Crop and Pasture Report South Australia

2013-14 CROP PERFORMANCE SUMMARY AND FINAL CROP ESTIMATES REPORT

MARCH 2014

PREMIUM FOOD AND WINE FROM OUR CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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 Agribusiness and Regions Division of Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA).

Information current as of 4th March, 2014.

ALL ENQUIRIES

Dave Lewis
Agribusiness Account Manager, Grains
Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA)
GPO Box 1671, Adelaide SA 5001
Telephone +61 8 8463 6696
Email dave.lewis@sa.gov.au

DISCLAIMER

Table of Contents

State Summary

WEATHER

- Rainfall for January varied from above average on Western Eyre Peninsula and Kangaroo Island to well below average in the Lower Murray and Northern Mallee.
- An intense low pressure weather system on the 14th February brought heavy rain to large areas of the State with most agricultural areas receiving well above average rainfall. Parts of the Mallee and far western Eyre Peninsula received the highest February rainfall on record.
- Most of the South East received average rainfall during February.
- Maximum temperatures during January were above average (1 to 3^{0}C) to very much above average (4^{0}C) across the agricultural districts with extended heat waves above 40^{0}C in many parts of the State.
- Maximum temperatures during early February were above average, although below average temperatures in the last two weeks brought temperatures for the month to around average levels.

CROPS

- Harvest was completed in the Lower South East in early February.
- Wheat was the most consistently performing crop with average to above average yields in all districts.
- Mace was the dominant variety grown with deliveries making up 45% of total wheat receivals to Viterra, up from 34% in 2012/13. Scout has increased slightly to 9% of deliveries while Wyalkatchem and Gladius have fallen to 7% each.
- Wheat quality across the State was generally quite good, although some areas had higher levels of screenings and some black point.
- Severe winds caused high grain losses to early barley crops, with some varieties being more affected. This has been associated with stage of maturity and higher disease levels weakening stems.
- Commander remains the dominant malting barley variety grown.
- Lightning started hundreds of fires across the State in mid January. Fortunately most were brought under control quickly however a number caused extensive damage across a wide area of the State. The total area burnt by these fires was almost 250,000 ha.
- An intense low pressure weather system on the 14th February brought heavy rain to a large area of the State, causing isolated flooding and some soil erosion, particularly in the fire damaged areas.
- Self-sown cereals germinated rapidly following the rain with thick stands in wind-damaged barley crops and paddocks with high levels of wheat screenings. Canola and pulse crops emerged slower.
- Both summer and winter weeds have germinated with the rain and many growers commenced spraying cropping paddocks in late February to conserve soil moisture.
- The extended period of cool moist conditions in mid February will have resulted in significant soil mineralisation, improving nitrogen reserves for this year's crops.
- The hot weather in January and early February combined with stubble management practices significantly reduced snail numbers in areas where populations were high. Snail baiting following the rain has been undertaken on Yorke Peninsula to further reduce numbers.
- Mice numbers have built up in paddocks where feed levels were high because of lost grain. Baiting to reduce numbers will commence in these paddocks in mid March when the nutritive value of germinating grain has been exhausted and mice become hungry.

- Because of above average February rainfall, there is good stored soil moisture in all the major cropping areas, providing farmers with confidence in the 2014 cropping season.
- Hay prices have lifted significantly in the last few months driven mainly by the on-going drought in northern New South Wales and Queensland.

PASTURES

- Most pastures had been grazed out by early February although there was still some feed value from lost grain in many stubbles.
- Heavy rains prompted germination of self-sown cereals, legume pastures and annual grasses, providing good feed for livestock.
- Dry pasture feed and stubbles are now of poor quality.
- Perennial pastures have responded rapidly to the damp and warm conditions and contain a high level of quality feed.
- Follow-up rain will be needed before the end of March to ensure pastures survive until opening rains.
- Livestock are generally in reasonable to good condition.

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 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	*ha*	503 000	142 000	405 000	161 000	253 000	242 000	48 500	4 600
	t	780 000	510 000	730 000	644 000	507 000	751 000	141 000	11 000
Durum	*ha*	0	0	0	24 000	12 500	12 500	5 900	0
	t	0	0	0	77 000	30 000	37 000	17 000	0
Barley	*ha*	75 000	70 000	76 000	146 000	91 000	87 000	30 000	2 700
	t	120 000	253 000	145 000	527 000	178 000	277 000	84 000	6 500
Oats	*ha*	15 000	3 200	5 000	5 000	9 000	8 000	2 000	3 300
	t	19 500	7 000	7 000	14 000	14 000	17 000		8 300
Rye	*ha*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	t	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Triticale	*ha*	1 500	500	4 000	2 000	2 500	3 000	500	300
	t	2 100	1 700	6 500	7 000	5 800	10 000	1 500	900
Peas	*ha*	5 000	5 500	5 500	21 000	26 600	24 000	7 700	400
	t	4 750	8 000	5 500	32 000	32 000	34 000	13 000	500
Lupins	*ha*	1 200	23 000	5 000	1 500	2 700	3 000	900	1 500
	t	1 000	44 000	5 500	2 500	3 400	4 500	1 400	2 400
Beans	*ha*	0	6 000	200	12 000	6 500	14 200	6 000	600
	t	0	12 000	200	26 500	10 000	34 000	10 500	1 300
Chickpeas	*ha*	0	200	200	10 000	3 200	5 000	1 000	0
	t	0	280	100	15 000	3 800	7 000	2 000	0
Lentils	*ha*	0	2 000	0	68 000	4 000	12 000	5 400	0
	t	0	3 300	0	124 000	5 400	19 000	7 500	0
Vetch	*ha*	200	1 500	500	2 000	5 000	2 600	300	0
	t	100	1 400	300	3 000	3 000	3 200	350	0
Canola	*ha*	5 400	63 000	8 500	34 000	26 000	55 600	11 000	4 100
	t	5 400	82 000	9 000	66 000	36 000	90 000	16 500	7 400
Hay	*ha*	7 700	4 500	6 700	21 000	21 000	27 000	7 000	7 200
(not in total)	*t*	19 000	18 000	21 000	146 000	91 000	143 000	35 000	37 000
Total	*ha*	606 300	316 900	509 900	486 500	442 000	468 900	119 200	17 500
	t	932 850	922 680	909 100	1 538 000	828 400	1 283 700	294 750	38 300

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	*ha*	5 800	69 000	245 000	123 000	69 000	25 000	2 295 900
	t	14 000	114 000	320 000	160 000	207 000	87 000	4 976 000
Durum	*ha*	300	800	500	0	11 800	0	68 300
	t	550	880	500	0	32 000	0	194 930
Barley	*ha*	8 200	53 000	48 000	77 000	75 000	16 000	854 900
	t	22 000	85 000	62 000	87 000	195 000	52 000	2 093 500
Oats	*ha*	1 800	3 000	2 000	3 200	19 500	5 000	85 000
	t	4 500	3 600	2 000	3 800	47 000	12 000	159 700
Rye	*ha*	0	1 500	2 000	2 600	1 000	0	7 100
	t	0	1 350	1 500	2 600	900	0	6 350
Triticale	*ha*	1 500	6 500	3 000	16 000	7 000	1 000	49 300
	t	4 500	8 000	3 000	19 000	13 000	3 500	86 500
Peas	*ha*	1 500	1 500	1 000	3 000	3 000	400	106 100
	t	3 100	1 600	1 000	2 400	4 500	900	143 250
Lupins	*ha*	1 300	1 000	1 200	10 000	14 000	3 000	69 300
	t	2 700	900	1 200	10 000	21 000	5 000	105 500
Beans	*ha*	400	100	0	1 000	12 000	10 000	69 000
	t	800	100	0	1 000	20 000	23 000	139 400
Chickpeas	*ha*	0	0	200	500	200	200	20 700
	t	0	0	150	500	200	250	29 280
Lentils	*ha*	0	0	0	200	3 000	200	94 800
	t	0	0	0	200	3 600	350	163 350
Vetch	*ha*	0	400	600	3 500	400	0	17 000
	t	0	120	250	2 100	500	0	14 320
Canola	*ha*	1 400	4 000	22 000	10 000	38 000	18 000	301 000
	t	3 000	3 600	11 000	7 500	61 000	36 000	434 400
Hay	*ha*	24 000	6 000	7 200	12 500	47 500	28 000	227 300
(not in total)	*t*	121 000	18 600	14 500	35 000	190 000	129 000	1 018 100
Total	*ha*	22 200	140 800	325 500	250 000	253 900	78 800	4 038 400
	t	55 150	219 150	402 600	296 100	605 700	220 000	8 546 480

TABLE 2 CROP ESTIMATES AGAINST FIVE YEAR AVERAGE

		2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	5 year ave	2013/14
Wheat	*ha*	2 043 000	2 111 100	2 237 100	2 226 100	2 176 300	2 158 700	2 295 900
	t	2 347 000	4 032 500	5 818 500	4 444 800	3 556 500	4 039 900	4 976 000
Durum	*ha*	59 100	60 000	69 800	74 600	77 200	68 100	68 300
	t	88 700	157 200	240 600	223 950	181 240	178 300	194 930
Barley	*ha*	1 210 500	1 152 300	965 200	987 700	907 100	1 044 600	854 900
	t	1 795 000	2 544 100	2 839 100	2 031 800	1 912 900	2 224 600	2 093 500
Oats	*ha*	72 100	79 700	75 300	75 800	85 800	77 700	85 000
	t	80 200	136 600	152 300	117 400	128 740	123 000	159 700
Rye	*ha*	11 000	9 400	9 500	9 500	9 500	9 800	7 100
	t	7 300	8 200	11 600	7 900	7 500	8 500	6 350
Triticale	*ha*	85 700	85 900	85 700	80 200	69 200	81 300	49 300
	t	86 600	117 700	167 100	117 500	95 920	117 000	86 500
Peas	*ha*	128 500	127 700	126 300	109 900	103 700	119 200	106 100
	t	129 100	181 150	238 500	144 400	116 100	161 900	143 250
Lupins	*ha*	74 000	66 500	64 900	64 900	63 200	66 700	69 300
	t	69 600	97 200	120 100	78 900	75 110	88 200	105 500
Beans	*ha*	72 400	71 200	71 500	72 200	69 400	71 300	69 000
	t	82 880	144 350	168 600	121 220	105 510	124 500	139 400
Chickpeas	*ha*	11 550	13 200	10 700	12 200	19 700	13 500	20 700
	t	9 200	17 150	16 000	19 550	21 810	16 700	29 280
Lentils	*ha*	46 500	52 100	97 700	106 100	88 800	78 200	94 800
	t	36 870	89 450	174 350	181 600	97 720	116 000	163 350
Vetch	*ha*	15 900	12 900	12 800	13 100	13 100	13 600	17 000
	t	4 980	10 650	12 900	11 120	6 800	9 300	14 320
Canola	*ha*	178 200	182 700	196 500	269 500	302 700	225 900	301 000
	t	192 600	297 100	381 700	435 700	398 700	341 200	434 400
Hay	*ha*	288 000	274 100	244 200	201 500	204 500	242 500	227 300
(not in total)	*t*	831 000	1 004 000	1 066 000	774 400	769 000	888 900	1 018 100
Total	*ha*	4 008 500	4 024 700	4 023 000	4 101 800	3 985 700	4 028 700	4 038 400
	t	4 930 000	7 833 400	10 341 400	7 935 800	6 704 600	7 549 000	8 546 500

District Reports

Western Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Temperatures in January and February were warm to very hot with a number of successive days above 40ºC
- Thunderstorm activity in mid-January and a large low pressure weather system in mid-February resulted in well above average rainfall totals in all Western Eyre districts.
- Rainfall totals above 100mm were recorded over a 24 hour period on the 14th of February around Streaky Bay.

CROPS

- Heavy rain in mid February caused localised flooding but little erosion was recorded on cropping paddocks due to generally good surface cover levels.
- These significant rainfall events will contribute to deep soil moisture storage ahead of the 2014 cropping season.
- Growers are confident that stored subsoil moisture levels will reduce the risk of cropping and are likely to increase crop area this season.
- Damp and warm conditions have resulted in a rapid germination of summer weeds including flax leaf fleabane, melons, heliotrope and volunteer cereals. .
- Most growers have sprayed summer weeds at least once and some have used prickle chains or cultivation to control more intractable weeds.
- Windy conditions in late January resulted in some isolated wind erosion on exposed dunes in Central Eyre districts.
- A large fire in January burnt 6000 ha near Sheringa. Although the fire was limited to a few properties there were considerable losses of stock and paddock feed on one property.
- The area sown to Clearfield cereal varieties is expected to increase, as growers use the weed control option afforded by Clearfield technology to manage time of sowing.
- There is likely to be a high level of nitrogen mineralised early in the season due to damp conditions and strong growth on medic paddocks in 2013.
- There have been reports of a likely increase in the area sown to vetch as a break crop this season with a reduction in the canola area.
- There has been some burning of header rows in paddocks north of Wirrulla.
- A number of days over 30ºC allowed growers to chain or roll stubbles to reduce snail populations prior to the February rains.
- Mice numbers are generally low.

PASTURES

- Although stubble feed quality has diminished with the large amount of rain during this period, the emergence of summer weeds and volunteer cereal has resulted in a high level of high quality paddock feed in all districts.
- Livestock are in excellent condition.
- February rains will help with an emergence of annual pasture species.

Lower Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Daytime temperatures in January and February were warm to very hot with a number of successive days above 40ºC.
- January rainfall was generally well below average.
- An intense low pressure weather system on 14th to 15th February brought wide spread rain across the district, taking monthly rainfall totals above the average for February. 70 mm of rain was recorded in a few hours at Ungarra.

CROPS

- Heavy rain in mid February caused creeks to overflow. Minimal erosion of agricultural land was noted due to high levels of paddock surface cover.
- February rains resulted in some moisture storage in the sub-soils of most districts but follow up rains will be required before growers finalise cropping plans for the 2014 season.
- A number of small fires were started by lightning strikes on 14th January. In most cases only small areas less than 50 ha in area were burnt, causing minimal damage to agricultural paddocks.
- Damp conditions in mid-February resulted in a rapid germination of summer weeds and volunteer cereals.
- Most growers began spraying summer weeds immediately following harvest with further herbicide application required following rains in February.
- The area of crop sown in lower Eyre districts is not expected to alter significantly from last year.
- A number of growers are sampling paddocks to assess the amount of soil nitrogen mineralisation stimulated by the rainfall in February.
- Hot days throughout this period have provided growers with a number of opportunities to control snails by chaining and rolling stubbles.
- Mice populations are generally low.

PASTURES

- Stubbles are still providing a high level of feed despite some reduction in feed quality due to rain.
- Perennial pastures have responded rapidly to the damp and warm conditions and contain a high level of quality feed.
- Livestock are in excellent condition.

Eastern Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Daytime temperatures during this period were warm to very hot with a number of successive days above 40ºC.
- Whilst January rainfall was below average, an intense low pressure system caused heavy rainfall on 14th February resulting in rainfall totals well above the monthly average.
- Falls of up to 120 mm within a few hours were recorded in Campoona and Mangalo districts during this event.

CROPS

- There were a number of fires started by lightning around the 14th of January. Most of these were confined to patches of scrub with little damage to agricultural paddocks.
- Despite the intensity of the rainfall on the 14th of February, very little erosion of cropping paddocks was observed due to high surface cover levels on stubble paddocks.
- Wet conditions in February delayed clay spreading and delving activities on the lighter textured soils in the region.
- Rain in February stimulated rapid germination of summer weeds and volunteer cereals.
- Most growers have begun to spray summer weeds to conserve stored soil moisture ahead of the cropping season. There have been isolated paddocks in the Franklin Harbour and Eastern Cleve Hills district cultivated for weed control.
- Stored subsoil moisture from February rains has increased grower confidence in a good cropping season and could lead to an increase in the area of wheat sown this year.
- Good subsoil moisture will result in a high amount of early nitrogen mineralisation on paddocks that had good medic pastures last year. Early-sown crops should benefit from this.
- The high level of volunteer cereals in paddocks will reduce the area of land to be sown for early feed and could result in an increase in the area of crop sown.
- Hot days provided good conditions for growers to chain and roll stubbles for snail control.
- Mice populations are generally low.

PASTURES

- Although February rains reduced stubble feed quality, the resulting germination of summer weeds and volunteer cereals will ensure growers have quality feed at the break of the season.
- Intense rainfall in mid February resulted a great deal of runoff, filling dams in the Cleve hills and causing some damage to fencing infrastructure.
- Livestock are in excellent condition.

Upper North

WEATHER

- Temperatures during January were well above average (3 to 4^{0}C) with continued hot conditions in early February, followed by below average temperatures in the last half of February.
- Rainfall was below average for January.
- An intense low weather system brought heavy rain across the district on 14th February with follow up lighter falls resulting in well above average rainfall during February.

CROPS

- Despite below average rainfall in January, there was sufficient moisture on lighter soils for summer weeds to survive and growers in the western part of the district applied herbicide when conditions were favourable.
- Lightning on the 14th January started a large number of fires across the district. Most were quickly controlled however one in the Bangor area was mostly in steep inaccessible country and burnt 35000 ha over 32 days. Hundreds of kilometres of fencing, numerous sheds, 1800 sheep and 80 cattle were destroyed. Approximately 40 commercial properties and 40 smaller lifestyle properties were affected by the fire.
- Heavy rainfall on the 14th February resulted in significant runoff from the fire area causing flash flooding and contamination of dams and creeks with silt, ash and debris.
- Soil and debris was also deposited onto cropping country, particularly in the Napperby area. Burnt cropping paddocks in the Wirrabara area suffered erosion.
- Paddocks with grain legume and vetch stubbles also suffered some erosion. Pasture and cereal paddocks generally had sufficient cover to slow the flow of water.
- Following the rain a significant area was cultivated, particularly on the heavier soil types in the lower rainfall areas.
- There are good levels of stored soil moisture across most of the district.
- There has been a significant germination of cereals and summer weeds across the district.
- Growers have been assessing weed populations and commenced summer weed spraying in late February to conserve soil moisture for this year's crops.
- In areas where snail numbers were beginning to increase, stubble management practices combined with hot weather in January and February have reduced numbers.
- Mice numbers have started to increase and growers will need to monitor numbers in the lead up to seeding.

PASTURES

- Heavy rain has destroyed stubble and dry pasture feed but rapid growth of self-sown cereals, annual grasses and pasture legumes should provide adequate feed.
- Most livestock from the fire damaged area have been sent to other areas on agistment but are likely to return in April. There is concern that there will not be adequate feed supplies for them when they return.
- Native perennial grasses have reshot in the fire area and there has been a good germination of annual grasses.
- The February rain has boosted the growth of perennial species such as native grasses and lucerne.

Mid North

WEATHER

- Temperatures were well above average during January and early February, and below average in the last two weeks of February.
- Rainfall during January was average to below average and February rainfalls were very much above average.
- On 14th February there was widespread rainfall of up to 100mm across the entire district

CROPS

- February rains have caused a rapid germination of self-sown cereals and in many cases populations are dense, reflecting the large grain losses caused by wind before harvest. There are also thick header rows in some paddocks where small wheat grains passed through headers at reaping.
- There is also germination of canola, pulses, weeds and pasture species but these are emerging slower than the cereals.
- Growers will wait until most weeds have emerged, especially heliotrope and marshmallow weeds, before spraying. It is expected that wide spread herbicide spraying of this year's crop paddocks will commence at the end of February.
- There will be less spraying where growers have sufficient livestock to keep weeds in check.
- Some growers baited for snails when the pests moved to the ground after the rain, with reasonably good success.
- Mice numbers are still relatively low and patchy. Germination of cereal seed will lower the nutritive value of feed required for breeding and so may well retard population build-up.
- Moist soil for several days following the rain in mid February will have started to mineralise available nitrogen from the soil organic matter and so reduce the need for nitrogen fertilizer early in the season.
- Volunteer crop and weed growth could build-up rhizoctonia root rot if they are not controlled before becoming well established. Effects on other root and foliar diseases is likely to be minimal at this stage.
- Current changes in planned areas of crops to be sown this year are relatively minor with an increase in lentils (in place of other pulses), and a reduction in the area sown to oaten hay.

PASTURES

- Germinated pasture plants will need follow-up rainfall to survive through to winter.
- There is ample feed available in paddocks, both from residues of last year's pastures and the recent flush of self-sown cereals and other plants.

Lower North

WEATHER

- Rainfall was below average for January and very much above average for February.
- Maximum temperatures were above average for January and early February, and below average for the last half of February.

CROPS

- Harvest was completed early across the district with the main problem being higher than usual wheat screenings. Some grain with 20% screenings required cleaning to meet delivery standards.
- The extreme heat in January and early February has killed many snails, even those perched on stubble stalks. Some growers had planned to bait following the rain in mid February but found numbers were already low, even in areas with normally high populations.
- Following the heavy rain in mid February there has been a rapid germination of self-sown plants on wind damaged barley and canola crops and from wheat screenings that passed through headers.
- High levels of marshmallow weeds have germinated together with summer weeds and medic plants.
- Growers commenced spraying weeds in the last week of February and are likely to spray all of their cropping paddocks, and even some pasture paddocks where medic levels are low.
- A large amount of glyphosate with a range of additives will be applied to control these weeds.
- Growers are taking great care to avoid off-target damage particularly near vineyard areas, with appropriate nozzle and herbicide selection. They have also been avoiding spraying in climatic conditions that lead to spray drift.
- Mice numbers are increasing because of the high amount of grain on the ground. The rain has germinated most of the grain. There should be an opportunity to spread bait in mid March to reduce numbers.
- Field cricket numbers have been building up on the heavy black soils and might cause a reduction in medic seed levels.

PASTURES

- Medic has germinated well in most paddocks but where levels are low in barley stubbles, growers will consider re-sowing medic.
- Follow up rains will be necessary for medic pastures to survive until t opening rains.
- Medic seed harvest was approximately 65% complete before the rain with the remaining crop suffering losses of 50%. This will reduce the supply of medic seed, particularly of some varieties.
- There is adequate green pasture and stubble feed available and livestock are in good condition.

Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER

- Rainfall was below average during January and well above average for February.
- Maximum temperatures were above average in January and average during February.

CROPS

- Wheat yields were well above average, although Scout was disappointing with high levels of yellow leaf spot early in the season, and black point and screenings at harvest.
- Barley yields were generally below expectations given their exceptional yield potential in early spring. Scope and early sown Fleet crops were severely affected by wind with losses of up to 2 t/ha.
- Pea yields were disappointing (average to below average) primarily due to black spot damage , with yields Lentils performed well across the Yorke Peninsula with yields well above average. Grain quality was good and strong prices have meant that most growers have already sold most of their grain.
- Oaten hay prices have increased significantly in the last few months as a result of the continuing drought in Queensland and northern New South Wales. Lower quality hay has increased from $80/t (below cost of production) to $130/t.
- Snail numbers were high at harvest, especially in pea and barley crops. The hot weather has enabled good control with chaining of stubbles. Paddocks with high numbers were also baited after the rain in mid February with good success.
- Mice numbers have increased in barley crops where high grain losses occurred. The rain has germinated much of this grain and once its energy value has been lowered, baiting will be undertaken to reduce mice numbers.
- Mouse baiting will also be necessary immediately after seeding to try and reduce damage to emerging crops.
- Some pre-emergent herbicides are in short supply. Alternative options might need to be sourced by some farmers.
- Seed cleaning is currently well under way in preparation for the new season.
- Growers are waiting for self-sown cereals and summer weeds to germinate and will commence spraying in late February to conserve soil moisture.
- Most growers will spray all of their cropping paddocks with mild conditions being ideal for spraying.
- Isolated paddocks have already been burnt to control snails and reduce feed for mice. Windrows and chaff heaps have also been burnt to control resistant weeds.

PASTURES

- Most pasture paddocks have been heavily grazed however the rain has resulted in a good germination of medic and grasses and there will now be adequate pasture feed.
- Significant numbers of livestock from the Bangor and Eden Valley fire areas have been placed on agistment in the region.

Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula & Kangaroo Island

WEATHER

- Rainfall for January was above average on Kangaroo Island and average in the rest of the district.
- Rainfall during February was above average across the district.
- Temperatures were above average for January and early February, and below average in the last two weeks of February.

CROPS

Central Hills/Fleurieu Peninsula

- A significant rainfall event in February resulted in germination of summer weeds.
- On-farm prices for feed quality cereals and lupins have been good.

Kangaroo Island

- Above average rainfall totals for both January and February resulted in a flush of summer weeds with Paddy Melons continuing to become more of a problem.
- Mice numbers are increasing, especially around houses and sheds.
- Summer weeds are being controlled through spot spraying, boom spraying and grazing.
- Key paddock activities are soil testing and lime spreading.

PASTURES

Central Hills/Fleurieu Peninsula

- Dry paddock feed is of poor quality and most producers have commenced supplementary feeding of livestock.
- Livestock condition remains good.
- Sheep and lamb prices remain high but cattle prices have fallen as excess cattle are being sent south from drought areas of NSW and Queensland.
- Farmers are not investing in perennial pastures at present as the previous two poor seasons have caused a decline in their productivity.

Kangaroo Island

- Most producers have commenced supplementary feeding of stock as paddock feed supply and particularly quality have dwindled.
- Unseasonal and heavy rainfall events have led to a deterioration of dry paddock feed.
- Kikuyu and other summer perennials have responded well to the rain.

Lower Murray

WEATHER

- Rainfall was well below average in January and well above average during February.
- The region had above average temperatures and significant heat waves throughout this period.

CROPS

- Harvest was essentially completed across the Murray Plains by the end of December, so there is no change to crop yield reports since then.
- A dry lightning storm caused a large bushfire in the Eden Valley, Cambrai and Truro area. This caused significant loss of pasture ground throughout the foothills and crop stubble paddocks on the plains.
- The fires have led to a loss of soil cover and some wind erosion on lighter soil types however volunteer growth from recent rainfall will help to restore some paddock protection.
- The large February rains have helped fill soil profiles and greatly increase crop yield potentials across the region for the coming season.
- Farmers have been controlling volunteer plant growth since the February rains to help retain soil moisture and minimize root disease build up.
- Snails are active and baiting now would be beneficial.
- There have not been reports of mice numbers increasing.

PASTURES

- Up until the February rains, feed was in short supply across the region and most farmers were providing supplementary feed to stock.
- Many livestock farmers are facing difficult choices between using weed control measures on volunteer plants to preserve moisture and minimise disease or letting the plants grow to re-establish soil cover and provide feed for stock.

Northern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Little rain fell in January but the steady downpour around February the 14th resulted in some of the highest measurements for decades, with some centers reporting falls in excess of 110mm.
- Temperatures were generally extremely hot with several heat waves though this period.

CROPS

- Harvest was completed across the Northern Mallee prior to January.
- The large amount of rain in February has generally filled soil profiles.
- Before the rainfall in February there were only scattered summer weeds across paddocks and farmers using weed-seeking spray technology were only using 5-15% of the amount of chemical normally used to control summer weeds. It is expected that there will be many more Northern Mallee farmers using this technology next summer.
- The stored soil moisture has provided some reassurance of plant available water for this year's crops, provided weed growth is controlled through to seeding.
- It is expected that more canola and pulse crops will be sown this year.
- Mice have not been reported as a major threat.

PASTURES

- Paddock feed has been scarce for most of this period but this is changing as growth of volunteer cereals and weeds begins.
- Many pasture paddocks from last season have very low surface cover levels.
- Fire has bared a number of paddocks close to the Billiatt Conservation Park.

Southern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- The Southern Mallee recorded varying rainfall amounts during January and February from slightly below average in the south western area around Peake and Geranium, to well above average through Karoonda to Pinnaroo.
- Both January and February had periods of extreme heat.

CROPS

- Harvest was essentially completed by the end of December.
- There was some early summer weed control after harvest but many paddocks were left for grazing as there was generally little summer growth.
- Approximately half of the district received good rains that have been stored in the soil profile, providing an early water supply for this year's crops.
- All areas have a fresh germination of weeds after the February rainfall that will need to be controlled to retain subsoil moisture.
- Mice activity has not been observed to date.
- Fires started by lightning in National Parks damaged some adjoining farms but did not affect large areas of agricultural land.

PASTURES

- Paddock feed was becoming scarce until the February rains fell.
- Many pasture paddocks from 2013 are quite bare on the hills and vulnerable to erosion.
- It is expected that feed supplies will increase due to the recent rains.

Upper South East

WEATHER

- January temperatures were above to well above average (2 to 3.5^{0}C).
- Above average temperatures in early February were followed by below average recordings in the last half of the month.
- January rainfall was average to slightly below average across the district and February rainfall was average in most of the district.

CROPS

- Harvest was completed in early January with wheat generally being the best performing crop. Scout yielded very well but suffered significant down-grading in quality as a result of high levels of black point.
- An increasing number of producers are growing high yielding feed barley with a consequent reduction in the production of malt-quality barley.
- Stubble paddocks have been grazed to control summer weeds and reduce biomass.
- Pests are at relatively low levels, due to the low rainfall.
- There are young melon weeds in some paddocks.

PASTURES

- Nutritious feed has now been grazed from most stubbles and rain will be needed to ensure adequate pasture feed.
- Hay is already being fed out to livestock and some growers have also been feeding grain as a supplement.
- Livestock are in reasonable condition.
- Attention will be needed to maintain livestock condition as feed supply is low and of poor quality.
- There has been very limited or no growth in most perennial pastures. Any new growth of perennial pastures has been quickly burnt off by hot temperatures.

Lower South East

WEATHER

- Temperatures during January were 2 to 3^{0}C above average.
- February temperatures were also above average by 1 to 2.5^{0}C.
- January rainfall was average at Mt Gambier to above average at Naracoorte.
- February rainfall was average at Mt Gambier to well below average at Naracoorte.

CROPS

- Harvest of most cereal and legume crops continued during January under favourable conditions
- Bean harvesting was not completed until early February.
- Black point has been widespread in wheat crops throughout the district due to wet conditions and high humidity after flowering.
- Summer weed levels have remained low due to the lack of summer rain.
- Pest populations are relatively low.
- Stubble paddocks are being grazed to control isolated summer weeds and reduce biomass.

PASTURES

- Livestock are grazing the last of the stubbles and are being fed hay, supplemented with barley or beans.
- Condition of stock is variable but generally reasonable.
- Ewes have been mated and are in good condition. Some were supplementary-fed throughout mating.
- Pasture feed availability and quality is generally poor.
- Growth of perennial pastures has been limited by above average temperatures.