



PRIMARY
INDUSTRIES
& REGIONS SA
PIRSA

Crop and Pasture Report South Australia

2016-17 CROP SEEDING INTENTIONS

MAY 2016

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).

Information current as of 5 May, 2016

State Summary Addendum regarding opening rains current as of 10 May, 2016.

© Government of South Australia 2016.

ALL ENQUIRIES

Dave Lewis
Grains Account Manager
Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA)
GPO Box 1671, Adelaide SA 5001
Telephone +61 8 8429 0472
Email dave.lewis@sa.gov.au

DISCLAIMER

PIRSA and its employees do not warrant or make any representation regarding the use, or results of the use, of the information contained herein as regards to its correctness, accuracy, reliability and currency or otherwise. PIRSA and its employees expressly disclaim all liability or responsibility to any person using the information or advice.

Table of Contents

State Summary	4
Update: Opening Rains	6
State Summary Addendum (10 May 2016):	6
District Reports	7
Western Eyre Peninsula	7
Eastern Eyre Peninsula	9
Upper North	10
Mid North	11
Lower North	12
Yorke Peninsula	13
Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula & Kangaroo Island	14
Lower Murray	15
Northern Murray Mallee	16
Southern Murray Mallee	17
Upper South East	18
Lower South East	19

State Summary

WEATHER

- March rainfall was above average to very much above average in most of the agricultural districts. Rainfall in areas of the Lower Eyre Peninsula, Southern Yorke Peninsula, Kangaroo Island, Northern Mallee and Lower South East was average.
- April rainfall was average on Eyre Peninsula, Southern Yorke Peninsula and below average in most other agricultural districts.
- Mean maximum temperatures for March ranged from below average in the Far West Coast to very much above average in the Mid North and Mallee.
- Mean maximum temperatures for April ranged from average on the Far West Coast to very much above average in the Mid North, Lower North and Northern Mallee.
- Mean minimum temperatures for April were average for Eyre Peninsula, Yorke Peninsula, Mid and Upper North and Northern Mallee and below average for the Fleurieu Peninsula, Adelaide Hills, Southern Mallee and South East.

CROPS

- Sub-soil moisture levels are moderate to low but topsoils are dry in most areas of the State.
- Summer weed spraying continued in most districts during March and into April.
- Some farmers sowed early pasture feed following good rains in mid to late March.
- Above average rainfall in March triggered movement and mating of snails and farmers have been successfully baiting and burning to reduce numbers, particularly on Eyre Peninsula, Yorke Peninsula and the South East.
- Some stubble burning has occurred in a number of districts to reduce stubble loads and weed seed and snail numbers. An increasing number of farmers are burning windrows rather than whole paddocks to retain stubble cover and reduce the risk of erosion.
- High mice numbers are present in pockets of Yorke Peninsula and some mice baiting has occurred in these areas.
- An increasing number of farmers across the State began dry-sowing crops in the third week of April. Crops sown include barley, oats and vetch for feed; oaten hay, lupins, beans, canola and some wheat.
- Farmers with large seeding programs (more than 3,000 ha) started dry-sowing pasture feed and other crops in mid-April and have moved onto sowing barley and some wheat by the end of the month. Most farmers are now waiting for an opening rain before continuing with their sowing program.
- There will be an increase in the area sown to oaten hay in many districts, due to the high returns, weed and disease control benefits and high frost risk potential of other crops. The increased area is mainly with existing growers but also other growers without hay machinery or infrastructure who will need to rely on contractors.
- The area sown to lentils will increase in a number of districts due to the current high prices, Current growers will increase their plantings, some will grow it for the first time and others are returning after not growing them for a number of years.
- The area sown to canola will increase in some districts (Lower Eyre Peninsula and Mid North), while decreasing in others (Upper South East).
- There is also likely to be an increase in the area sown to other pulses, particularly peas and chickpeas.
- There is likely to be a slight reduction in the area sown to wheat (particularly wheat sown back on wheat). The reduction is expected to be minimal given the forecast low wheat prices.

- The area of barley will also decline and be replaced by oaten hay, canola or pulses.

PASTURES

- Rains in March germinated self-sown crops and provided reasonable feed for livestock in many districts.
- With a poor level of pasture cover and reduced stubble feed, an increased number of producers have been supplementary feeding livestock in confinement areas.
- Some pasture and legume stubbles have been heavily grazed with wind erosion occurring on bare areas.
- Annual pastures that germinated in March have either died or are severely moisture stressed.
- It is expected that livestock feeding will continue in the coming months until pastures become well established.

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.

Update: Opening Rains

State Summary Addendum (10 May 2016):

- Significant rains of 10-30 mm fell across most of the cereal zone of South Australia over the period 8 to 10 May 2016.
- The rains can be regarded as a “season opening” and grain growers will now move into full gear with seeding operations in most parts of the State.
- However, lighter falls of 10mm or less were recorded in parts of the northern Murray Mallee, Upper North and coastal eastern Eyre Peninsula. Farmers will continue seeding in these areas, but with marginal soil moisture conditions.
- The gale force winds associated with the rain resulted in some soil erosion particular in areas with lighter sandy soils.
- The rains are most welcome in the lower north where farmers in the Pinery fire scar have been seeding in order to establish some ground cover to prevent further erosion of valuable top soil. The rains will aid crop establishment needed to get their season off to a good start.
- A follow up rain is needed in the next few weeks to consolidate the season start, particular in those areas receiving the lighter falls during the recent rain event.

District Reports

Western Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- March rainfall was above average to very much above average with widespread rains greater than 10 mm falling in most districts in early March.
- A cold front brought isolated showers to the region in early April however the remainder of the month was generally dry with most of the district receiving average April rainfall.
- Mean maximum temperatures for March were below average in the Far West and average in the rest of the district. Temperatures for April were average in the west and above average in the east of the district.
- Hot, dry and dusty conditions were recorded in the last week of April.

CROPS

- There is some soil moisture deep in the profile from early March rains but the soil surface was generally dry by the end of April.
- Damp, warm conditions during March resulted in rapid growth of summer weeds and volunteer cereals and most farmers have sprayed weeds at least twice since harvest.
- Growers in the Central Eyre districts around Kyancutta and Warramboo prickle-chained paddocks to encourage a germination of grass weeds for effective knockdown herbicide applications prior to sowing.
- A large amount of stubble burning has been undertaken over this period. Most were partial burns to control weed seeds in header rows.
- A number of paddocks were completely burnt to remove heavy stubble prior to seeding.
- During March, many farmers sowed vetch and oats for feed, as well as medic pastures. These germinated well but were suffering moisture stress at the end of April.
- A few canola paddocks were dry-sown, however very dry conditions towards the end of April halted seeding and most farmers have not yet started sowing cereals.
- Given the dry conditions there has been little opportunity for a germination and knockdown of winter weeds. This may result in some weedy paddocks when seeding resumes following opening rains.
- Snail activity increased with damp conditions in March and paddocks which will be sown to vulnerable crops such as canola and pulses have mostly been baited.
- Insect pests including weed web moth, pasture day moth, diamond back moth and native budworm have been reported on volunteer crops and medic pastures. Indications are that many farmers will apply insecticide at sowing on at least some of their paddocks to protect crops against damage.
- Crop areas are not expected to be significantly different to the long term average.

PASTURES

- While most paddocks contain a high amount of quality feed as summer weeds and volunteer crops, some farmers are supplementary feeding livestock in containment areas so they can prepare paddocks for seeding.
- Livestock are in excellent condition.

Lower Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to above average in most of the district during March and average for April.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average to above average for March and above average in April.

CROPS

- Soil profiles contain some stored moisture at depth. Topsoils were generally dry at the end of April.
- Warm and damp conditions resulted in rapid growth of summer weeds and volunteer crops throughout March. Most growers have applied herbicide several times since harvest.
- Farmers spread gypsum and lime in March to improve soil condition on paddocks that required it.
- A large amount of residue burning was undertaken throughout this period. Whilst most were partial burns to control weed seeds in header rows there were a number of paddocks completely burnt to reduce stubble loads before seeding.
- Crop seeding intentions are not expected to vary significantly from the long term average.
- Some canola, pulses and early wheat was sown in mid-April.
- Dry conditions slowed seeding until follow-up rains were received at the end of the month.
- Early-sown crops germinated quickly.
- There has been a high germination of weeds, particularly marshmallow, which may be difficult to control in conventional canola varieties.
- Snail activity increased with damp conditions in March and farmers have been baiting paddocks prior to seeding.
- Whilst red legged earth mite and lucerne flea numbers have been low, there has been a large amount of weed webworm, pasture web worm and native budworm as well as some diamond backed moth in pasture paddocks and volunteer crops.
- Farmers are likely to apply insecticide at seeding to minimise the risk of damage to emerging crops.

PASTURES

- Summer weeds and volunteer crops have provided a high amount of high quality feed.
- Early rain and mild conditions have resulted in rapid germination and growth of annual pastures.
- Livestock are in excellent condition.

Eastern Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- March rainfall was generally very much above average across the district with intense thunderstorm activity resulted in falls of up to 120 mm in four hours in isolated parts of the Cleve Hills.
- April rainfall was average across most of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures for March and April were above average.

CROPS

- Soil profiles have some stored moisture at depth. Topsoils were mostly dry at the end of April.
- Heavy rainfall in March resulted in significant damage on isolated areas with runoff eroding gutters along drainage lines in paddocks with canola or pulse stubbles. Landholders levelled these areas and sowed cereal to stabilise them.
- A large amount of residue burning was undertaken during this period. Most were partial burns to control weed seeds in header rows and there were a number of complete burns to reduce stubble loads prior to seeding.
- Warm and damp conditions in March resulted in rapid growth of summer weeds and volunteer crops. Most farmers have applied herbicide at least three times since harvest.
- Growers sowed medic pastures and vetch and barley for feed following the March rains. Some canola and pulses were also dry-sown.
- Dry conditions in April slowed seeding with most producers not starting on cereals until the end of the month.
- Some paddocks of wheat were sown early utilising varieties with maturity aligned to day length. These varieties have performed well when sown early in recent years.
- High amounts of weed web worm, pasture web worm and native budworm have been reported in pasture paddocks and volunteer crops. Most farmers will apply insecticide at sowing to protect emerging crops.
- Red legged earth mite and lucerne flea levels have been generally low.
- Moist conditions in March increased snail activity so paddocks to be sown to vulnerable crops such as pulses and canola were baited.
- The area sown to canola and wheat is not likely to vary significantly from recent years.
- There is increased interest in growing legumes (including lentils, chickpeas and faba beans) with a slight reduction in the area of barley.

PASTURES

- Paddocks generally contain a high amount of quality feed.
- Some farmers are supplementary feeding livestock in containment areas to provide an opportunity for annual pastures to germinate and grow before grazing.
- Livestock are in excellent condition.

Upper North

WEATHER

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

CROPS

- There was good stored moisture at depth in most of the district at the end of April.
- Summer weed spraying continued during March and into April with many farmers spraying two or even three times over the summer-autumn period.
- Following reasonable rainfall in late March a few farmers sowed cereals, vetch and medic as early feed. Germination of these crops was patchy and they were showing signs of moisture stress by the end of April.
- In mid-April many farmers began dry-sowing vetch and other pasture feed with the expectation of an early break to the season.
- Stubble burning began in early April and more is planned in the coming weeks in paddocks with high stubble loads.
- Farmers in the coastal part of the district commenced sowing lupins, hay and peas in the third week of April, and have now progressed to wheat and barley.
- In the eastern part of the district some farmers have dry-sown beans, oaten hay and canola but most are waiting for rain before starting seeding. Farmers with large areas to sow started dry-sowing pasture feed and break crops in the third week of April and have now moved onto sowing barley and some wheat.
- Gypsum and lime is being spread into paddocks where required.
- With the increased cost of lime and freight there is growing interest in using on-the-go pH mapping to identify soil pH zones and areas that require lime to treat acidity rather than blanket applications across whole paddocks.
- There is likely to be an increase in the area sown to pulses, including peas, beans and lentils.
- The area sown to oaten hay will also increase, particularly where farmers have hay machinery and storage infrastructure.
- There are no reports of insect pests at this stage of the season but paddocks and crops will be monitored closely.

PASTURES

- Self-sown crops and summer weeds have produced a reasonable amount of feed.
- Ewes have commenced lambing and producers have increased supplementary feeding to meet their nutritional requirements.
- Early-sown pastures have not grown sufficiently to provide adequate levels of feed.
- Most livestock are in good to reasonable condition.

Mid North

WEATHER

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

CROPS

- There are moderate levels of soil moisture at depth but the topsoil is relatively dry.
- Sowing of barley and vetch for feed commenced in mid-April.
- Many farmers commenced sowing crops about April 20, with oaten hay, vetch for grain, beans and some wheat sown by the end of the month.
- There has been some stubble burning undertaken but no more than normal.
- There will be an increase in the area sown to oaten hay by farmers, some of whom do not have equipment to cut and bale hay and will be relying on contractors.
- The area of lentils will also increase with some new growers and return of others who have not grown them for a number of years.
- The area of canola is also likely to increase slightly, due to high prices and the current low wheat and barley prices.
- The area of beans is likely to be reduced and replaced with vetch and peas.
- The area of wheat is likely to fall slightly with less wheat sown back on wheat.
- There are currently low levels of pests with no major issues reported at this stage.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed is very poor.
- Most livestock are being supplementary fed, with many in confinement areas.
- Some ewe flocks have lambed but most producers delayed mating to ensure ewes lambed when green feed was available.
- Wind erosion is occurring on heavily grazed, pasture paddocks or legume stubbles on lighter-textured soil.

Lower North

WEATHER

- March rainfall was above average in the south and very much above average in the north of the district. April rainfall was below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average to very much above average in March and very much above average in April.

CROPS

- There are moderate levels of stored moisture at depth but surface soil is dry.
- Farmers with large areas to sow commenced seeding in the second week of April and have continued to dry-sow. The majority of farmers started seeding in the last week of April.
- Several severe dust storms have occurred in the Pinery fire scar area. Due to the dry conditions very little crop has emerged in the area resulting in minimal crop damage.
- Sulphate of ammonia fertiliser is being spread and incorporated to minimise ammonia losses from bare soil in the fire area.
- In the fire area, soil ridges created to reduce soil erosion have been flattened to ensure even coverage of pre-emergent herbicides. The sowing operation with knife-points and press wheels will provide some ridging for soil erosion protection while the new crop is establishing
- Farmers in the Pinery fire scar area have low weed seed levels and have not increased the area sown to hay.
- Farmers with hay machinery and infrastructure outside the fire area have increased the area sown to hay.
- Most farmers have started dry-sowing oaten hay and wheat and will wait until reasonable rainfall is received before sowing canola.
- Some beans have been sown dry but early sowing increases the risk of disease and most will wait until the second week of May.
- Herbicide residues from last season are still causing crop rotation problems, with farmers needing to change crop types in some paddocks.
- Lentils will not be sown until the second week of May to reduce the risk of disease and wind blasting.
- The area sown to lentils will increase, even within the fire scar area, although most will be sown on heavier soil types to reduce the risk of sand blasting.
- There is also likely to be an increase in the area sown to chickpeas.
- The areas sown to canola and peas will reduce.
- The area sown to wheat will remain similar to last season with a low risk of diseases with wheat-on-wheat crops in the fire scar area.
- A more virulent strain of *Septoria tritici* has enabled this disease to build-up and there is a high risk of damage to susceptible wheat varieties this season.

PASTURES

- There is a shortage of pasture seed supplies due to the Pinery fire and drought in western Victoria.
- Sheep that had been agisted out from the fire scar area have been returned. Some have since been sold and others are being confinement fed.
- Outside of the fire area there is adequate pasture feed, particularly in stubbles from self-sown crops.

Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER

- March rainfall was very much above average in the north, above average in central Yorke Peninsula and average in the south of the district.
- April rainfall was average in the south and below average in the remainder of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures for March were very much above average in the north and above average in the rest of the district. April temperatures were above average across the district.

CROPS

- Weed control has been variable across the district, with most producers controlling summer weeds but many delayed spraying after the rain in early March.
- Weeds remaining in paddocks are now stressed due to the dry conditions and these weeds will also harbour pests and diseases.
- Where farmers controlled weeds in March there are high levels of stored soil moisture and a disease-free break prior to sowing.
- Stubble burning was less frequent than in previous years and farmers mostly burnt rows and chaff cart heaps for weed control, rather than entire paddocks.
- Summer and early autumn rainfall events have been sufficient to lower soil herbicide residue levels and allow farmers to sow their preferred crops and varieties.
- The area sown to lentils will increase, replacing canola in most instances but also some barley.
- Forward contracts and hectare contracts for lentils have provided extra confidence for growers.
- The area of oaten hay is likely to increase due to good profitability, reduced yield risk, and agronomic benefits.
- Wheat area will decline slightly through a reduction in wheat on wheat rotations, due to low forecast prices over the next year.
- High mice numbers are present in pockets of Yorke Peninsula and while some mice baiting has occurred, the large majority of farmers will wait to see if damage occurs after seeding before baiting.
- Rains earlier in the year led to snail movement and mating, and egg-laying has been already reported. Farmers have baited and most have reported good control of snails.
- There were reports of very low numbers of Green peach aphid and lucerne flea during March but the dry April has reduced the risk of aphids transmitting viruses.
- Forecasts of a neutral weather pattern or possible La Niña developing during the season are providing some confidence amongst farmers for the year.
- A higher than usual number of farmers began dry-sowing in the third week of April but the dry dusty conditions has slowed the seeding pace. Canola, beans and oats have been the main crops sown.
- Dry-sown crops are likely to have a patchy establishment, due to the variation in moisture between soil types and the small rainfall events received to date.
- The majority of farmers are still waiting for the opening rain before starting seeding.

PASTURES

- Self-sown crops are providing a reasonable amount of livestock feed
- This feed combined with supplementary feeding of hay and grain has livestock in excellent condition.
- The dry April has resulted in germinated medic now being severely moisture stressed, however reasonable rain soon will enable it to recover and produce good early feed for livestock.

Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula & Kangaroo Island

WEATHER

- March rainfall was average across most of the district.
- April rainfall was average on eastern KI and below average in the rest of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for March and above average for April.

CROPS

Central Hills/Fleurieu

- At the end of April there were very low levels of soil moisture.
- There has been limited paddock preparation for cropping.
- Only limited stubble burning has occurred. Heavy grazing post-harvest combined with the hot dry spring and summer reduced stubble loads significantly.
- There has been some dry-sowing of oaten hay crops.
- Farmers have not yet made changes to crop programmes in response to seasonal conditions.
- The last two years of below average rainfall has made most cropping farmers cautious and they are taking greater care with strategic and operational planning.

Kangaroo Island

- Stored soil moisture levels were very low at the end of April.
- There has been some spraying of weeds but effectiveness is being hampered by environmental stresses on the plants.
- The amount of stubble burning has been about normal, and principally to control weeds.
- A few farmers have commenced dry-sowing but most are waiting for more significant rainfall before commencing.
- It is still too early to determine if farmers will make any changes to sowing intentions if the break to the season is late.
- Cropping farmers are ready and in standby mode waiting for more rain.

PASTURES

Central Hills/Fleurieu

- Pasture feed and ground cover is very poor.
- Livestock condition is average but early lambing ewes may lose body condition as feed quality and quantity is declining rapidly.
- Supplementary feeding is at a maximum.
- There is likely to be an increase in the area of hay sown as fodder reserves are very low.
- Some planned annual and perennial pasture renovations may not happen as seed supplies of some species are low due to recent poor harvests.
- Dams are very low or dry and it will take substantial rainfall events to fill them.

Kangaroo Island

- Pasture feed and ground cover is declining and most paddocks have very little cover.
- Livestock condition is above average due to hand feeding and availability of green feed following the early rains in February.
- Some producers stopped supplementary feeding after the February rains but most have now recommenced full hand feeding.
- Producers are waiting for significant rain before sowing pasture feed.

Lower Murray

WEATHER

- March rainfall was above to very much above average, throughout the whole district.
- April rainfall was average in the north to below average in the south.
- Mean maximum temperatures for March and April were very much above average in the north and above average in the south of the district.

CROPS

- There are moderate to good levels of sub-soil moisture in most areas of the district but topsoil conditions are dry and this will delay the start to seeding for many producers.
- Windrow burning has been completed with mixed results due to the amount of rain in March.
- Spaying to control weeds has been continual since early March.
- Where summer weeds have been controlled, soil moisture should be good, particularly at depth.
- Other farm operations have included spreading manure and fertilisers.
- Most farmers will continue with their intended seeding programs for now.

PASTURES

- Cereals and vetch were sown into moist soil following rains in late March with great success and some of these paddocks are now being grazed.
- Supplementary feeding of livestock with grain and hay is still taking place.
- Pasture paddocks vary from good supplies of sown cereals and self-sown cereals in stubble paddocks to very poor grassy pastures with areas of bare soil and erosion.
- The majority of livestock are in good condition with many ewes lambing at present.

Northern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- March rainfall was above average in the western part of the district and average in the remainder of the district.
- April rainfall was average in the west and below average in the rest of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures for both March and April were very much above average.

CROPS

- While good summer rains have provided some subsoil moisture, a very dry April has meant that there has not yet been an opening to the season.
- Most farmers have started dry-seeding, with mainly canola, pulses, Clearfield cereal varieties or feed paddocks sown.
- Many farmers will continue with dry-seeding for most of their cropping program at this stage.
- Farmers on more traditional systems will sow very little before a good opening rain arrives.
- More farmers are sowing an increased area of pulses including chickpeas, vetch, lupins, peas and some are experimenting with lentils.
- It is expected that the area sown to canola will begin to rise again after a dramatic decline in 2015.
- Triticale area has greatly decreased over the last decade across the district and is now only considered a minor crop. It has mostly been replaced with barley.
- A late season break is likely to see some farmers reduce sowing area but at this stage most farmers are still committed to their full seeding program.
- The lack of good early opening rains and dry-seeding will mean that grassy weeds will need extra attention to control within the crop in 2016.
- Stored soil moisture has been measured to be more than at the same time last season, with the plant available water generally about half capacity.
- Many paddocks coming out of pasture last year have very low soil cover at present and are at a high risk of wind erosion.
- There have been low levels of windrow burning for the control of ryegrass.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed has been poor through autumn, requiring supplementary feeding of hay and grain.
- Some feed paddocks were sown after rainfall in March or dry-sown in mid-April.
- It is expected that livestock feeding will continue in the coming months until pastures become well established.
- There is some concern that paddocks will continue to be heavily grazed, leaving soils exposed to wind erosion until sufficient groundcover is established.

Southern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

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

CROPS

- Sub-soil moisture levels are relatively low across the district.
- There has been an increase in windrow burning and weather conditions have been favourable for good results.
- Dry-seeding of crops commenced in mid-April, starting with low risk, weed free paddocks and many farmers have continued sowing higher risk paddocks.
- Farmers who received rainfall from thunderstorm activity in early March have planted sheep feed, which germinated and is still growing well but needs follow-up rain soon.
- Summer weed spraying has continued where needed.
- There have not been any significant changes to sowing intentions yet but farmers are anxious to see the break of the season soon.
- Farmers have also been moving and selling hay from paddocks.

PASTURES

- Livestock grazing stubble paddocks are maintaining condition, however stock in pasture paddocks have little feed on offer and are losing condition.
- Some grazing of early sown feed has occurred.
- Soil erosion is still a concern as there are many bare paddocks across the district.
- Supplementary feeding is taking place daily and extra feed is being sourced as supplies start to run low.
- Livestock that are getting enough supplementary feed are doing well.
- Lambing is well underway.

Upper South East

WEATHER

- March rainfall was above average in the north and average in the south of the district.
- April rainfall was below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for March and April.

CROPS

- Isolated pockets of subsoil moisture exist where thunderstorm activity has occurred, particularly in clayed sands or loams.
- Little moisture exists in the unimproved sands and clay soils.
- Some summer weeds were sprayed early in the year whilst others will be sprayed after a significant rainfall event.
- Snail numbers are reported as being higher than normal and producers are burning, rolling or baiting to control them.
- Most areas of the district have now received sufficient rain to reduce the risk of chemical residue carryover from last season. Growers still concerned about the risk have changed their cropping plans.
- Dry-seeding of beans, canola and hay is underway to ensure timely sowing.
- There is expected to be a significant reduction in the area sown to canola compared to last season.
- Grazing crops early and then allowing them to recover for a grain harvest has been a common practice in recent years but shorter growing seasons have resulted in reduced yields and many producers are questioning the viability of this practice.

PASTURES

- Ground cover has been compromised as a result of the extended dry period and overgrazing despite livestock numbers being heavily reduced.
- Crop stubbles were very light as a result of the poor seasonal conditions with most heavily grazed.
- Some paddocks were completely de-stocked and will respond quickly to opening rains.
- Many other paddocks will have to be resown to produce reasonable feed.
- Dry-seeding of barley and oats for livestock feed has commenced. Some clover and vetch has been sown.
- Livestock condition is starting to suffer with the start of lambing and calving combined with dwindling feed supplies.
- Many producers are not able to provide the full ration of supplementary feed required.
- Some producers who mated ewes later are choosing to sell pregnant breeding ewes as no significant rain has been received during April. Livestock prices are holding well despite the dry conditions.
- Many ewes have been released from confinement feeding to lamb in paddocks.
- Heavily grazed paddocks and those with little cover are planned for pasture renovation this season.
- Many producers are getting close to the capacity of their irrigation water licences, due to the length of time and amount of water needed for crops this season.
- Dryland lucerne which provided feed earlier in the year has stopped growing and will not recover until the next rainfall. Snails are proving to be a problem in dryland lucerne stands.
- Lucerne seed harvest has been exceptional with record prices despite variable yields. Mirid and Rutherglen bugs have been present in greater numbers than normal in lucerne crops.

Lower South East

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average for March and below average for April.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average in March and April.

CROPS

- The northern part of the district is much drier than the southern parts.
- There is very little stored soil moisture in most of the district but properties located closer to the coast have some stored soil moisture still available
- Ground cover is minimal in the northern parts but still good in the rest of the district.
- Dry-sowing of wheat, beans and hay crops has commenced.
- Many farmers are trying to sow early to avoid seeding delays if soil conditions quickly become wet and paddocks become un-trafficable.
- High snail numbers are being controlled by either burning stubbles or baiting.
- Generally there has been less burning of stubbles due to reduced stubble loads.
- There are only low levels of summer weeds present and weeds will be controlled at a later date once opening rains have resulted in further germinations.
- Crop plans made early in the year are unlikely to change significantly.
- The area sown to broad beans will increase this season, due to record prices last year.
- The amount of canola sown will decrease in the 2016 season due to poor prices in relation to broad beans and the closure of the canola crushing plant at Millicent, which tended to purchase poorer quality canola that is difficult to sell into other markets.

PASTURES

- There are concerns that the drains have not run for some time in the mid to lower South East, impacting on pasture growth and under-ground water levels.
- Dry-sowing of annual and perennial pastures has commenced.
- Lambing and calving are well underway and livestock are in good condition.
- Livestock prices have been high.
- Cow numbers decreased last year due to low prices but now that cattle are bringing excellent prices numbers have stabilised.
- There is still some pasture feed remaining but the majority of producers are supplementary feeding livestock.
- A late break and a quick onset of cold conditions will compromise feed growth through June and July.