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Crop and Pasture Report South Australia

2015-16 HARVEST

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PREMIUM
FOOD AND WINE FROM OUR
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ENVIRONMENT



Government
of South Australia

Primary Industries
and Regions SA

Crop and Pasture Report - South Australia

This is a bimonthly report prepared by Rural Solutions SA, for the Agriculture, Food and Wine Division of Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA).

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ALL ENQUIRIES

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State Summary

WEATHER

- Thunderstorms in early November brought heavy rain to many districts.
- November rainfall was above to very much above average in most of Eyre Peninsula, Upper and Mid North, Northern and Southern Murray Mallee but below average in the Fleurieu Peninsula and Adelaide Hills and average in other districts.
- December rainfall was generally below to very much below average across the agricultural districts.
- A number of heat waves were recorded during November and December accompanied by several days of strong hot winds.
- Mean maximum temperatures for November were very much above average for Kangaroo Island, Fleurieu Peninsula and Adelaide Hills and Southern Yorke Peninsula and above average for the rest of the agricultural areas.
- Mean maximum temperatures for December were the highest on record for most agricultural areas of the State.

CROPS

- Thunderstorms and heavy rain in early November were too late to benefit crop yields but fortunately only caused minor damage to ripe crops.
- Harvest was completed in all districts except the Lower South East by the end of December.
- Despite the hot, dry finish to the season and frost damage in some areas, crop production in South Australia has still been above the long term average.
- Yields were highly variable, being above average in most of Eyre Peninsula and the Upper North, average in the Mid North, Northern Murray Mallee and Lower South East, well below average in the Upper South East and average to below average in other districts.
- Variable weather conditions, including cool, damp mornings and numerous hot windy days, slowed harvest in many districts
- Extreme weather conditions on the 25 November resulted in a fire in the Pinery area which spread rapidly and burnt approximately 85,000 ha.
- About 22,500 ha of unharvested crops was burnt with estimated crop losses of 60,000 tonnes of grain, 33,000 tonnes of hay and 50,000 tonnes of straw. The fire also destroyed 18,000 sheep and 87 cattle.
- Strong winds following the fire caused significant soil erosion, particularly on lighter soils. Most farmers have cultivated burnt areas to bring up soil clods to reduce the erosion risk. This has been relatively effective in most areas, although some drifting is still occurring on sandy soils.
- Frost in October caused significant damage in isolated pockets, particularly in the Upper North, Northern and Southern Murray Mallee.
- Wheat crops were above average on the Eyre Peninsula and parts of the Upper and mid-north districts, ranging to below average yields in the Southern Mallee and South East, particularly the Upper South East where wheat production was only 55% of average.
- Wheat crops were generally more affected by the hot, dry finish with significant tonnages down-graded to lower value utility wheats (AUH and AUW) and general purpose wheat (AGP) on account of higher than normal screenings.
- Barley yields were average to above average in most districts. Grain quality was highly variable with a high percentage down-graded due to low test weights and high screenings (low retention).

- Pulse crops were the worst affected by the hot dry conditions with bean and vetch crops below 50% of average and pea, lentil and lupin crops all yielding well below average.
- The dry finish affected the grain size of pulses and many lentil crops needed to be cleaned to meet higher grade specifications.
- Canola crops had generally finished flowering before the hot weather so yields were close to average in most districts with close to average oil content. Yields in the Mallee and Upper South East were well below average with low oil content.
- A larger proportion of grain has been warehoused with the expectation that prices will rise after harvest.
- More grain is being stored on-farm in a number of districts close to domestic markets, due to lower prices and poor grain quality.
- There was a germination of summer weeds in many districts following the rain in November, with large areas being sprayed after harvest.
- There have been a higher than usual number of hay stack fires, resulting in significant losses of hay and machinery.

PASTURES

- Livestock are currently grazing stubbles which are providing good quality feed.
- Pastures have either been grazed or are deteriorating rapidly in most districts.
- Adequate levels of hay and grain are available in most areas of the State.
- Pasture and fodders reserves are low in the Upper South East and many producers have opted to reduce herd and flock sizes while high livestock prices prevail.
- In many districts some producers are already supplementary feeding livestock.
- An increased number of producers are planning to confinement-feed livestock to reduce the risk of erosion.
- Perennial pastures responded to the rain in November providing some good quality feed.

KEY LINKS TO OTHER INFORMATION

Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources - Soil and Land Condition monitoring:
www.environment.sa.gov.au/Knowledge_Bank/Science_research/Monitoring_evaluation_analysis/Monitoring/Soil_and_land_condition

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

		Western Eyre Peninsula	Lower Eyre Peninsula	Eastern Eyre Peninsula	Yorke Peninsula	Upper North	Mid North	Lower North	Kangaroo Island
Wheat	<i>ha</i>	470,000	145,000	392,000	165,000	228,000	234,000	37,000	5,800
	<i>t</i>	705,500	451,000	823,000	470,000	456,000	597,000	108,000	14,000
Durum	<i>ha</i>	0	0	0	20,000	9,500	8,500	3,800	0
	<i>t</i>	0	0	0	37,000	15,000	16,000	8,300	0
Barley	<i>ha</i>	59,000	66,000	71,000	168,000	102,000	100,000	23,000	1,800
	<i>t</i>	94,000	214,500	156,000	495,500	228,500	272,000	70,000	4,700
Oats	<i>ha</i>	16,500	3,200	6,000	4,000	4,500	5,000	1,200	3,300
	<i>t</i>	19,500	8,000	8,500	9,000	6,500	10,000	2,600	8,000
Rye	<i>ha</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>t</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Triticale	<i>ha</i>	400	500	500	1,000	1,500	1,700	400	0
	<i>t</i>	550	1,500	1,000	2,500	3,000	4,250	1,000	0
Peas	<i>ha</i>	4,800	4,500	5,500	16,000	27,000	23,000	6,000	400
	<i>t</i>	4,300	5,500	5,500	23,000	26,500	23,000	7,800	600
Lupins	<i>ha</i>	1,500	26,000	5,500	1,000	3,500	1,800	500	1,000
	<i>t</i>	1,350	26,500	3,000	1,050	3,600	1,800	650	1,500
Beans	<i>ha</i>	0	6,000	400	12,500	7,200	13,500	5,700	3,500
	<i>t</i>	0	7,800	250	12,500	5,500	10,800	6,800	5,000
Chickpeas	<i>ha</i>	0	400	200	8,500	3,200	5,000	800	0
	<i>t</i>	0	500	140	8,500	2,600	4,000	850	0
Lentils	<i>ha</i>	0	2,000	200	94,000	4,000	12,500	6,200	0
	<i>t</i>	0	2,500	160	112,500	4,000	10,500	6,200	0
Vetch	<i>ha</i>	2,400	1,800	2,000	2,000	5,500	5,000	300	0
	<i>t</i>	1,200	1,400	1,000	2,000	1,100	1,000	150	0
Canola	<i>ha</i>	5,300	63,000	10,000	23,000	23,000	26,000	3,700	2,200
	<i>t</i>	7,500	114,000	11,000	36,000	29,000	40,000	4,100	4,000
Hay (not in total)	<i>ha</i>	4,500	4,500	2,500	22,000	27,500	45,500	3,000	7,000
	<i>t</i>	13,800	27,000	9,000	120,000	132,000	228,000	15,000	29,000
Total	<i>ha</i>	559,900	318,400	493,300	515,000	418,900	436,000	88,600	18,000
	<i>t</i>	833,900	833,200	1,009,550	1,209,550	781,300	990,350	216,450	37,800

TABLE 1 CROP ESTIMATES BY DISTRICT (CONT)

		Central Hills & Fleurieu	Lower Murray	Nth Murray Mallee	Sth Murray Mallee	Upper South East	Lower South East	State Total
Wheat	<i>ha</i>	5,200	69,000	245,000	129,000	53,000	22,000	2,200,000
	<i>t</i>	12,000	103,500	294,000	130,000	67,000	76,000	4,307,000
Durum	<i>ha</i>	300	800	300	0	6,300	0	49,500
	<i>t</i>	500	650	300	0	5,000	0	82,750
Barley	<i>ha</i>	10,000	59,000	56,000	88,000	30,000	5,500	839,300
	<i>t</i>	23,000	112,000	83,000	133,000	34,000	19,000	1,939,200
Oats	<i>ha</i>	1,800	3,000	2,200	3,400	12,200	4,000	70,300
	<i>t</i>	4,100	3,600	2,600	3,100	8,500	10,000	104,000
Rye	<i>ha</i>	0	2,000	2,200	2,500	800	0	7,500
	<i>t</i>	0	2,000	2,000	1,800	400	0	6,200
Triticale	<i>ha</i>	500	2,800	4,500	6,500	1,000	500	21,800
	<i>t</i>	1,100	3,800	5,500	5,800	1,000	1,700	32,700
Peas	<i>ha</i>	1,500	4,500	2,400	3,600	3,000	400	102,600
	<i>t</i>	2,100	2,700	1,200	900	1,600	900	105,600
Lupins	<i>ha</i>	2,000	2,000	2,400	10,000	16,500	3,000	76,700
	<i>t</i>	2,800	1,600	1,200	4,000	10,000	4,800	63,850
Beans	<i>ha</i>	400	200	0	1,200	8,000	10,000	68,600
	<i>t</i>	600	100	0	150	4,800	21,000	75,300
Chickpeas	<i>ha</i>	200	0	800	1,000	200	200	20,500
	<i>t</i>	250	0	550	500	100	250	18,240
Lentils	<i>ha</i>	200	0	400	1,000	3,000	200	123,700
	<i>t</i>	200	0	200	500	1,500	320	138,580
Vetch	<i>ha</i>	0	1,200	3,600	5,000	800	0	29,600
	<i>t</i>	0	600	1,800	1,300	350	0	11,900
Canola	<i>ha</i>	4,300	4,000	11,000	5,000	17,500	12,500	210,500
	<i>t</i>	6,500	3,200	5,500	2,500	8,000	24,000	295,300
Hay (not in total)	<i>ha</i>	25,000	7,200	2,500	14,000	90,000	27,500	282,700
	<i>t</i>	126,000	25,000	5,000	42,000	207,000	116,000	1,094,800
Total	<i>ha</i>	26,400	148,500	330,800	256,200	152,300	58,300	3,820,600
	<i>t</i>	53,150	233,750	397,850	283,550	142,250	157,970	7,180,620

TABLE 2 CROP ESTIMATES AGAINST FIVE YEAR AVERAGE

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	5 year ave	2015/16
Wheat	<i>ha</i>	2,237,100	2,226,100	2,176,300	2,295,900	2,236,000	2,234,300	2,200,000
	<i>t</i>	5,818,500	4,444,800	3,556,500	4,976,000	4,672,000	4,693,600	4,307,000
Durum	<i>ha</i>	69,800	74,600	77,200	68,300	51,300	68,200	49,500
	<i>t</i>	240,600	223,950	181,240	194,930	118,250	191,800	82,750
Barley	<i>ha</i>	965,200	987,700	907,100	854,900	804,000	903,800	839,300
	<i>t</i>	2,839,100	2,031,800	1,912,900	2,093,500	1,922,000	2,159,900	1,939,200
Oats	<i>ha</i>	75,300	75,800	85,800	85,000	73,300	79,000	70,300
	<i>t</i>	152,300	117,400	128,740	159,700	120,700	135,800	104,000
Rye	<i>ha</i>	9,500	9,500	9,500	7,100	9,000	8,900	7,500
	<i>t</i>	11,600	7,900	7,500	6,350	9,300	8,500	6,200
Triticale	<i>ha</i>	85,700	80,200	69,200	49,300	27,100	62,300	21,800
	<i>t</i>	167,100	117,500	95,920	86,500	44,300	102,300	32,700
Peas	<i>ha</i>	126,300	109,900	103,700	106,100	98,000	108,800	102,600
	<i>t</i>	238,500	144,400	116,100	143,250	114,600	151,400	105,600
Lupins	<i>ha</i>	64,900	64,900	63,200	69,300	64,700	65,400	76,700
	<i>t</i>	120,100	78,900	75,110	105,500	72,250	90,400	63,850
Beans	<i>ha</i>	71,500	72,200	69,400	69,000	65,600	69,500	68,600
	<i>t</i>	168,600	121,220	105,510	139,400	93,900	125,700	75,300
Chickpeas	<i>ha</i>	10,700	12,200	19,700	20,700	19,700	16,600	20,500
	<i>t</i>	16,000	19,550	21,810	29,280	20,250	21,400	18,240
Lentils	<i>ha</i>	97,700	106,100	88,800	94,800	106,200	98,700	123,700
	<i>t</i>	174,350	181,600	97,720	163,350	152,350	153,900	138,580
Vetch	<i>ha</i>	12,800	13,100	13,100	17,000	23,200	15,800	29,600
	<i>t</i>	12,900	11,120	6,800	14,320	13,150	11,700	11,900
Canola	<i>ha</i>	196,500	269,500	302,700	301,000	321,200	278,200	210,500
	<i>t</i>	381,700	435,700	398,700	434,400	313,800	392,900	295,300
Hay (not in total)	<i>ha</i>	244,200	201,500	204,500	227,300	211,500	217,800	282,700
	<i>t</i>	1,066,000	774,400	769,000	1,018,100	763,000	878,100	1,094,800
Total	<i>ha</i>	4,023,000	4,101,800	3,985,700	4,038,400	3,899,300	4,009,600	3,820,600
	<i>t</i>	10,341,350	7,935,840	6,704,550	8,546,480	7,666,900	8,239,000	7,180,600

District Reports

Western Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- November rainfall was average in the Far West to very much above average in the east of the district as a result of intense thunderstorms early in the month.
- Rainfall in December was below average across the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were very much above average in the Far West and above average in the remainder of the district in November and the highest on record for December.

CROPS

- Most farmers finished harvest by mid December.
- Crop yields and quality were variable depending on district rainfall and soil type.
- The continued dry conditions around Streaky Bay and Piednippie resulted in yields that were below average (around 0.5 to 0.8 t/ha). Despite the poor growth these crops yielded better than expected given the extremely low growing season rainfall.
- Yields in other Western Eyre Peninsula districts were around average to slightly above average with wheat crops yielding 2.5 t/ha or better and barley yielding better than 3 t/ha.
- Canola yields and quality were generally good with reports of 1.2 to 1.5 t/ha in the Wudinna and Kyancutta districts and up to 1.7 t/ha around Mt Cooper.
- Wheat grain quality has been variable with much of the crop delivered in the specially created Australian General Purpose (AGP) or Australian Utility Hard (AUH) grades due to high screenings and low test weights.
- November rainfall resulted in a high germination of summer weeds with growers spraying immediately after harvest.
- Snail and mice numbers are low.

PASTURES

- Stubbles are providing a high amount of quality feed and livestock are in excellent condition.
- Most farmers have either cut hay or bought hay where necessary to replenish on-farm feed reserves.

Lower Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to above average in most of the district for November and below average in December.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for November and the highest on record for December.

CROPS

- The majority of farmers finished harvest by the end of December.
- Variable weather conditions slowed harvest with some cool, damp mornings and numerous hot windy days.
- Cereal yields were slightly above average with some exceptional yields on the better soil types around Ungarra and Yeelanna.
- Yields were poorer than expected in crops that had high winter growth on lighter textured soils south of Edillilie.
- Canola yields were exceptional with many growers averaging 1.7 to 1.8 t/ha and many reports of yields above 2 t/ha. Grain oil content was also high.
- Pulse yields were around the long term average with peas producing around 1 t/ha, and lentils and beans producing 1.2-1.5 t/ha.
- Lupin yields were disappointing with reports of less than 1 t/ha common. This reflects the difference in productive capacity of the soil types on which these pulses are grown as well as the impact of heat stress at flowering.
- Grain quality has been a large issue this season with cereals producing a high level of screenings and low test weights which has resulted in lower classifications at delivery.
- There was little impact from native budworm or other pests on grain yield or quality.
- There has been a large germination of summer weeds following November rain with many growers applying herbicide immediately after harvest.

PASTURES

- Stubbles have a high amount of quality feed and livestock are in excellent condition.
- Perennial pastures responded to the November rainfall providing a high amount of quality green feed.
- Most farmers have adequate supplementary feed supplies stored on farm.

Eastern Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- November rainfall was above average in the north and very much above average in the south as a result of thunderstorm activity early in the month.
- December rainfall was average to below average across the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for November and the highest on record for December.

CROPS

- Most farmers finished harvest by mid December.
- Yields were average to above average in most districts but varied considerably between different soil types and in accordance with rainfall received.
- Reports of wheat yields above 3 t/ha and barley yields above 3.5 t/ha were common with some exceptional yields reported in the Franklin Harbour, Lock and Wharminda districts.
- Grain quality was a problem with high screenings and low test weights causing quality downgrades at delivery.
- Canola generally yielded well, with reports of above 1.2 t/ha common.
- Whilst the majority of the region received good growing season rainfall, low winter rainfall in the Yalanda district east of Kimba, Buckleboo and Wilcherry districts resulted in poor crops with high screening levels.
- Pulse yields were variable with peas achieving yields of around 1 t/ha and lupin yields generally poor and often less than 0.5 t/ha.
- Despite some early native budworm damage to canola and peas, the impact on yield and quality was minimal
- There has been a germination of summer weeds following November rains with many growers applying herbicide immediately following harvest.
- Mice and other pest numbers are low.

PASTURES

- There are high amounts of quality feed in stubble paddocks with summer weeds and volunteer cereals providing some green feed.
- Most growers have adequate supplementary feed supplies stored on farm
- Livestock are in excellent condition.

Upper North

WEATHER

- Rainfall for November was above average to very much above average. December rainfall was below average in the north and very much below average in the south.
- Mean maximum temperatures for November were above average. December maximum temperatures were the highest on record.

CROPS

- Heavy rain in early November was too late to benefit crops and resulted in weather damage to a small number of early maturing crops in the Port Germein district. The rain caused very little damage in the rest of the district.
- Harvest progressed rapidly during November with only short delays due to several extreme and severe fire danger days.
- Harvest in the western part of the district was complete by late November and in the rest of the district by mid to late December.
- Barley yields were average to well above average across the district but grain quality was variable depending on stored soil moisture. There was a lower than normal percentage of malting barley delivered, mainly due to high screenings (low retention).
- Wheat yields were average to above average in the northern part of the district but grain quality was highly variable. Grain protein levels were reasonable although slightly lower than anticipated given the dry finish to the season.
- Wheat yields in the southern part of the district were close to average but with lower grain quality, returns have been low.
- Wheat screening levels were highly variable with large fluctuations between paddocks and even within paddocks.
- Most wheat delivered from growers in the northern part of the district had only minimal down grading attributable to high screenings.
- In the southern part of the district screenings levels were much higher with some grain being undeliverable (40% screenings) and other grain requiring cleaning to meet even low grade specifications.
- Canola yields were average to above average with reasonable oil content.
- Most pulse crops yielded below average, particularly lupins, vetch and beans.
- Numerous small fires were started during the harvesting of pulse crops, particularly lentils and vetch but most only caused minimal damage.
- Some vetch crops with high biomass but not harvested because of poor grain yield were baled and sold to feed millers.
- There have been several hay stack fires with significant losses of hay and other equipment.

PASTURES

- Most producers have put livestock on crop stubbles which have high amounts of quality feed.
- Livestock are in good condition and most growers have been able to finish lambs and young cattle for target markets.

Mid North

WEATHER

- Rainfall for November was above average in the south and very much above average in the north.
- December rainfall was below average to very much below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for November and the highest on record for December.

CROPS

- Harvest was completed by the end of December.
- Wheat yields were varied from above average to slightly below average.
- Wheat quality was generally poor with high levels of screenings. Some grain was able to be cleaned to meet quality specifications but most screening levels were too high and was delivered as lower paying grades of utility wheat (AUH2 and AUW) and General Purpose wheat (AGP).
- Wheat grain protein was highly variable and generally lower than expected given the dry finish to the season.
- Durum yields were below average with variable levels of screenings depending on variety.
- Barley yields were close to average but quality was highly variable with a high percentage having high screenings and low test weights. Most barley was delivered as F3 with smaller amounts of other grades.
- Bean crops were severely affected by the hot, dry finish with most crops yielding less than 30% of average.
- Pea crops were also badly affected by the hot dry conditions and some also suffered frost damage. Early-sown crops yielded about 50% of average and later-sown crops only 30%.
- Most vetch crops were not harvested due to low yields but those producers that persisted have been rewarded with high prices.
- Lentil crops did not pod well and the hot weather caused significant damage with early sown crops yielding 60% of average and later-sown crops only 20%. Most crops had a high proportion of small grain and most growers cleaned grain before delivery to ensure delivery into higher grades.
- Canola crops were less affected by the hot dry finish and most crops yielded close to average with some even above average.
- A large proportion of grain has been warehoused with the expectation that prices will rise after harvest.

PASTURES

- Livestock are currently grazing stubbles but these are deteriorating quickly.
- Pastures have deteriorated rapidly and many producers will need to provide supplementary feed for livestock once stubbles have been grazed.
- Livestock prices have remained high and mixed farmers have been able to capitalise on high livestock returns.

Lower North

WEATHER

- Rainfall during November was average in the south and above average in the north of the district.
- December rainfall ranged from average in the west to very much below average in the east.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average in November and the highest on record during December.

CROPS

- Harvest progressed rapidly during November.
- A fire which started in the Pinery area on 25 November burnt more than 85,000 ha in an area approximately bounded by Pinery, Mallala, Owen, Roseworthy Tarlee, Kapunda and Greenock at a rate of over 10,000 ha per hour
- An estimated 55,000 ha of cropped land was burnt in the fire.
- In the Pinery/Mallala area harvest was approximately 75% complete with the majority of canola, pulses and barley harvested. Further east towards Freeling and Kapunda harvest was less than 50% complete with canola and most pulses completed but very little wheat harvested.
- An estimated 22,500 ha of unharvested crops were burnt with production losses of approximately 60,000 tonnes of grain, 33,000 tonnes of hay and 50,000 tonnes of straw.
- The fire destroyed numerous hay sheds and other farm buildings with many farmers sustaining significant machinery losses.
- The large amount of biomass from heavy stubbles created significant heat and the strong winds caused the fire to move rapidly, leaving no or minimal ground cover.
- Strong winds following the fire caused significant soil erosion, particularly on the lighter soils.
- Most farmers have cultivated burnt areas of heavier soils to bring up clods of soil to reduce the risk of erosion. This has been relatively effective in most areas although some drifting is still occurring on sandy soils where cultivation does not bring clods to the surface.
- For farmers who were not affected or only partly affected by the fire harvest was completed by mid to late December.
- Wheat yields were slightly below average (10%), although grain quality was variable with high levels of screenings in some crops. Much of the high screenings grain was delivered direct to feed millers.
- Barley yields were 10% below average with most classified as Feed (F1 and F2) grade.
- Yields of most pulse crops were 25 to 30% below average.
- Additional unburnt cereal stubbles have been cut and baled to meet the short fall in straw demand.
- Farmers in the fire area have also lost seed supplies for the coming season. Grain has been set aside and stored at various locations to meet these requirements.

PASTURES

- Almost 18,000 sheep and 87 cattle were destroyed in the fire.
- Most livestock that survived the fire have been agisted out of the fire area reducing the short term need for fodder. Livestock are likely to be returned when feed in agisted areas runs out and supplementary feed will be required until sufficient pasture growth is available.
- Large areas of medic seed crops were burnt in the fire with seed shortages of some varieties likely this season.

Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER

- Temperatures were above average for November. December temperatures were the highest on record across the district.
- Rainfall was above average for November and below average rainfall for December.

CROPS

- Harvest is now complete with the majority of producers finished well before Christmas.
- Some farmers on Southern Yorke Peninsula are cleaning grain to remove screenings and small grain before delivery to achieve better grades. Yields were above average in the north but below average across central parts and around average in the south of the district.
- Barley was the better performing cereal, yielding close to average.
- Stand-out wheat yields of 5t/ha⁺ occurred on the lighter soils of the northern areas that had stored soil moisture from summer rain or from 2014 lentil crops. Wheat on wheat performed poorly.
- Wheat and barley quality was variable with protein levels above average due to the dry spring.
- High screenings caused significant quality downgrades. Viterra opened new quality grades to cater for the poor quality grain being delivered.
- Barley was mostly Feed (F2) quality, with around 20% in both higher value feed grade F1 and lower F3 grades. F3 Barley was mainly reaped on heavier soil types or where snails, weeds or fungal disease caused plant stress.
- Canola yielded just above average and had good oil content.
- Lentil yields and quality (screenings) were below average, particularly early sown crops that grew a lot of dry matter early in the season. There was minimal insect damage despite large flights of moths.
- Bean yields were half of average due to the high spring temperature and windy weather. Coastal regions and crops that grew high biomass were the worst affected.
- Pea yields were variable with some producers achieving above average yields and others approximately two thirds of their average.
- The August frost events in isolated areas of the district severely reduced final yields.
- Chickpea grain fill suffered from the November heat therefore yields were 75% of average, however the \$1000 per tonne price made chickpeas a very profitable crop for 2015.
- Oaten hay quality was excellent this year with above average yields in most of the district except in the northern areas which had even higher yields but poorer quality.
- Summer weed levels are currently lower than normal. Paddocks harvested before the early November rains have a higher summer weed density than others and many of these have now been sprayed to conserve soil moisture for next year.
- No reports of header fires in lentil crops occurred after the November rain as the rain is assumed to have washed the "lentil dust" from the canopy. Before this rain there were a very high number of small fires that producers were able to control.

PASTURES

- Livestock have been moved onto stubbles across the district and are generally in excellent condition.
- Some barley, pulse and oat stubbles have reasonable levels of grain remaining on the ground, due to wind damage just before harvest.
- A small germination of volunteer cereals following the November rainfall event has provided some feed. Some producers are currently supplementary feeding stock with hay and grain.

Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula & Kangaroo Island

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to below average across the region for November and below to very much below average for December.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above to very much above average for November and the highest on record in December.

CROPS

Central Hills/Fleurieu

- Harvest was completed by the end of December.
- Early sown crops had average yields but quality was below average due to the dry spring finish. Later-sown crops had below average yields with poor grain quality.
- More grain than average is being stored on farm due to low cereal prices and quality issues.
- The early November rain did not affect grain quality. Summer weeds germinated but not in excessive numbers due to a lack of follow-up rain.

Kangaroo Island

- Harvest was completed by the end of December.
- Grain yields were average to above average with the majority of grain being good quality and only a low proportion with high screenings.
- Rain in early November caused some unharvested grain to sprout.
- Some summer weeds also germinated following the rain with most being controlled with grazing.

PASTURES

Central Hills/Fleurieu

- There is limited pasture due to the dry spring and summer.
- Early destocking has been a successful strategy.
- Early sown crops are providing some stubble feed but later-sown crops have little feed value.
- There are an increased number of containment feeding areas being set up to keep pregnant ewes in good condition.
- A fire near Currency Creek burnt over 300 ha of mainly pasture in late December.

Kangaroo Island

- Livestock are grazing crop stubbles.
- Pasture feed has almost gone.
- Some producers have already commenced supplementary feeding of livestock.

Lower Murray

WEATHER

- November rainfall was average in the south to above average in the north of the district December rainfall was below average in the south to very much below average in the north.
- A significant rainfall event was recorded early in November
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for November and the highest on record during December.

CROPS

- Harvest was completed by the end of the December.
- The isolated heavy thunderstorms in early November did not damage crops.
- There were no major rain delays through harvest.
- Barley generally performed better than wheat across the district with yields for wheat around average and barley above average.
- Barley quality varied with some malt delivered and some down-graded due to low test weight.
- Wheat quality was good to excellent.
- Hot dry spring conditions have been the main cause of a reduction in yield potential this season.
- Early sown crops with good preparation performed the best in 2015.
- Canola yields and grain quality were lower than average due to hot spring conditions but generally remained profitable.
- Yields of pulse crops varied from average to below average.

PASTURES

- Pastures matured early with the hot dry conditions
- Livestock have been moved to stubble paddocks where possible.
- Some producers have already started supplementary feeding livestock.
- Livestock condition has been good going into summer.

Northern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Thunderstorms in early November brought heavy rainfall to parts of the district. Loxton and Wanbi recorded well above average rainfall while the rest of the district was around the average for the month.
- Rainfall in December was below to very much below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above to very much above average for November and the highest on record for December.

CROPS

- Harvest was at least two weeks earlier than normal, due to the lack of subsoil moisture, the poor spring rainfall and the period of high temperatures in early October.
- Many farmers finished harvest in early December.
- Despite the low rainfall year, many areas still recorded average to slightly above average yields, particularly in the eastern side of the district which received slightly higher growing season rainfall.
- Some areas that missed out on critical rainfall events reaped yields well below average, such as west of Moorook and also around Wanbi.
- Most farmers found significant frost damage, with some wheat losses south of Paruna estimated at over 50%.
- While barley yields were generally better than expected, quality was poor due mainly to high screenings (low retention).
- Wheat varied in quality, and there was not the consistently high protein that is often associated with dry, early finishes to the season.
- Canola yields were generally poor this season.
- While there were a few reports of high pea yields, most pulse crops were below average.
- November rains resulted in a germination of summer weeds, which most cropping farmers have sprayed or are in the process of spraying.
- Farmers with weed-sensing spray technologies are using significantly less herbicide so far this summer.

PASTURES

- Poor spring pasture growth, along with the early harvest resulted in livestock being put into stubble paddocks much earlier than usual.
- Paddock feed is adequate at present but there is concern that it will diminish significantly in coming months and lead to erosion concerns.
- There are slightly more bare pasture paddocks than normal for this stage of the season.

Southern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Thunderstorms in early November brought heavy rain to parts of the district with rainfall ranging from average in the west to very much above average around Lameroo.
- December rainfall was below to very much below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for November and the highest on record for December.

CROPS

- Hot dry spring conditions hastened the ripening of crops leading to another early harvest, around a week earlier than last year.
- Several days of very hot windy conditions caused harvesting delays due to fire danger.
- Heavy rains which fell across the district in early November did not benefit crops due to the late timing but fortunately did not affect grain quality either.
- Canola and some pulse crops were harvested early with disappointing yields and quality.
- Wheat yields were well below average across the district.
- Significant frost damage was observed in wheat crops once harvesting began.
- High protein and good quality was reported in wheat unaffected by frost.
- Barley crops suffered less frost damage, although quality was average, particularly in terms of high screenings (low retention).
- Several fires broke out across the district but were contained before too much damage was caused. Spontaneous combustion of legume hay has been reported as a cause of at least two fires.

PASTURES

- There is little feed left in pasture paddocks and livestock have been moved to stubble paddocks where possible.
- Soil erosion is a concern as feed production has been limited this season.
- Some producers are supplementary feeding livestock. Livestock are generally still in good condition.

Upper South East

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to above average for November and below average for December.
- Rainfall received during the growing season was the lowest on record for some areas of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for November and well above average to the highest on record for December.

CROPS

- Harvest was completed in mid to late December.
- The Wolseley district was severely affected by the dry conditions due to this district's heavy clay soils. Many crops in this district were not worth reaping or yielded only 10% of their average.
- Closer to Naracoorte in the lower part of the Upper South East where rainfall was slightly higher, crops performed better overall with yields closer to 50% of the average.
- Yields across all crop and soil types were down 60-90% from the average with frost and hot drying winds contributing to yield loss.
- Canola was the worst performing crop only averaging 30% of average with grain oil content ranging from 29-42% and averaging 34-35%.
- Bean yields were 30-35% of average with some crops only yielding 10% of average with a few crops a complete failure. Most bean crops only received one fungicide application due to poor yield potential.
- Wheat and barley crops ranged from 30-60% of the average, depending on soil type and sowing time. Barley quality on rain-fed (non-irrigated) land was poor and many crops were classified as lower value feed grades (F3 or F4).
- Lupin crops yielded 40% of average with large differences in yield mostly due to time of sowing. Split lupin seed has been a large issue due to manganese deficiency caused by insufficient moisture for uptake.
- Most producers have obtained enough seed for all crops next year but the quality is variable.
- Approximately 10% of all crops were a complete failure and were grazed by stock for remaining fodder value.
- There has been a high incidence of haystack fires due to a range of factors including high water soluble carbohydrate levels in drought affected hay, too high moisture levels at baling and hay stacks getting wet from rain in November.

PASTURES

- There will be minimal dryland lucerne seed production but irrigated stands were at full flower to 50% pod set at the end of December. Seed prices are currently at record highs.
- Very little dry pasture remains and stubbles only have about half their normal grazing value so lambs that are often finished on stubbles have been sold as stores or at lighter kill weights.
- Livestock condition is holding reasonably well, although the condition of cattle is starting to decline and maintaining livestock condition will be challenging due low feed and cash reserves.
- Conserved fodder and feed reserves are low. Many producers have opted to sell stock down to half of what they would normally run, particularly cattle. This has been driven by good livestock prices.
- Producers are considering what fodder crop options they have to fill the autumn/winter feed gap.

Lower South East

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average for November and below to very much below average for December.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average in November and the highest on record for December.

CROPS

- Harvest was approximately 50% complete by the end of December with most of the wheat and canola reaped. Most producers will have completed harvest by the end of January.
- Wheat and canola crops have produced average to above average yields with peat soils and heavy soils performing the best this year. In a normal year these would often be waterlogged resulting in lower yields.
- A few crops that were sown later had below average yields.
- Canola grain oil contents were average.
- Beans were still being harvested with average yields and well above average prices.
- The drier conditions have generally been beneficial for many parts of the Lower South East particularly where water logging would normally occur.
- There were reports of higher than normal snail and larvae infestations in some crops.
- Army worms were in extremely high numbers but a very minor problem as little barley is grown in the lower parts of the South East.
- Some producers observed higher than normal numbers of native budworm in bean crops and required two insecticide applications to achieve adequate control.
- There have been reports of a couple of haystack fires but no more than normal.

PASTURES

- The dry conditions reduced pasture growth in some areas with lighter soils.
- Very little green feed remains but good amounts of standing dry feed is on offer.
- Some producers with higher stocking rates have just started supplementary feeding small amounts of hay to stock.
- Livestock condition is excellent.
- Growth rates of lambs and young cattle has been much quicker than normal due to the drier winter and very little water logging resulting in exceptional pasture growth and quality.