Crop and Pasture Report
South Australia

2017-18 SPRING CROP PERFORMANCE

NOVEMBER 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 6 November, 2017.


ALL ENQUIRIES

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State Summary

WEATHER

- September rainfall was average to above average in the southern agricultural districts and very much below average to below average in northern agricultural districts.
- October rainfall was average to below average across the agricultural districts.
- Growing season (April to October) rainfall was below average to very much below average in all agricultural districts except the South East and southern part of the Southern Murray Mallee.
- Above to well above average rainfall over most of the agricultural districts for January to March provided the subsoil moisture reserves improving crop performance despite the generally below average growing season rainfall.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average in the South East, Fleurieu Peninsula, and southern Lower Eyre Peninsula and above average in other agricultural districts for September.
- Maximum temperatures for October were very much above average for Lower and Eastern Eyre Peninsula, southern and central Yorke Peninsula, Fleurieu and Central Hills and Murray Mallee, and above average in other agricultural districts.
- Mean minimum temperatures for September were very much above average for Western Eyre Peninsula and Central Hills and average to above average in other districts.
- Minimum temperatures for October were very much above average on the Far West Coast, Lower Eyre Peninsula, Fleurieu Peninsula and Lower South East and average to above average in other districts.
- Strong to gale force winds and hail were recorded on 29 and 30 October across much of the agricultural districts.

CROPS

- Despite below average growing season rainfall in many districts, total state crop production estimated at 6.79 million tonnes from a smaller than average crop area of 3.54 million hectares, is only slightly below the long-term average production, and below the current 10-year average production of 7.7 million tonnes.
- The dry finish to the season reduced yield potential in most districts, with crops on deep sands or shallow soils drying off prematurely. Crops on soil with good moisture-holding capacity were able to ripen slowly.
- Where good summer weed control allowed soil moisture to be conserved and where crops were sown and emerged early, crops have above average yield potential. Paddocks with poor summer weed control or where crops were sown or emerged late, have below average yield potential.
- Conditions in the South East have been ideal for crop growth, with well above average yield potential for all crops. Frost in the last week of October caused damage to a wide range of crops in the Mid and Upper South East, with preliminary estimates of up to 10 to 15% loss in yield in some crops.
- Crop maturity is highly variable across the State and even within districts, but the warm, dry conditions hastened crop maturity.
- Harvest commenced in the Upper North in late September with other districts commencing from mid-October, but progress has been slow due to the late ripening of the crop. Harvest is expected to increase during November with warmer weather.
- Strong winds and hail caused severe damage to ripe barley, canola and lentil crops on Central and Eastern Eyre Peninsula, Upper, Mid and Lower North and Yorke Peninsula. Average yield loss in
affected crops has been estimated at 20 to 30% with some crops suffering 50% or more yield loss. Other crops such as peas and wheat suffered minor damage.

- Frost in late August caused damage to pea, wheat and lentil crops in a number of districts. The worst-affected areas of some wheat crops were cut for hay.
- The relatively large area of late-sown crops on Western Eyre Peninsula have suffered moisture stress and have low yield potential so many will not be harvested.
- More kangaroo and emu crop damage than usual has been reported in a number of districts.
- Areas of some crops in the South East have been affected by waterlogging, reducing yields, but the majority of crops have above average potential. Wet soils and wet and windy weather delayed spraying and fertiliser application, affecting some crop yields.
- A combination of staggered/poor germination, slow early growth and a dry finish to the season has resulted in below average canola yields in all districts, except Kangaroo Island, Fleurieu Peninsula and the South East.
- Canola crops in lower rainfall districts have been harvested. In most other districts canola crops are more likely to be direct-headed rather than the normal practice of windrowing before harvest, due to less crop growth, the high cost of windrowing and increased confidence in the efficacy of desiccants.
- Lentil crops have performed well in the dry conditions with many crops having above average yield potential. However, recent wind and hail damage to many unharvested crops will lower yields to below average.
- Yields of bean crops are likely to be below average in most areas of the State, although crops in the South East have grown and podded well and have above to well above average yield potential.
- Chickpea crops have grown well with the dry, warm conditions, have low levels of disease and average yield potential.
- Hay yields were below average with the exception of the South East. Quality has been good to excellent.
- Native budworm was in high numbers after multiple flights and egg laying in crops. Some pulse crops were sprayed twice to control native budworm larvae and reduce crop damage.
- Foliar diseases were at low levels across the State except for Septoria tritici infection in wheat in the Yorke Peninsula and the South East, requiring treatment of susceptible varieties with fungicide.
- Mice numbers have remained high in several districts and mouse bait has been applied to maturing crops in an attempt to reduce numbers and minimise crop damage.
- Russian wheat aphid numbers have generally remained low but numbers increased in several districts in later-sown crops or those not treated with an insecticide seed dressing. Many of these crops required spraying with an insecticide to reduce crop damage.

PASTURES

- Pasture and stubble feed is low in many districts, except in the Southern Mallee and South East where there is excellent available pasture feed. Farmers on Eyre and Yorke Peninsulas have already started selling surplus stock to reduce feed demand.
- On Eyre Peninsula, sheep grazing on vetch and medic pastures that had high infestations of Cowpea aphids suffered photosensitisation with some deaths. Surviving stock recovered relatively quickly once removed from these pastures.
- Many farmers spray-topped pasture paddocks to minimize seed set of grass weeds.
- There has been a smaller area of pasture cut for hay, due to less pasture biomass in most districts and high levels of hay remaining on-farm from last season. Hay reserves on Eyre Peninsula are relatively low and many farmers will need to buy hay from other parts of the State.
KEY LINKS TO OTHER INFORMATION

Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources - Soil and Land Condition monitoring:

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.
### Crop Estimates

#### TABLE 1: CROP ESTIMATES BY DISTRICT

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District Reports

Western Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Rainfall was below average in September and around average in October. Low pressure systems and thunderstorm activity throughout October brought a number of small rainfall events to the region.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for September and October; and mean minimum temperatures were very much above average for September and above to very much above average in October.

CROPS

- Strong winds in late October caused head and grain loss in some ripe barley and wheat crops.
- Warm, damp conditions in early September encouraged good crop and pasture growth and evened out some of the variability seen earlier in the season. However, spring biomass production was well below average.
- Dry conditions and above average temperatures resulted in a rapid senescence of crops and pastures. Rainfall in October was too late to benefit crop yields.
- Harvest of canola, peas and early-sown cereals commenced in mid-October in earlier districts of the Far West Coast.
- Crop maturity and yield potential varies markedly across the region.
- The potential for head loss/shattering on canola and barley crops is greater when the time of ripening is extended.
- Yields on paddocks with good control of weed growth last summer are likely to be 40% or more greater than on paddocks where summer weeds were not controlled.
- Pea crops are generally yielding well with reports of 0.8 to 1.6 t/ha around Wudinna, however frost at pod set reduced yields by 50% or more in parts of paddocks.
- Frost is also expected to have affected cereal yields inland. Some frosted pea and wheat paddocks near Wudinna were cut for hay.
- Early-sown crops around Wirrulla and Nunjikompita are yielding above average with some crops yielding 1.6-1.9 t/ha.
- Earlier-sown crops around Elliston have a yield potential of around 1.5 t/ha, however later-sown crops have poor yield potential.
- Large areas of crop around Mt Cooper and Streaky Bay were sown late. These crops grew poorly and suffered moisture stress so have poor yield prospects and many will not be harvested.
- Pest and diseases are at low levels with little effect expected on yields.

PASTURES

- Stock are in good condition, but farmers are concerned about the low amounts of pasture and stubble feed coming into summer so most have already sold off surplus stock.
- Farmers will retain some grain for livestock feed and many are looking to buy hay from other parts of the State to ensure sufficient feed is on hand over summer and autumn.
- Sheep grazing on vetch and medic with high infestation of Cowpea aphid suffered photosensitisation. Stock were removed from these paddocks and insecticide applied to control the aphids.
Lower Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average for September and average to below average for October.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average to above average for September and very much above average for October. Mean minimum temperatures were above average to very much above average in both September and October.
- Strong winds were recorded during the last week of October.

CROPS

- Strong winds in late October did not cause significant crop damage as most crops were not fully ripe. Despite warmer temperatures, small rainfall events kept crops green and helped fill grain.
- Harvest of early-sown crops on the Tumby Bay flats has commenced but most crops will not be ripe until mid to late November.
- Cereal yield potential is highly variable across the region. Yield estimates are 1.0 to 1.5 t/ha around Port Neill, Mt Hill and Tumby Bay and potentially 2.0 to 2.5 t/ha in most other districts.
- Russian wheat aphids are still present in crops and pastures with grass weeds. Insecticides have mostly been effective in minimising crop damage.
- Canola crops are at pod fill and will be desiccated in early November. More crops are likely to be direct-headed than windrowed, due to lower crop biomass, the high cost of windrowing and increased confidence in the efficacy of desiccants.
- Canola yields are expected to be below average, due to staggered germination, poor crop growth and damage from insect pests. Estimates of yields are 0.8 to 1.2 t/ha, with small areas around Koppio and Wanilla having potential to yield more than 1.8 t/ha.
- Native budworm numbers were high in canola and legume crops, so insecticides were sprayed to minimise damage to pods. Diamond backed moth numbers were much lower than normal this spring.
- Yield of pulse crops are expected to be highly variable with pea crops having above average yield potential and bean crops having low biomass and poor pod set. Vetch and lentils have flowered and set pods well but require mild conditions to realise their yield potential.
- Generally, there has been low levels of cereal foliar disease this season, but loose smut occurred on susceptible barley varieties. The disease will be managed with seed treatments in 2018.
- Mice and snail numbers are lower than earlier in the season.

PASTURES

- Although good spring growing conditions resulted in rapid growth of pastures, biomass levels are less than normal.
- Sheep grazing on vetch pastures with high infestations of Cowpea aphid suffered photosensitisation. Livestock were removed from these paddocks and provided shade to enable them to recover.
- The area cut for hay was lower than normal due to reduced growth of crops and pastures. Most farmers are opting to reap crops for grain rather than cut them for hay.
- Surplus stock has been sold to reduce summer feed demand and farmers will buy hay from other regions to supplement stubble feed and stored grain.
Eastern Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- September rainfall was average in the south to very much below average around Kimba/Buckleboo. October rainfall was average in the west and below average in the east of the district.
- Growing season rainfall was below average in the south and very much below average in the northern part of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures in September were above average and above to very much above average in October. Mean minimum temperatures for September were above average and average in the east to above average in the west of the district for October.

CROPS

- Strong winds occurred in the last week of October and damaged ripe canola and barley crops around Kimba and Cleve with estimates of up to 20% yield losses.
- Growers north of Kimba and Buckleboo are well into harvest, with peas and canola almost finished and early barley reaped. Pea yields have been average and canola yields average to below average.
- Barley yield has been well above average and malting varieties have achieved malt grade. Screenings have been low but are expected to increase as harvesting of later-sown crops begins.
- In other districts many earlier-sown crops are ripe but harvest has been delayed by cool conditions and damp mornings. A few cereal paddocks have been harvested around Cowell and Cleve but later-sown crops will only be ripe in mid to late November.
- Early reports are that peas are yielding well above average and lupins about average.
- Cereal crop yields are highly variable, with yields of 2 to 3 t/ha in the Cleve Hills and higher around Crossville but well below average (1.0 to 1.5 t/ha) west of Cleve.
- Canola and pulse crops were sprayed with desiccants to encourage even ripening at the start of October. Lower biomass in canola crops and increased confidence in desiccation has prompted more farmers to direct-head rather than windrow canola crops.
- High numbers of turnip and cabbage aphids infested canola crops in early to mid-October and damaged crops before they could be sprayed.
- Native budworm numbers in canola were higher than normal and most farmers applied insecticide to minimise damage to pods. Canola yields are expected to be well below average due to poor seasonal growth, frost and damage from insect pests, with some estimates of yield around 0.5 t/ha.
- There have been few leaf disease problems in crops this season.
- Russian wheat aphids are still present on grass weeds in pulse crops and pastures. Control measures have been most effective in cereal crops that were sprayed early.

PASTURES

- Warm, damp conditions stimulated good pasture growth but biomass is still below average.
- Some oat and vetch paddocks in the Cleve Hills were cut for hay and yielded above average but elsewhere hay yields have been average to below average.
- Sheep grazing on vetch and medic paddocks with high infestations of Cowpea aphid suffered photosensitisation, with some deaths reported. Most surviving stock recovered once they were removed from the infested paddocks.
- A high number of pasture paddocks were spray-topped to minimise seed set of grass weeds.
- Farmers have sold surplus stock to reduce grazing pressure over summer and plan to keep some grain for feed as well as buying hay from outside of the district.
Upper North

WEATHER

- Rainfall was very much below average in September with some areas recording their lowest rainfall on record. Rainfall was below average for October.
- Growing season rainfall was very much below average across the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for September and October.
- Strong winds and small hail occurred in late October.

CROPS

- The warm, dry finish to the season reduced yield potential across the district. Early-sown crops, in paddocks with good summer weed control maintained average to above average yield potential.
- Later-sown crops or those sown into paddocks with poor or no summer weed control, suffered moisture stress and will have below average yield potential.
- Crops in the Quorn area and from Carrieton through to Hallett suffered from the dry conditions with below average yields likely in these areas. Some crops will not be harvested and some farmers have turned livestock onto these crops.
- High numbers of kangaroos and emus caused significant damage to some crops in the northern and eastern parts of the district. Higher levels of damage than normal occurred in some other parts of the district.
- Harvest commenced in the western part of the district in late September with above average yields and good grain quality in most crops. However, some early-sown pea crops were severely damaged by frosts in late August and some wheat crops were also affected.
- The strong winds at the end of October caused head loss and shattering in ripe barley crops and some lentil crops.
- Harvest of peas and barley commenced in the Willowie and Booleroo areas in late October, with reports of average to below average yields with some frost damage in peas.
- Canola crops have either been desiccated or windrowed in preparation for harvest. An increasing number of farmers have opted to direct-head crops, due to low crop biomass, the high cost of windrowing and greater confidence with desiccation.
- Dry, cold conditions slowed early growth of many canola crops and yields are likely to be below average.
- Early-sown bean crops have performed well with average yield potential but later-sown crops have grown poorly with the dry conditions and yields are likely to be below average.
- Lentil crops appear to have performed very well in the dry conditions and early-harvested crops have yielded above average. Crops that were close to harvest or had been desiccated prior to the strong winds in late October suffered severe shattering and pod loss of 30 to 50%.
- Hay yields have been average to below average but quality has been excellent.

PASTURES

- The dry conditions have severely limited pasture growth and feed reserves are low in most pasture paddocks.
- Livestock will be moved onto crop stubbles as soon as possible.
- Livestock are in good condition with most farmers having adequate hay and grain on hand to maintain livestock numbers.
Mid North

WEATHER

- September rainfall was average in the west of the district and below average in the east. Rainfall for October was below average across the district.
- Growing season rainfall was below average across the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for September and above to very much above average for October. Mean minimum temperatures were average to above average for September and average for October.
- Strong winds and hail were recorded in late October.

CROPS

- Harvest of early sown peas and some lentils commenced in late October but the majority of the district will commence harvest in mid to late November.
- Farmers have commenced windrowing and desiccating canola crops. A higher percentage of crops than normal are being direct headed due to lower crop biomass, the high cost of windrowing and increased confidence with desiccation.
- Early-sown cereal crops and those in areas of better rainfall will yield above average. Later-sown crops will yield below average and be of poorer grain quality.
- Early-sown lentil crops have been severely damaged by the strong winds and hail in late October with losses of 20 to 50% reported and an average loss of 30%. Pods were shattered and knocked onto the ground with desiccated crops being the worst affected and later-sown crops less affected.
- Less than 10% of lentil crops had been harvested before damaging winds struck.
- The warm, dry conditions shortened the flowering period of canola crops so yields are likely to be slightly below average.
- Bean crops grew slowly with the dry start to the season and many podded poorly reducing yields of most crops 10 to 20% below average.
- Yields of pea crops are likely to be highly variable with some early-sown crops in better rainfall areas yielding well above average and later-sown or crops damaged by frost well below average.
- Lentil crops are now likely to yield well below average because of wind damage.
- Chickpea crops have grown well with the dry, warm conditions and low levels of disease but many crops are relatively thin with only average yield potential.
- Hay yields have been close to average with excellent quality being reported.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed is in short supply because of minimal spring growth.
- Livestock will be turned onto crop stubbles as soon as crops are harvested.
- Despite excellent sheep and wool prices, there is unlikely to be a significant increase in sheep numbers across the district.
Lower North

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to below average for September and below average for October.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average to above average for September and very much above average for October. Mean minimum temperatures were above average for September and October.
- Growing season rainfall was below average across the district.
- Strong winds and hail were recorded on 29 and 30 October.

CROPS

- Harvest of lentils and barley has commenced in the early parts of the district but harvest progress has been slowed by cool, damp conditions.
- The dry finish to the season has reduced crop yields with canola and bean crops being the worst affected. The cool conditions have enabled most crops to ripen slowly, which should ensure reasonable grain quality even in the later districts.
- The strong winds at the end of October damaged ripe lentil, canola and barley crops. In lentil crops pods were shattered and knocked onto the ground with ripe or desiccated crops suffering 20 to 30% losses. Later maturing crops were not affected.
- Canola pods were shattered and barley heads knocked onto the ground but losses in these crops were relatively low.
- Foliar disease levels were very low in all crops with many crops sprayed with preventative fungicides, which given the dry spring conditions were probably not required.
- Native budworm numbers were lower than normal in pulse and canola crops and Etiella moth numbers were also low in lentil crops.
- Yields of wheat, barley and canola are likely to be slightly below average and lentil crops close to average.
- Bean crops grew slowly with the cold, dry conditions and yields are likely to be 10 to 15% below average. Pea crops have performed well with the dry conditions and yields are likely to be well above average, with low disease levels.
- There have been low levels of disease in chickpea crops and yields should be above average.
- Hay yields have been average to above average with reasonable quality. The area cut for hay has been significantly reduced, due to high levels of hay remaining from last season.

PASTURES

- Spring growth of pastures has been low, with limited supplies of pasture feed available.
- Following the strong winds in late October there will be extra grain on the ground, providing additional feed for livestock in crop stubbles.
- Despite limited pasture feed, most farmers have adequate supplies of hay on-farm from last season and will store additional grain to maintain livestock numbers.
Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER

- Rainfall for September was average across most of the district. Rainfall for October was below average in the north and foot of the Peninsula and average in the remainder of the district.
- Growing season rainfall was very much below average around Kadina; below average for Central Yorke Peninsula and average for Northern and Southern Yorke Peninsula.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for September and above to very much above average for October. Mean minimum temperatures have been above average for September, and average in the north and above average in the south for October.
- Strong to gale force winds were recorded on 29 October and strong winds and hail on 30 October.

CROPS

- Following frost in late August, some wheat on northern Yorke Peninsula was cut for hay and early-sown lentil and pea crops suffered yield loss.
- The strong winds and hail at the end of October caused severe damage to lentil and canola crops by shattering pods or snapping them off. Thin or desiccated crops were the worst affected with losses of 50% or more but average losses on central and northern Yorke Peninsula are estimated at 30%, varying from 0.5 to 1.2t/ha loss in lentils and canola.
- The dry finish to the season has reduced yield potential, with crops on deep sands or shallow soils drying off prematurely. Crops on soils with good moisture-holding capacity were able to ripen slowly.
- Harvest commenced on Northern Yorke Peninsula in mid-October and coastal areas in late October. In the remainder of the district harvest will not commence until mid to late November.
- Paddocks that were only partially baited for mice at sowing required further baiting in spring to reduce numbers.
- Russian wheat aphid numbers were kept low by insecticidal seed treatments.
- There may be some damage from late flights of Etiella moths in lentil crops but harvest has only just commenced with no reports to date of insect damage.
- Native budworm were in high numbers after multiple flights and egg laying in pulse and canola crops. Most pulse crops were sprayed twice to control native budworm larvae.
- Septoria tritici was the major disease in wheat crops, with most susceptible varieties requiring spraying. Powdery mildew levels also increased, particularly in Scepter wheat.
- Cereals on Northern Yorke Peninsula are likely to yield slightly below average. Lentil yields had above average yield potential but wind damage will result in below average yield. Yields will vary from average to well below average in the rest of district.
- Chickpeas crops are likely to produce average yields with the dry spring reducing disease levels. Faba bean, pea and vetch yields are likely to be average and canola yields average to below average.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed has already been depleted on Northern and Central Yorke Peninsula, with some farmers supplementing paddock feed with hay.
- Oaten hay yields have been below average and wheaten hay (cut after the frost) also below average.
- High sheep returns prompted some farmers to purchase more sheep but this has led to overgrazing.
- Stock condition is average due to adequate pasture growth after the winter rains. Farmers have already sold stock due to lack of pasture feed and low stubble after harvest.
- Following the wind in late October there are high levels of lentil and canola pods and grain on the ground. These will need to be heavily grazed to reduce the buildup of mice.
Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula & Kangaroo Island

WEATHER

- Rainfall for September was average for Central Hills and Fleurieu, and average to above average for Kangaroo Island. November rainfall was average to below average for all districts.
- September mean maximum temperatures were average for Fleurieu and average to above average for Kangaroo Island and Central Hills, and above to very much above average for October.
- Growing season rainfall was average for Central Hills and Fleurieu and below to very much below average for Kangaroo Island.

CROPS

Central Hills/Fleurieu

- Crop yields for all cereals, canola and pulses will be average to slightly above average.
- Harvest will be about two weeks earlier than usual.
- Pests and diseases are all at relatively low levels.

Kangaroo Island

- Crops have responded well to spring rains. Canola is expected to yield slightly above average, cereals average and beans below average.
- Desiccation of canola will commence in early November with harvest expected to start in late November to early December, which is close to average.
- Russian wheat aphid was widespread with levels high enough in some areas to warrant treatment but numbers have now decreased.
- Native bud worm larvae were present in high numbers in pulse and canola, with crops treated early avoiding significant crop damage.
- Aphanomyces nematode has been identified in a bean crop and has caused significant crop damage.

PASTURES

Central Hills/Fleurieu

- Spring pasture growth varied across the region from slightly below average to average. Many pastures did not recover well from the dry July.
- Pastures are beginning to mature on lighter soils.
- The area cut for hay is below average as many producers still have reserves on hand from last year.
- Livestock are in average to good condition.

Kangaroo Island

- Spring pasture growth has been average.
- Hay yields have been average to slightly below average as a result of poor winter growth.
- Red legged earth mite caused significant damage to untreated pastures in October.
- Livestock are in good condition although some flocks have high worm levels as a result of the short pasture feed in winter and early spring.
Lower Murray

WEATHER

- Rainfall was below average for both September and October. Growing season rainfall was below average across the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average to above average for September and very much above average for October.
- Mean minimum temperatures were above average for September and above to very much above average for October.
- Windy days occurred ahead of cold fronts that brought little to no rain. Isolated thunderstorms and hail were observed at the end of October.

CROPS

- Yield potential has been reduced by dry spring conditions with yields of early-sown crops cut from above average to average. Later-sown crops, which already had below average potential, have declined further.
- The dry finish and warm conditions hastened crop maturity so harvest operations commenced earlier than normal.
- Pulse and oilseed crops had a shorter than normal flowering time due to the dry conditions resulting in reduced yields.
- Mice numbers are still high in some areas and some farmers have applied mouse bait to maturing crops to reduce numbers and crop damage.
- The area cut for hay has been reduced due to a reduction in export hay contracts, with average yields of excellent quality being produced.
- The dry conditions limited the incidence of disease and insect pests.

PASTURES

- Livestock are still in good condition despite the dry conditions.
- Pasture feed levels have been declining, however the quality of feed has been very good with the dry finish.
- Sheep sales remain buoyant with high prices being achieved for quality stock.
Northern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Rainfall was well below average for both September and October.
- Most areas only received 75% of their April-October average growing season rainfall.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for September and very much above average for October. Mean minimum temperatures were average to above average during September and October.
- There were some frosts recorded during this period and strong winds in late October.

CROPS

- Harvest has commenced in barley and pulse crops across the district.
- Yields are highly variable between soil types, ranging from above average on better soils to extremely poor on deep sands and shallow soil over stone.
- Many early-sown cereal crops in swales have suffered severe frost damage, from both earlier stem frost and later frosts during flowering with many plants reshotting from the base.
- While losses from frost vary between farms, districts and crop types, it is likely that there has been a 10-15% production loss across the whole region.
- Despite a very dry finish to the season, crops that were able to use stored soil moisture from summer rainfall have matured with reasonable grain size.
- Cereal crops are expected to yield below average on the western side of the district but almost average in the eastern and southern areas.
- Additional nitrogen fertilizer was applied to crops with reasonable yield potential.
- Russian wheat aphid numbers have increased on later-sown crops and those not treated with insecticide seed dressings. Many of these crops required spraying to reduce crop damage.
- Cereal leaf diseases were at very low levels and very few were sprayed to control disease.
- Pulse and canola crops suffered from the dry finish as well as severe frost damage in some crops, resulting in well below average yields.
- There has been more mice damage to crops later in the season than normal, but not sufficient to require treatment.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed has generally been well managed despite the low rainfall and most farmers are reporting enough feed for livestock until crop stubbles become available.
- Livestock enterprises have been performing well in 2017 due to good prices.
Southern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- September rainfall was below average across most of the district.
- Isolated thunderstorms during October brought patchy rains with most areas receiving average rainfall.
- Several strong northerly winds and some mild frost events were experienced in September.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average to above average for September and above to very much above average for October. Mean minimum temperatures were average to above average for September and above average for October.

CROPS

- Yield potential across the district is variable as a result of patchy spring rains.
- It is expected yields will range from above average to below average.
- Cereal crops are showing greater potential than pulses and oilseeds as a result of the variable conditions.
- Frosts in late August and September caused some crop damage, however damage is unlikely to be significant.
- Mouse baiting has been undertaken by air.
- Hay cutting and baling has been undertaken although the area cut has been reduced as a result of lower prices on offer for both export and domestic hay.
- Rain delayed some hay baling toward the end of October.
- Hay crops have produced average dry matter cuts but early feed tests are showing hay quality is excellent.

PASTURES

- Livestock are in excellent condition.
- There are adequate supplies of pasture feed for livestock across most of the district.
- Livestock prices have continued to do well with confidence in livestock enterprises growing.
Upper South East

WEATHER

- September rainfall was average to above average and October rainfall was average in the east and below average in the west of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average in September similar to the long-term average throughout the period.
- Hail storms and severe frost were reported in parts of the district in late October.

CROPS

- Crop yields in parts of some paddocks have been reduced due to waterlogging.
- A hail storm occurred in parts of the district in late October but there were no reports of significant damage. The late October frost caused production losses in some crops of up to 10-15%.
- Proactive preventative control of pests and diseases has kept levels low.
- Yields will be well above average and many farmers have forward-sold grain at slightly above average prices. Grain fill has been assisted with timely rainfall events.
- Cereals are expected to yield 40% above the long-term average.
- Pulses are expected to yield 40-50% above the long-term average.
- Harvest will commence at the normal time with windrowing and desiccation of crops commencing in early November.
- Ryegrass control has been the biggest problem as a result of consecutive wet years and a second germination during this season. Many producers will consider using a pasture or silage phase next year to combat the ryegrass in problem paddocks.
- Septoria tritici has been at higher levels than normal but stripe rust levels have been much lower.
- Pesticide application has been difficult due to wet soils and wet, windy weather with many herbicide applications being applied later than ideal.
- There were high mice numbers across most of the district early in the season with many producers baiting to reduce crop damage. A second round of aerial baiting was undertaken towards the end of the season which has been effective in minimising crop damage.

PASTURES

- Farmers have commenced cutting and baling hay with most reporting above average yields. The area cut for hay is lower than normal due to high levels of stock remaining on-farm from last season. Hay has cured quicker than normal due to warm, dry weather conditions.
- Hay yields overall are expected to be 70% higher than the long-term average.
- Better quality hay will be produced this year but there is a limited market for hay due to the carryover from last year. Hay has been sold at clearing sales for less than the cost of production.
- Spray-topping of pasture paddocks has been undertaken by many farmers.
- There has been grass seed contamination in lambs, affecting eyes and carcass quality.
- Lambing percentages have been 20% higher than normal.
- Dryland lucerne has performed well with excellent growth.
- Livestock are in excellent condition.
Lower South East

WEATHER

- September rainfall was average to above average.
- October rainfall was average in the east and below average in the west of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average in September and above average in October.
- Mean minimum temperatures were average to above average in September and very much above average for October.

CROPS

- Cereal crops are in head and at grain fill with rain in late October benefitting yields.
- Barley crops will be windrowed from mid-November to reduce the risk of wind damage and hasten ripening.
- Canola pod set has been good and the yield potential is high; crops will be windrowed in early November.
- Faba bean crops have podded with good yield potential. Native budworm numbers are beginning to increase and crops will be sprayed in early November to minimise crop damage.
- Harvesting of beans is likely to commence in the northern part of the district in the third week of November. In the southern part of the district many crops are still flowering.
- Some crop paddocks were waterlogged, reducing yield potential.
- Early-sown crops have grown well and will yield higher than later-sown crops.
- Septoria tritici and leaf rust have both infected wheat crops with fungicides applied to many crops to prevent further spread of these diseases. Other diseases have been at low levels.
- Pest numbers have been at low levels, due to the application of preventative treatments.
- Spring plantings of barley, chickpeas and safflower have been completed with good germination. Most of these crops will be grown dryland, with only a small portion irrigated.
- Sub soils have plentiful moisture and surface waterlogging has now reduced.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed is abundant across the district.
- Pasture renovation has been widespread with good establishment and early growth with warmer conditions.
- Farmers have commenced spray topping grass weeds in pastures.
- Summer grazing pastures, including millet, turnips and red clover, have established well.
- Lucerne flea populations continue to be monitored to minimise damage to pastures.
- The production of silage has been completed with good yields.
- Livestock are in good condition, although the wet, cold winter and a current lack of fibre in pastures has reduced growth rates of livestock.
- There are large stores of hay on many properties from last season with a limited market for new hay. The amount of hay cut this year is like to be reduced.
- Livestock have higher levels of lameness and internal parasites than normal as a result of the wetter conditions.