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Crop and Pasture Report South Australia

2014-15 HARVEST SUMMARY

JANUARY 2015

PREMIUM
FOOD AND WINE FROM OUR
CLEAN
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

- Rainfall for November was average to below average across most of the State. Parts of Eastern Eyre Peninsula and the Lower South East received well below average rainfall.
- December rainfall was average for Eyre Peninsula and the Upper North but average to below average in most other areas of the State. Areas in the Upper South East received very much below average rainfall.
- Mean maximum temperatures for November were very much above average on Western Eyre Peninsula, Kangaroo Island, and the Upper and Lower South East. In other districts temperatures were above average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average in all districts during December.
- Thunderstorms brought light falls of rain to parts of the State and lightning started numerous fires.
- A number of heat waves were recorded in parts of the State, particularly during November.

CROPS

- Harvest was completed in most areas of the State by mid-December with only Southern Yorke Peninsula, Kangaroo Island and the Lower South East still harvesting into January.
- Many farmers have reported that it was the earliest they have ever completed harvest.
- Despite having one of the warmest and driest springs on record, total crop production across the State has been above the long term average, mainly due to crops drawing on moisture stored in the soil from heavy rainfalls earlier in the season.
- Yields and quality have been variable across the State. Western Eyre Peninsula and the northern part of the Upper North had an exceptional season with yields of most crops well above average.
- The Upper South East had an exceptionally poor season with well below average yields for all crops. Approximately 15% of the total crop area was cut for hay, further reducing grain production.
- Canola yields were generally well below average across the State and oil content was variable with some districts achieving average levels while others had lower oil content.
- Lower canola yields resulted from a combination of Beet Western Yellow virus, waterlogging, frost damage and dry spring conditions.
- Barley yields and quality were above expectations in most districts with average to above average yields in all districts except the Upper South East. Grain quality was also excellent with a higher proportion of grain making malting quality than normal.
- Wheat yields were variable across the State with above average yields on Upper Eyre Peninsula and the northern part of the Upper North but average to below average in other districts.
- Wheat yields were above expectations in the low to medium rainfall areas and below expectation in many higher rainfall areas, due to wet conditions early in the season and the hot dry finish.
- Wheat grain protein was generally below average with the more wheat than normal in lower protein segregation of Australian Standard White (ASW) and less than normal in the higher protein classifications of Australian Premium White (APW) and the Australian Hard (AH).
- Durum crops suffered with the hot, dry finish resulting in below average yields and high proportions of screenings.
- Frost significantly reduced the yields of peas in some districts but unaffected crops have returned average yields.

- Bean crops have been severely affected by waterlogging, frost and hot, dry windy conditions with yields below average in all districts.
- Lentil yields were slightly below average in most districts but high prices ensured good returns were achieved.
- Lupin crops suffered from the frost and dry conditions giving below average yields but prices have increased with good local and interstate demand.
- Hay yields varied from above average in the Lower and Mid North and Yorke Peninsula, to well below average in other districts.
- Hay quality has also been highly variable, but hay exporting industry reports the dry finish and frost resulted in excellent quality export hay. Higher prices reflect the higher quality hay with demand from both domestic and export markets.
- There are reports of increased mice activity around sheds and in paddocks, particularly on Western Eyre Peninsula, Yorke Peninsula and the Mid North.

PASTURES

- There is limited annual pasture feed available in most areas of the State.
- On Eyre Peninsula most crop stubbles contained a high amount of quality feed with more variable levels in other parts of the State.
- Producers in the Mid North, Central Hills and South East are beginning to provide supplementary feed to livestock. Most have adequate supplies of hay and grain on hand.
- Livestock throughout the State are generally in good condition but many will require supplementary feeding to maintain condition over the next few months.
- Many producers in the South East and Central Hills have sold sheep and cattle rather than feeding them over the summer-autumn period.

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

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 dry-land 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>	503 000	142 000	407 000	175 000	260 000	244 500	53 500	4 600
	<i>t</i>	930 000	370 000	712 000	580 000	482 000	623 000	160 000	11 500
Durum	<i>ha</i>				18 000	10 000	10 000	5 000	
	<i>t</i>				45 000	16 000	19 000	12 000	
Barley	<i>ha</i>	75 000	70 000	76 000	146 000	87 000	83 000	27 000	2 700
	<i>t</i>	135 000	195 000	144 000	482 000	164 000	232 000	87 000	7 000
Oats	<i>ha</i>	13 500	3 200	5 000	5 000	10 000	8 000	2 000	3 300
	<i>t</i>	16 000	7 000	7 000	11 000	13 000	17 000	4 500	8 200
Rye	<i>ha</i>								
	<i>t</i>								
Triticale	<i>ha</i>	1 500	500	4 000	2 000	2 500	2 500	500	300
	<i>t</i>	2 400	1 250	6 000	5 500	4 200	6 500	1 300	900
Peas	<i>ha</i>	5 000	5 500	5 500	20 000	25 000	24 000	7 300	400
	<i>t</i>	4 500	6 500	3 300	30 000	25 000	32 000	11 500	550
Lupins	<i>ha</i>	1 200	23 000	5 000	1 500	3 000	3 000	900	1 500
	<i>t</i>	1 000	32 000	5 000	2 000	3 300	3 500	1 400	2 500
Beans	<i>ha</i>		6 000	200	12 500	6 500	14 200	6 000	600
	<i>t</i>		7 000	200	20 000	6 500	21 000	8 500	1 100
Chickpeas	<i>ha</i>		200	200	9 500	3 200	5 000	1 000	
	<i>t</i>		250	100	10 500	3 200	4 500	1 200	
Lentils	<i>ha</i>		2 000		78 000	4 000	12 000	6 000	
	<i>t</i>		3 000		117 000	4 400	15 500	9 000	
Vetch	<i>ha</i>	800	1 800	800	2 000	5 500	5 000	300	
	<i>t</i>	400	1 500	500	1 500	1 600	2 500	300	
Canola	<i>ha</i>	5 400	63 000	9 000	32 000	28 000	54 000	10 500	4 100
	<i>t</i>	6 000	63 000	9 000	42 000	25 000	65 000	14 500	7 400
Hay (not in total)	<i>ha</i>	6 200	4 500	3 500	19 000	25 000	34 000	7 000	4 300
	<i>t</i>	15 500	18 000	9 500	95 000	88 000	142 000	35 000	17 000
Total	<i>ha</i>	605 400	317 200	512 700	501 500	444 700	465 200	120 000	17 500
	<i>t</i>	1 095 300	686 500	887 100	1 346 500	748 200	1 041 500	311 200	39 150

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>	5 500	69 000	245 000	123 000	59 000	20 000	2 311 100
	<i>t</i>	12 000	117 000	294 000	166 000	95 000	64 000	4 616 500
Durum	<i>ha</i>	300	800			9 000		53 100
	<i>t</i>	500	1 200			12 500		106 200
Barley	<i>ha</i>	9 000	54 000	49 000	81 000	71 000	14 500	845 200
	<i>t</i>	21 000	95 000	73 000	105 000	114 000	43 000	1 897 000
Oats	<i>ha</i>	1 800	3 000	3 000	3 000	16 500	4 000	81 300
	<i>t</i>	3 600	3 600	3 600	5 000	23 000	9 000	131 500
Rye	<i>ha</i>		1 500	4 000	2 500	1 000		9 000
	<i>t</i>		1 800	3 600	3 000	600		9 000
Triticale	<i>ha</i>	1 500	5 000	6 000	8 000	5 000	1 000	40 300
	<i>t</i>	3 600	7 500	7 200	12 000	6 300	2 500	67 150
Peas	<i>ha</i>	1 500	4 500	2 000	3 000	3 000	400	107 100
	<i>t</i>	2 400	4 000	600	1 800	3 000	700	125 850
Lupins	<i>ha</i>	1 300	2 000	2 400	10 000	14 000	3 000	71 800
	<i>t</i>	2 200	1 800	1 200	8 000	11 000	4 500	79 400
Beans	<i>ha</i>	400	200		1 200	11 500	9 000	68 300
	<i>t</i>	700	200		1 200	12 500	18 000	96 900
Chickpeas	<i>ha</i>			600	600	200	200	20 700
	<i>t</i>			500	600	150	200	21 200
Lentils	<i>ha</i>			400	600	3 000	200	106 200
	<i>t</i>			200	500	2 500	250	152 350
Vetch	<i>ha</i>		600	1 800	4 200	400		23 200
	<i>t</i>		200	1 400	3 000	250		13 150
Canola	<i>ha</i>	1 400	8 000	22 000	11 000	36 000	18 000	302 400
	<i>t</i>	2 200	4 800	7 700	6 600	29 000	32 000	314 200
Hay (not in total)	<i>ha</i>	17 000	7 200	2 500	12 500	54 000	25 000	221 700
	<i>t</i>	50 000	25 000	5 000	31 000	163 000	100 000	794 000
Total	<i>ha</i>	22 700	148 600	336 200	248 100	229 600	70 300	4 039 700
	<i>t</i>	48 200	237 100	393 000	312 700	309 800	174 150	7 630 400

TABLE 2 CROP ESTIMATES AGAINST FIVE YEAR AVERAGE

		2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	5 year ave	2014/15
Wheat	<i>ha</i>	2 111 100	2 237 100	2 226 100	2 176 300	2 295 900	2 209 300	2 311 100
	<i>t</i>	4 032 500	5 818 500	4 444 800	3 556 500	4 976 000	4 565 700	4 616 500
Durum	<i>ha</i>	60 000	69 800	74 600	77 200	68 300	70 000	53 100
	<i>t</i>	157 200	240 600	223 950	181 240	194 930	199 600	106 200
Barley	<i>ha</i>	1 152 300	965 200	987 700	907 100	854 900	973 400	845 200
	<i>t</i>	2 544 100	2 839 100	2 031 800	1 912 900	2 093 500	2 284 300	1 897 000
Oats	<i>ha</i>	79 700	75 300	75 800	85 800	85 000	80 300	81 300
	<i>t</i>	136 600	152 300	117 400	128 740	159 700	138 900	131 500
Rye	<i>ha</i>	9 400	9 500	9 500	9 500	7 100	9 000	9 000
	<i>t</i>	8 200	11 600	7 900	7 500	6 350	8 300	9 000
Triticale	<i>ha</i>	85 900	85 700	80 200	69 200	49 300	74 100	40 300
	<i>t</i>	117 700	167 100	117 500	95 920	86 500	116 900	67 150
Peas	<i>ha</i>	127 700	126 300	109 900	103 700	106 100	114 700	107 100
	<i>t</i>	181 150	238 500	144 400	116 100	143 250	164 700	125 850
Lupins	<i>ha</i>	66 500	64 900	64 900	63 200	69 300	65 800	71 800
	<i>t</i>	97 200	120 100	78 900	75 110	105 500	95 400	79 400
Beans	<i>ha</i>	71 200	71 500	72 200	69 400	69 000	70 700	68 300
	<i>t</i>	144 350	168 600	121 220	105 510	139 400	135 800	96 900
Chickpeas	<i>ha</i>	13 200	10 700	12 200	19 700	20 700	15 300	20 700
	<i>t</i>	17 150	16 000	19 550	21 810	29 280	20 800	21 200
Lentils	<i>ha</i>	52 100	97 700	106 100	88 800	94 800	87 900	106 200
	<i>t</i>	89 450	174 350	181 600	97 720	163 350	141 300	152 350
Vetch	<i>ha</i>	12 900	12 800	13 100	13 100	17 000	13 800	23 200
	<i>t</i>	10 650	12 900	11 120	6 800	14 320	11 200	13 150
Canola	<i>ha</i>	182 700	196 500	269 500	302 700	301 000	250 500	302 400
	<i>t</i>	297 100	381 700	435 700	398 700	434 400	389 500	314 200
Hay (not in total)	<i>ha</i>	274 100	244 200	201 500	204 500	227 300	230 300	221 700
	<i>t</i>	1 004 000	1 066 000	774 400	769 000	1 018 100	926 300	794 000
Total	<i>ha</i>	4 024 700	4 023 000	4 101 800	3 985 700	4 038 400	4 034 700	4 039 700
	<i>t</i>	7 833 350	10 341 350	7 935 840	6 704 550	8 546 480	8 272 300	7 630 400

District Reports

Western Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Rainfall for November and December was average to below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were very much above average for November and average for December.

CROPS

- Warm, dry weather conditions allowed harvest to progress rapidly and many growers in the region had finished harvest before the end of November with the remaining farmers finishing by mid-December.
- There was little impact of pest and disease on yields due to the dry conditions during spring.
- Despite the dry finish to the season, crop yields were generally good to excellent. Reports of yields 50% above the long term average were common with reports of exceptional yields, up to 3 t/ha for wheat and 4 t/ha for barley on better soil types.
- Canola yields were generally above the district average with most achieving high oil content. There were reports of canola yields above 2.0 t/ha on the best paddocks at Mt Cooper.
- Wheat grain protein levels were lower than expected with most delivered as APW or ASW quality.
- Many producers who delivered malting barley varieties were able to achieve malt grade. Screening percentages were generally low across all cereals.
- The dry conditions resulted in little summer weed growth to the end of December.
- Snail numbers are lower than normal.
- There are reports of increased mice activity around sheds with growers monitoring numbers and preparing to bait if necessary.

PASTURES

- Stubbles contain a high amount of high quality feed and livestock are in excellent condition.
- Some farmers are feeding stock in confined areas to avoid baring off paddocks at high risk of wind erosion.
- Most producers have adequate supplies of hay on hand in addition to the stubble feed.

Lower Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- November rainfall was average to below average. December rainfall was average with thunderstorm activity in the middle of the month and a cold front bringing isolated showers at the end of the month.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average during November and average for December.

CROPS

- Hot and windy conditions in mid-November and mild humid conditions at the end of the December caused some harvest delays, however most producers had finished harvest by mid-December.
- Grain yields and quality were highly variable depending on soil type and the degree of waterlogging experienced early in the season.
- Cereals on the productive red brown earths north of Cummins yielded well above average, with reports of 5.0 to 6.0 t/ha wheat crops near Yeelanna.
- On less productive soils or paddocks that had been waterlogged, yields were well below average (1.2 to 2.0 t/ha).
- Much of the wheat delivered was APW quality with lesser amounts of ASW and AH. There were high screenings in later sown crops on sandier soils which were waterlogged early in the season.
- Canola yields on productive soils north of Cummins and around Butler were average to above average with generally high oil content. Yields on sandy/ironstone gravelly soils around Kappinie and south of Edillille were well below average.
- Pulses yielded better than was first expected with average lupin and slightly below average bean yields.
- Snail levels were high across the region at harvest and many farmers used snail crushers to clean grain before delivery.
- Mice activity in paddocks and around sheds is low.

PASTURES

- Stubble paddocks contain high levels of high quality feed and livestock remain in excellent condition.
- There has been a germination of summer weeds following rainfall at the end of December. Follow up rains forecast for the start of January will prompt farmers to spray weeds prior to the break of the season.

Eastern Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- November rainfall was below to well below average with many locations receiving their lowest recorded November rainfall in 20 years. December rainfall was average.
- Thunderstorm activity around November 16th and in early December resulted in generally cool and humid conditions for harvest. Mean maximum temperatures were above average in November and average in December.

CROPS

- Crop yields were better than producers' estimates, with cereals yielding 10 to 20% above the long term average. Earlier-sown crops on more productive soils performed better than on poorer soils.
- During late November and early December farmers often had to wait until mid-morning before grain moisture levels were low enough to harvest.
- Grain quality was generally high with much of the wheat being delivered as APW or AH. Despite the dry finish to the season screenings levels were generally low.
- A large proportion of malting varieties achieved malt grade at delivery.
- The quality of feed barley was variable with much of the delivered grain classified Feed 1. Dry conditions resulted in pinched grain on heavier soil types, reducing quality of some crops.
- Canola and pulse yields were highly variable with crops being affected by a range of factors during the season including pest damage, frost and fungal diseases.
- Canola yields are reported to have ranged from 0.75 t/ha on shallow or sandier soils to 1.7 t/ha on soils with better water holding capacity.
- High input costs and lower prices have returned a lower gross margin on canola than in other years. Some producers are considering growing vetch or medic as alternative break option to canola next year.
- The area of crop suffering yield losses due to frost was lower than expected with higher than average yields and the unfrosted areas of paddocks compensating for the frosted areas in many cases.
- Pest numbers at the end of harvest were generally low but farmers are monitoring mice numbers.

PASTURES

- Stubble paddocks contain a high amount of quality feed and livestock are in excellent condition.
- Dry conditions over summer have minimized the amount of summer weed growth in paddocks.
- Most growers have adequate supplies of stored feed in addition to stubble residues.

Upper North

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to below average for November and average for December.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for November and average for December.
- Several thunderstorms brought isolated rainfall across the district with lightning starting numerous fires.

CROPS

- Harvest progressed rapidly during November with only limited delays due to fire bans and light falls of rain.
- Barley yields and quality were above average across the district.
- Wheat yields were more variable with most crops in the northern part of the district yielding above average. Frosted crops and late-sown crops were of average to below average yields.
- Mace wheat has again performed extremely well across the district.
- Wheat grain protein levels were slightly below average with only limited amounts of AH delivered and higher levels of ASW and APW.
- Canola and pea yields were well below average, due to a combination of frost and the dry finish to the season.
- Yields of other pulse crops were variable with early sown lupin and bean crops with only minor frost damage yielding close to average but later sown and frosted crops were well below average.
- Numerous fires caused minor crop damage with most being started by lightning and only a few by machinery.
- The Harvest Code of Practice has been followed by most farmers this season with harvest stopping on several hot windy days.
- The silo system coped extremely well during the peak harvest period with minimal delays at most sites.
- The dry spring and below average rainfall during harvest has resulted in very few summer weeds in early January.

PASTURES

- Most pasture paddocks still have good cover despite the dry spring.
- Perennial pastures in the Bangor fire area have recovered well but annual pastures have been severely affected.
- Most livestock were moved onto stubbles during November as crops were harvested.

Mid North

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to below average for November and December.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average in November and average in December.
- Several thunderstorms brought isolated rainfall across the district with lightning starting numerous fires.

CROPS

- Harvest was completed across the district by mid to late December with minimal delays.
- Yields in the medium to low rainfall areas of the district were better than expected.
- Crops in the higher rainfall areas suffered from the wet start to the season, frost damage and the dry finish with minimal rainfall received after August. Yields in these areas were lower than expected.
- Crop returns in the higher rainfall areas were relatively poor due to the high input costs of nitrogen and fungicide applications, and below average yields.
- Durum crops were severely affected by the dry finish and yields were relatively poor, being 20% below average with high levels of screenings.
- Barley yields were above expectations and a higher percentage than normal was classified as malting. Most crops yielded close to the long term average.
- Canola yields were below the long term average with variable oil levels, due to Beet Western Yellow virus, insect damage and the hot dry finish to the season.
- Bean crops were severely affected by frost, weakening stems and making them more prone to wind damage. Yields varied from 1.2 to 1.6t/ha, 20% below the long term average.
- Field pea yields were variable with slightly below average yields in most areas and well below average in areas affected by frost.
- Lentil yields were close to the long term average and with high prices have given good returns.
- Lupin crops did not recover from early frost damage and yields were below the long term average. Prices have risen with good demand from the dairy industry.
- Oaten hay yields were above average with excellent quality and prices have risen due to strong domestic and export demand.
- Chickpea crops were affected by the hot dry finish with reduced seed number and size affecting both yield and quality.
- There have been some reports of increased mice activity around sheds and active holes in paddocks.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed is limited throughout the district.
- Most crop stubbles have limited feed which has been quickly eaten out by stock.
- Producers are supplementing stubbles with mineral blocks to improve stubble utilisation.
- Some producers are already starting to provide supplementary feed to stock, particularly pregnant ewes, to maintain body condition.

Lower North

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average during November and below average during December.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average in November and average during December.

CROPS

- Harvest progressed rapidly with very few delays.
- Barley yields were better than expected with most being close to the five-year average. Crops in parts of the district were able to fill with good grain quality and most was classified as Feed 1.
- Very few malting varieties are grown in the district so most growers aim for high yields of feed grain.
- Wheat yields were close to the long term average with very few screenings and reasonable grain protein with most delivered as APW and AH.
- Durum crops suffered from the dry finish with well below average yields and high screenings.
- Durum production is likely to continue to fall as higher prices are unlikely to compensate for variable yields and quality problems.
- Bean yields were well below average, with the dry conditions and hot winds causing crops to bend and lose pods.
- Pea crops coped reasonably well under the dry conditions and yields were close to the long term average, although grains were smaller than normal.
- Canola yields were below average due to the Beet Western Yellows virus and the dry finish to the season. The crop's shallower root systems were not able to access deep soil moisture.
- Canola oil content was average at around 41%.
- There were very few grain quality issues and most grain was able to be delivered without any downgrading, including pulse grains.
- Lentil crops performed well with close to average yields and good quality.
- Generally hay yields were near average and of excellent quality.

PASTURES

- Early-sown medic seed crops flowered early and produced minimal biomass and poor seed yields. Later sown crops produced more biomass with higher seed yields.
- Pasture hay cuts were well below average with medic not producing adequate biomass.

Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER

- November and December rainfall was average to below average across the Yorke Peninsula with very little soil moisture stored in the soil profile.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for November and average for December.
- Two isolated hail storms events in November damaged some windrowed canola, lentils and cereal.

CROPS

- Harvest was completed early in Northern and Central Yorke Peninsula. Mild conditions during December slowed reaping on Southern Yorke Peninsula which finished in early to mid-January.
- Many producers reported that this is the earliest they have ever finished harvest (with some finishing in November).
- Some fires were started by headers reaping chickpea and lentil crops.
- All crops have far exceeded earlier expectations for yield and quality, demonstrating the importance of stored soil moisture and improved farming practices in grain production.
- Wheat performed better than expected across the district, with above average yields and mostly APW quality.
- Some early-sown paddocks on Northern Yorke Peninsula had yield reductions of 0.5-1.0 t/ha through frost damage. Wheat quality was also reduced by frost damage, resulting in higher proportions of screenings.
- Southern Yorke Peninsula reported some very high screenings (13-21%) in wheat, mainly in later sown crops on shallow soil over rock.
- Barley yields were outstanding, ranging from 2.8 to 6 t/ha with higher yields occurring more in the Central Yorke Peninsula region than in the north or south. Most malting varieties achieved malt classification and most feed barley segregated into Feed quality classifications.
- Lentils generally had better yields and quality than expected with medic and Bifora being the main weed contamination issues. The dry finish to the season resulted in some small grain but this was easily screened out before delivery.
- Chickpea and field pea yields were generally above average, although frost damage and snail contamination reduced yields and quality in some pea crops.
- Canola yields were average, but oil content was slightly down (most below 42%).
- Oaten hay achieved 6.5-10 t/ha, but quality was slightly lower than expected.
- Mice have been observed in the Central Yorke Peninsula during harvest and active holes are now appearing in paddocks.
- The dry spring and summer is expected to have slowed the rate of breakdown of chemicals in the soil and this could influence the choice of crops to be grown in affected paddocks in 2015.

PASTURES

- Most livestock are now grazing stubbles. Stock condition is excellent still but likely to decline as feed diminishes under usual summer-autumn weather conditions.

Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula & Kangaroo Island

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to below average for November and average to above average for December.
- Rainfall for the October to December period was very much below average for the Fleurieu/Central Hills and below average for Kangaroo Island. Rainfall for the July to December period was very much below average for the entire region.
- Mean maximum temperatures were well above average for November and average for December.

CROPS

Central Hills/Fleurieu

- The overall total quantity of grain produced from the region was below average.
- Crops that were sown early or direct drilled produced average yields while crops that were later sown and/or sown into land that had been cultivated more gave below average or well below average yields.
- Canola yields in particular were well below average due to a combination of a poor spring and virus and/or insect damage. Despite this, the area sown this coming season is expected to remain the same.
- Overall grain quality was good with only some reports of frosted or pinched grain.

Kangaroo Island

- Harvest was approximately 80% completed by early January.
- Yields have been highly variable but mostly below average due to the dry finish.
- Grain quality has been highly variable.
- Bean grain quality was generally good but canola oil content was below average. Wheat protein has been highly variable ranging from hard to feed quality.

PASTURES

Central Hills/Fleurieu

- Cereal hay yields were well below average, with limited pasture hay and silage cut.
- Pasture paddocks have low cover levels reflecting the poor spring rainfall.
- Supplementary feeding of livestock has commenced.
- Livestock numbers are well below average, due to large numbers being sold in spring and early summer in anticipation of poor pasture feed supplies.
- Livestock are healthy with very few issues reported.

Kangaroo Island

- The amount of pasture feed in annual pastures is low.
- Pasture quality is declining rapidly as a result of the summer rains and is below that required for stock maintenance.
- Most producers are providing supplementary feed to stock.
- Kikuyu pastures are responding well to the rainfall events in December.
- The few brassica crops sown for pasture are producing well due to low insect numbers and December rains.

Lower Murray

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average for November and average to below average for December
- All areas received average to slightly above average annual rainfall for 2014, mainly due to two very high rainfall months of February and April.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average to very much above average in November with periods of extreme heat and high winds. Temperatures during December were average.

CROPS

- Harvest progressed well across the district and was generally completed by the end of the third week of December.
- Barley yields were better than expected and generally above average. Barley protein was lower than average so a high proportion achieved malt quality.
- Wheat yields were also slightly above average despite the poor finish to the season, as crops used stored soil moisture from early season rainfall.
- Protein was generally low in wheat, with a large percentage delivered as ASW quality.
- Lupin yields were highly variable due to seasonal factors and soil types.
- While many pea crops suffered severe frost damage, there were reports of high yields.
- Hay performed above average this season and was generally of very good quality.
- Canola yields were generally slightly below average across the district, mainly due to Beet Western Yellows virus, frost and late insect attack.
- November rains resulted in some weed germination, requiring an early summer herbicide application by most farmers.

PASTURES

- Livestock are generally in good condition, grazing on cereal stubbles.

Northern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Rainfall was generally average for November and average to below average in December.
- Thunderstorm activity in November saw some areas around Waikerie receive more than 60mm.
- Most locations received average to slightly above average annual rainfall for 2014, mainly due to the high rainfall months of February and April.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average during November with a few days of extreme heat and high winds. Mean maximum temperatures were average during December.

CROPS

- Harvest conditions were generally favourable across the district with only a few days of extreme heat or rainfall.
- Most farmers completed harvest by the third week of December.
- Barley yields were generally better than expected, and were slightly above average.
- Malting quality was achieved more often this season due to generally lower than normal barley grain protein.
- Wheat crops on deeper soils benefited from stored soil moisture, resulting in average to slightly above average yields despite the poor finish to the season.
- Wheat protein was generally lower than average, with less grain achieving hard quality.
- Crops on deep sandy soils generally performed poorly due to moisture stress earlier in the season.
- Pea yields were generally poor, mainly due to frost damage earlier in the season.
- Lupin yields were also below average.
- Canola yields were very poor this season due to Beet Western Yellows virus, insect damage, frost and moisture stress.
- Most farmers have undertaken some summer weed spraying, but this will increase with January rainfall.

PASTURES

- Annual pasture feed was generally depleted by the time crop stubbles became available in mid-November.
- Livestock are now grazing stubbles and maintaining condition.

Southern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average in November and average to below average in December.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average in November and average in December.

CROPS

- Harvest weather conditions were generally good, with only a few periods of extreme heat or rainfall.
- Reaping in most of the district was completed by the end of the third week of December.
- Barley yielded average to above average with lower than average protein levels, resulting in a high proportion of malt quality grain.
- Wheat yields were also average to slightly above average despite the poor finish to the season, as crops used stored soil moisture from early season rainfall.
- Crop yields on areas of shallow stone and deep sands were below average.
- Grain protein was generally lower than normal in wheat, with a large percentage delivered as ASW quality.
- Lupin yields were generally below average this season.
- Pea crops generally performed poorly due to frost damage and the dry finish to the season.
- Hay yields were around average and generally of good quality.
- Canola yields were well below average across the district, mainly due to Beet Western Yellows virus, frost and late insect attack.
- November rains have resulted in some weed germination, requiring an early summer herbicide application by most farmers.

PASTURES

- Annual pasture feed was generally depleted by early to mid-November.
- Livestock are now grazing stubbles with adequate feed still available.

Upper South East

WEATHER

- Mean maximum temperatures were above average to well above average in November and average for December.
- Rainfall for November was average to below average and average to very much below average for December. Many areas only received 50-60% or less of their long term average rainfall.

CROPS

- Crop yields were variable but generally well below average.
- Yields on sandy soils were the poorest being 50% below the long term average, while those on the soils with more clay were 30 to 35% below average.
- Loamy soils performed the best with yield reductions of only 25-30% from average.
- The grain quality of wheat was relatively good considering the dry finish to the season, especially on sandy and loamy soils. Grain quality was reasonable on loamy soils but poor on more clayey soils.
- Barley grain quality was variable with some crops classified as malting quality but overall malting barley production was down 20 to 30% compared to an average year.
- Most feed barley has either been warehoused or kept for stock feed.
- Canola was particularly disappointing with yields 50% below average and oil content down 2 to 3%.
- Lentils performed well considering the dry season, with yields down 30 to 40%. Grain quality was good although some required cleaning to meet market specifications.
- Beans yields were 30 to 40% below average with smaller grain size and lupin yields were down 40% with most kept on farm for livestock feed.
- Most legumes were sold at harvest as the prices were good, providing some cash flow to farmers.
- The combination of frost and the dry finish significantly impacted field pea yields.
- Of the area sown to crop, a minimum of 15% was cut for hay with a mixture of crops cut including canola, wheat, barley and some beans.
- Crop yields in the very upper south east (Culburra north) were 20% better than in the southern part of the upper south east due to slightly better rainfall earlier in the season.
- Early crop plans for the coming season indicate a reduction in the area of canola, being replaced with beans or wheat on wheat in the rotation. The area of canola is expected to drop by 10 to 15%.
- The area sown to lupins is decreasing due to the poor performance of the crop. Some of this is due to AMV (Alfalfa Mosaic Virus) being transmitted from lucerne.
- More straw has been baled this year by many producers who would not normally bale straw. Barley has been the preferred crop stubble for baling.

PASTURES

- Dryland lucerne has produced very little growth for grazing or seed production. Irrigated lucerne has performed well to date under weather conditions ideal for bee pollination and little competition for pollination from other plants.
- Most dry pasture has mostly been eaten now and heavy supplementary feeding, confinement feeding and feedlotting of stock has commenced.
- Livestock are in good body condition due to quality of the standing dry feed. Livestock condition is likely to start to deteriorate from now if producers do not provide adequate supplementary feed.
- Stubbles are being grazed and providing enough feed to maintain stock condition.

Lower South East

WEATHER

- Mean maximum temperatures for November were well above average and average for December.
- Rainfall during November was highly variable from average to very much below average and average to below average for December. Many areas received between 40-80% of their average rainfall.

CROPS

- Harvest is still in progress in the Lower South East with the majority expected to be finished by mid-January.
- Overall crop yields were variable due to soil type but were generally average despite the dry season. This was due to better varieties and just enough soil moisture to enable crops to finish.
- Grain quality has been good and similar to what would be achieved in a normal year.
- Barley and wheat crops were of average yields.
- Beans and canola yields were average to slightly below average with good oil content for most canola grain.
- A lot of long season wheat varieties were cut for hay due to concern the crops would hay-off. Most of the hay cut was sold as standing crops or is currently being sold.
- Initial discussions with growers indicate that there will be little change to crop area and type for the 2015 sowing season. Older varieties will be discarded and replaced by new improved crop varieties.

PASTURES

- Very little pasture hay was cut.
- There are still some good stands of dry feed available for livestock.
- Livestock have just been put onto crop stubbles.
- Many producers have sold sheep and cattle rather than feeding them over the summer-autumn period.
- Livestock condition is good at the moment but expected to decline from the end of December, particularly on properties that do not have enough supplementary feed supplies on hand.
- Producers who have not sold their livestock and would traditionally finish them on pastures are now heavily supplementing paddock feed or finishing animals in feedlots.