	ha	29.400	149.200	325.500	286.800	244.200	77.100	4.011.100
	t	69,320	228,225	487,890	594,760	556,645	230,810	9,013,000

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TABLE 2 CROP ESTIMATES AGAINST FIVE YEAR AVERAGE

		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	5-year average	2023/24
Wheat	ha t	2,000,400 3,156,000	2,112,100 3,251,500	2,201,600 4,923,000	2,195,400 4,705,500	2,185,955 7,330,250	2,139,100 4,673,300	2,230,300 5,137,140
Durum	ha	42,000	42,900	37,800	35,800	37,200	39,100	36,900
	t	75,220	82,560	114,870	108,350	142,200	104,600	101,525
Barley	ha	818,600	990,000	953,500	917,400	858,600	907,600	842,700
	t	1,725,800	2,091,000	2,560,000	2,151,700	3,080,500	2,321,800	2,229,220
Oats	ha	74,700	72,800	77,700	75,300	75,700	75,200	72,600
	t	121,500	120,450	173,700	162,400	230,950	161,800	150,030
Rye	ha	5,300	5,700	8,600	6,600	9,100	7,100	9,000
	t	3,150	4,250	11,100	4,600	16,250	7,900	9,250
Triticale	ha	29,400	32,300	28,800	21,400	18,300	26,000	17,600
	t	33,470	42,250	70,750	30,150	49,600	45,200	33,160
Peas	ha	65,700	65,300	70,000	66,800	69,700	67,500	63,200
	t	53,620	70,100	113,700	92,500	137,550	93,500	88,310
Lupins	ha	61,000	51,100	50,600	45,900	54,200	52,600	52,900
	t	59,950	53,800	75,650	63,400	124,650	75,500	75,740
Beans	ha	63,100	98,400	100,600	107,300	102,100	94,300	105,700
	t	79,730	156,650	212,700	247,280	318,800	203,000	216,625
Chickpeas	ha	33,600	22,200	29,500	13,500	43,500	28,500	38,400
·	t	23,870	17,000	44,050	15,450	81,650	36,400	41,300
Lentils	ha	149,800	164,300	186,700	197,200	191,600	177,900	240,200
	t	177,870	220,400	345,950	339,180	527,250	322,100	409,470
Vetch	ha	28,400	34,000	36,400	34,400	37,900	34,200	34,400
	t	5,810	9,420	27,750	15,050	63,950	24,400	28,100
Canola	ha	200,100	206,600	220,800	224,700	258,400	222,100	267,200
	t	278,900	347,400	461,800	509,750	684,000	456,400	493,130
Hay	ha	436,000	320,600	263,500	220,800	210,600	290,300	218,300
(not in total)	t	1,297,000	1,258,900	1,195,000	852,000	989,950	1,118,600	892,500
Total	k -	2 570 400	2 007 700	4 000 000	2 044 700	2 042 255	2 971 000	4 044 400
TULAI	t	5,794,890	5,697,700 6,466,780	4,002,000 9,135,020	3,941,700 8,445,310	3,942,255 12,787,600	8,525,900	9,013,000