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Crop and Pasture Report South Australia

2011-12 CROPPING INTENTIONS

MAY 2012

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**Government
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Primary Industries
and Regions SA

CROP AND PASTURE REPORT - SOUTH AUSTRALIA

This is a bimonthly report prepared by Rural Solutions SA, for the Agribusiness Grains Industry Development Group of Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA).

Information current as of 3 May 2012

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ALL ENQUIRIES

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State Summary

WEATHER

- Temperatures during March were average to below average across most of the State with above average temperatures during April.
- Rainfall was above average in most districts of the State during March. Falls were below to well below average during April.
- Widespread good rains were received across southern areas of the State from 20th to 23rd April, with more than 40 mm (Lower Eyre Peninsula, Kangaroo Island, Adelaide Hills and Lower South East). Recordings varied greatly across the remainder of the State.

CROPS

- Control of summer weeds and the first germination of winter weeds took place in March and early April
- Herbicides are the first choice for weed kill, but some cultivation was used in the Northern and Mallee districts where weeds were woody or had become moisture stressed and control with herbicide became difficult.
- Snails are a major problem in almost all district of the state with significant amounts of stubble burning and baiting during March and April to control numbers.
- Mice numbers are building-up on Yorke Peninsula and widespread baiting may be required.
- Seeding commenced in those areas of the state that received significant falls from 20th to 23rd April
- Canola, beans and lupins have been the first crops sown.
- Most growers delayed sowing cereal crops to wait for a germination of winter weeds. In areas which received less than 5 mm some growers have started dry seeding lupins, beans, and canola and a small amount of cereal.
- The area sown to wheat is likely to fall across the state as current prices are below the cost of production. The area is being replaced by either more profitable crop options or pasture.
- There is likely to be a slight reduction in the area sown to barley and a continued swing away from malting varieties in most districts and particularly Eyre Peninsula where there are limited segregation options.
- Cropping area is likely to be reduced in the lower rainfall areas of the state with many growers opting to leave or sow higher risk cropping paddocks to pasture.
- The area sown to peas and lentils is likely to fall in a number of districts, due to tighter receival standards and a range of other issues.
- The area sown to canola will increase given the high returns relative to other crops and significant levels of stored soil moisture in some districts.
- In low and medium rainfall areas canola acreages will most likely be reduced if significant rain is not received by the middle of May.
- The high intensity of canola in the rotation in some districts will increase the risk of black-leg,
- Growers are using a combination of black-leg resistant varieties (where available), seed, fertiliser and foliar applied fungicides and careful paddock selection to reduce the risk of black-leg in canola.
- The area sown to milling oats is likely to increase in the South East with the expansion of Blue Lake Milling.

PASTURES

- Growers began dry sowing cereals and other pasture for stock feed during early to mid April in most districts.
- Pasture feed supplies throughout the state are extremely low and most livestock producers have been supplementary feeding stock to maintain condition.
- The rain in the last few weeks of April has germinated pastures in most areas of the state, except the Upper and Mid North and Mallee regions and these are growing rapidly with the warm conditions.
- Supplementary feed supplies have all but been exhausted in the South East.

KEY LINKS TO OTHER INFORMATION

Dept Environment and Natural Resources - Land condition monitoring project:

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.

District Reports

Western Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Temperatures in March and April were generally mild, with night time temperatures cooling towards the end of April.
- There were a number of days of strong winds in late March which caused some drift on cultivated light textured soil in the Central Eyre district.
- March rainfall for the Western Eyre district was below average to average.
- Rains from 21st to 23rd April varied significantly across the region with 4 mm at Penong up to 34 mm at Pt Kenny.

CROPS

- Growers have been utilizing a number of methods of snail control. Widespread stubble burning and baiting has occurred on calcareous soils and growers have also used prickle chains and rotary harrows to flatten and bury stubble residues
- Clay spreading and delving was conducted on significant areas of lighter textured soils in the Central Eyre district during March.
- Following the 21st to 23rd April rain some growers in the Mt Cooper and Wudinna districts predrilled urea/sulphate of ammonia and began sowing canola.
- Vetch and lupins were sown during the last week of April, but very little wheat and barley.
- Most growers are waiting for a germination of weeds and follow up rains before beginning the bulk of their cereal sowing program. In most areas, mice numbers are lower than in previous years. However, in isolated patches where numbers are high, growers are preparing to bait paddocks after sowing in these areas.
- The total crop area sown is likely to be slightly lower than last year with growers removing higher risk paddocks from the cropping program and returning to pasture due to the lack of subsoil moisture, grass weed issues, and low soil N.
- The area sown to canola will remain similar to last year.
- Mace will be the major wheat variety sown, followed by Wyalkatchem and Scout with smaller areas of Gladius and Axe.

PASTURES

- Livestock feed supplies throughout March and April were very low with many growers supplementary feeding to ensure livestock maintain condition.
- Following the rains from 21st to 23rd April, there was a rapid germination of weeds and medics on pasture paddocks which is providing some "green pick" for stock.
- Sowing of pasture feed mixes and medics began following this rain.
- There has been increased demand for medic seed in the lead up to this season

Lower Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Daytime temperatures have been mild to warm with cool to mild nights.
- A number of light frosts were reported in late April.
- There were a few days of strong winds in mid March and early April however there was minimal wind erosion in the Lower Eyre district due to limited cultivation to date.
- March rainfall for the Lower Eyre Peninsula was generally below average.
- April rainfall was well above average due to widespread rain on the 21st and 22nd of the month with falls of up to 30 mm recorded.

CROPS

- Despite good rains in mid April, stored subsoil moisture levels are still relatively low.
- Significant burning of stubbles took place during April to control snails, manage ryegrass numbers and reduce residue loads prior to seeding.
- A general lack of summer rain and low subsoil moisture has led to generally low levels of summer weeds
- Rain on 21st-22nd April saw a germination of weeds and provided the opportunity for an early knockdown herbicide application.
- Many growers have begun sowing canola.
- Most growers are waiting for follow up rains before beginning the bulk of their winter crop seeding.
- Growers are snail baiting paddocks that are going into canola. Growers have reported that they lack a marketable and profitable pulse break crop for sandy soil types in the higher rainfall zone of Lower Eyre.
- Growers are likely to reduce the area sown to beans and peas due to mould and fungal staining making them undeliverable last harvest.
- The total area of crop sown will be similar to 2011, with a small reduction in the area of barley and a small increase in the area sown to canola.
- Growers are using a combination of black-leg resistant varieties, seed, fertiliser and foliar applied fungicides and careful paddock selection to manage the risk of black-leg in canola.

PASTURES

- Paddock feed supply is very low following a very dry summer and many growers are supplementary feeding stock to ensure they maintain condition.
- Rains in mid April have seen a germination of weeds and pasture plants which is starting to provide a green pick on pasture paddocks.
- Many growers have begun sowing livestock pasture feed

Eastern Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Temperatures have been generally mild with night time temperatures cooling toward the end of April.
- There were a number of days of strong winds in late March and early April which caused some drift on cultivated light textured soil in the Wharminda and Franklin Harbour districts.
- March rainfall for the Eastern Eyre district was generally above average with significant rainfall totals being record in the first week of March in the Kimba and Franklin Harbour districts. Some areas around Darke Peake received greater than 75 mm in less than 24 hours.
- Widespread rain totaling between 15 and 20 mm was recorded around the 21st of April, however monthly totals were still below average.

CROPS

- Following the rain in early March many growers on Eastern Eyre have mechanically fallowed paddocks mainly to control large woody weeds including horehound, blanket weed and onion weed.
- Growers in the Kimba district were also beginning to sow canola paddocks by the end of April.
- Growers in the Buckleboo, Kimba, and Arno Bay began cultivating in preparation for sowing
- There has been a high amount of stubble burning to control weeds and deal with high residue loads prior to seeding.
- Snails numbers are high and large areas have been baited
- Vetch and some lupins were sown in the last week of April, however very little wheat and barley had been sown with most growers waiting for a germination of weeds. Follow up rains will be needed to complete the bulk of the winter cropping program.
- Early indications from growers are for a more conservative cropping program than in the last couple of years.
- A lack of subsoil moisture in many districts has high risk paddocks dropped out of the cropping program and sown to pasture to control grassy weeds and increase N levels.
- The barley area may decrease by 5 to 10% from last season due to poor returns and foliar disease issues, with most of this area being replaced with pasture.
- Fleet, Hindmarsh and Keel will be the main varieties with only small areas of malting varieties, as Commander is not being accepted as a malting variety on Eyre Peninsula.
- Despite issues with disease and frost in 2011 the area sown to peas is not likely to change significantly.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed supplies are very low and supplementary feeding with lupins and hay has increased.
- Stubble paddocks and the small area of perennial pastures contain the highest level of feed for livestock. Growers in the Buckleboo, Kimba, and Arno Bay began trashing in early cereal crops for feed following rains in mid April.
- Medic, vetch and were sown in the last week of April, (Michael is this a pasture comment)
- There is a high demand for medic seed with many growers looking to this year as an opportunity to renovate old medic stands.

Upper North

WEATHER

- Conditions during March were cool with below average maximum temperatures (2 to 3°C) and reasonably cold nights. April temperatures were near average.
- Rainfall for March was average to above average with around 30 mm received across the region in early March.
- Rainfall during April was well below average across the district.
- The district experienced a number of very windy days in March

CROPS

- Some stubbles in the southern part of the district were burnt in late March-early April to control snails and reduce ryegrass seed levels.
- Most growers continued to control germinations of summer and winter weeds during March and into early April using herbicides.
- Some growers have applied three or even four glyphosate applications since harvest in some paddocks and there are concerns about the sustainability of this practice
- A considerable amount of country has been worked up north of Booleroo Centre in an attempt to control summer weeds and store moisture following the rain in March.
- Country that had been cultivated earlier was worked back during March.
- A few summer crops including millet, maize and sunflowers were grown near Wirrabara and harvested during March,
- Locusts were present in moderate densities during March in most of the southern part of the district during March, with only a small number surviving through to maturity. In isolated areas sufficient egg laying occurred to be a concern for spring.
- Vetch, lupins and some canola were sown dry towards the end of April, with some wheat and barley been sown dry in the western part of the district.
- In the lower rainfall areas there is likely to be a reduction in the area sown to crop with poorer producing paddocks left or sown to pasture.
- There is likely to be a significant increase in the area sown to canola and juncea canola, particularly in the low to medium rainfall parts of the district. This could change if good rains are not received by mid May.
- A large number of growers are considering sowing canola for the first time.

PASTURES

- Stubble levels declined in quality in late autumn but March rains caused germination of cereals and weeds providing considerable green pick for livestock
- By late April most of the pasture that germinated after the March rain had died, particularly on the heavier soils north of Booleroo.
- Pasture feed supply is very low with most growers supplementary feeding stock.
- Growers commenced dry sowing pasture feed in early to mid April throughout the district.

Mid North

WEATHER

- Temperatures during March and April were mostly slightly below average, interspersed with brief periods of warm to hot weather.
- Total rainfall across the district during March-April was in the range of 50 – 75 mm.
- Rainfall for March was well above average (Decile 8-10 in all cases) across the district, with significant falls in the early and middle parts of the month.
- Virtually no rain was recorded from late March to the last week in April, when falls of 5 – 20 mm were recorded across the district.

CROPS

- Good sub soil moisture reserves are present in most areas following good early– mid March rainfall (on top of earlier summer rains), but the top 50 – 75 mm of the profile is now quite dry.
- Extensive spraying programs have meant that most summer weeds, and some early emerging winter weeds, are well under control.
- Stubble burning has increased in higher rainfall areas of the district this year, mainly to manage ryegrass and snails and, in some cases, heavy stubble loads. Straw baling after the last harvest has reduced the area burnt on a number of properties in the south eastern part of the district.
- Snail numbers have been high at a number of locations throughout the district and the recent light rain received allowed baiting to take place. There is likely to be a lot more baiting carried out before and after seeding, particularly in canola and pulse crops.
- Mice are currently at minimal levels in most parts of the district. Some preventative baiting is taking place to avoid an increase in numbers..
- Some canola has been sown in early districts on lighter soils and in later districts where stubble loads have been managed.
- Sowing of Faba beans has also commenced.
- Very little of the main sowing program has been carried out to date.
- Most farmers have indicated their intent to commence their main sowing program by the end of the first week in May, with the early part of the crop expected to be sown dry. Others will wait for another week or two and reassess whether or not to sow canola and other crops dry if there has still not been sufficient rainfall. Falls of 15mm+ will be required before sowing is in full swing.
- The area sown to canola is expected to increase this year, due to favourable prices for canola compared to the current low expected returns for wheat and barley. The increased canola area will be at the expense of cereals and, some pulse crops.
- There is also expected to be a slight increase in the area sown to oaten hay, due to increase in demand from exporters.
- Pea area is expected to decrease, due to ongoing problems with snails at harvest
- The area sown to chickpeas is expected to increase slightly.

PASTURES

- Livestock feed had been adequate until mid April, with most stock grazing on crop stubbles and germinations of volunteer cereals and weeds from March rains.
- Supplementary feeding has only recently commenced on some properties, most commonly those with lambing flocks. Most producers are considered to currently be holding good reserves of conserved fodder.

- The feed situation will tighten considerably when seeding gets underway. Despite good germination of pasture species on earlier rains, the recent dry spell means that very little growth has occurred to date.
- Most feed crops (cereals and some vetch) were sown during April and are currently emerging.

Lower North

WEATHER

- Temperatures were slightly below average during March and above average during April.
- Rainfall for March was well above average across the district.
- Rainfall was below average during April.
- Rainfall on the 20th April varied from 8 mm (Kapunda) to 18 mm. (Riverton)

CROPS

- There has been significant stubble burning to control snails and reduce ryegrass seed numbers. This has been slightly less than last year.
- Cereal stubbles were burnt to reduce emergence problems with canola crops and yellow leaf spot on wheat being sown back into wheat stubbles.
- Straw baling after the last harvest has reduced the area burnt on many properties across the district.
- Across most of the district, snail numbers are lower, due to the dry summer. In isolated areas and paddocks, snail numbers remain high. High numbers in some areas and paddocks.
- Very little summer weed spraying has been done, due to the dry conditions and small moisture stressed weeds.
- The early districts have commenced dry sowing with some growers having sown up to 30% of their program by the end of April. Canola and beans have been the main crops sown.
- Most growers are waiting for weeds to germinate before commencing sowing of cereals, but with the greater range of herbicides now available, sowing cereals dry is no longer such a risk.
- Wheat area is likely to be slightly down on last year.
- Reduced area sown to barley with a swing away from malting varieties, due to reduced premiums and tighter specifications.
- Reduced area sown to lentils, peas and beans, because of tighter receival standards.
- The oaten hay area is likely to fall, due to the high risk of weather damage and reduced market options for lower grade hay.
- Significant (5 to 10%) increase in the area sown to canola, due to the high price and increased management options.
- With the higher canola intensity more crops will be sown next to a paddock of canola stubble, increasing the risk of black-leg
- Black-leg risk is being managed by using Intake in furrow[®] on the canola crop and the application of an early foliar fungicide spray.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed is at low levels throughout the district
- Rain in late April has provided some feed, but further follow-up rains will be needed.

Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER

- Minimum and maximum temperatures have not shown any significant anomalies.
- Rainfall over the past three months on Yorke Peninsula has generally been around average with above average falls being recorded on parts of lower YP.
- Rain was received on several days from 21st to 23rd April, with 25mm in the south down to 5mm in the north. Areas receiving the higher falls would regard this as an ideal opening to the season.

CROPS

- Summer weed and volunteer cereal spraying has been widespread again this year, with most paddocks only requiring one or two sprays. Up to three applications have been reported in some cases.
- Stored soil moisture levels are generally down on last year's excellent levels but are still seen as reasonable. Recent rainfall has not been sufficient on heavier soils to join up with deeper subsoil moisture.
- Stubble loads in paddocks are again high with some late burns still required to reduce the level of bunching after sowing and improve pre-emergent weed control.
- Stubble burning has been widespread, with snails, weed seed levels and the difficulties in handling high stubble loads being the main drivers of the decision to burn
- Significant wind erosion has been evident following high wind events on burnt paddocks (particularly lighter soil types).
- The recent rains have resulted in winter weed emergence with marshmallow continuing to be a major problem weed Snails are in extremely high levels in many paddocks, even after extensive baiting.
- Mice activity appears to be increasing, with the need for baiting expected to be widespread again this year
- Sowing of canola and cereals has commenced in areas favored by the late April rains Sowing intentions are for a much larger canola and chickpea area (both up as much as 50%) at the expense of lentils. Cereals and peas are likely to remain largely unchanged in area.
- Hard wheat varieties are expected to be favoured with Hindmarsh the major barley variety grown.

PASTURES

- Self replacing ewes and prime lambs remain attractive break crop options utilizing pasture. There has been a small increase in the amount of pasture being used for this purpose.
- There is a general feed shortage in the region until the new seasons pastures are established.
- Feed paddocks (usually barley and oats) were planted in mid-April and will benefit from recent rains.
- Medic has emerged after the recent rains and is growing well.

Central Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island

WEATHER

- Rainfall for March was above average.
- Most of the region has had an excellent opening to the season April 21st-23rd receiving soaking rains of 25 – 50 mm.
- March and April temperatures have been average

CROPS

- On Kangaroo Island, the late April rainfall event has enabled excellent germination of pastures and weeds.
- Whilst some burning of stubbles occurred on KI before the rains, the recent germination has prevented any more burning off. About 10% of stubbles have been burnt mainly for control of weeds and snails.
- Limited reports of mice are causing a few problems, mainly around sheds and facilities. There have been no reports of mice damage in paddocks
- On Kangaroo Island no seeding had occurred at the end of April with, most growers waiting for a further weed germination before they commence spraying and seeding. A few growers have worked up paddocks and some will start spraying / seeding in early May.
- On the mainland seeding preparation has been occurring over the last month with some spraying of late summer weeds Snails and slugs have the potential to be an issue across the region with some early baiting already occurring.
- On Kangaroo Island there will be a reduced area sown to wheat, canola area will be similar to last year and a predicted increase in the area sown to broad beans of about 10-15%.
- On the mainland no real changes to crop area and type are anticipated, although there is a potential for an increase in area sown to canola (5-10%) and a small decrease in cereals, mainly wheat and barley of around 2%.

PASTURES

- Hand feeding is continuing until pastures are well established.
- Pasture germination on Kangaroo Island has been excellent. On the mainland germination has been a little slower due to the cooler weather.
- On Kangaroo Island summer kikuyu pasture have provided excellent feed and surface cover over the summer months. Strong winds on the 6th April caused some wind erosion and this event has helped trigger more interest in seeding kikuyu this year.
- On the mainland Lucerne has responded well to the recent rains.
- Some early feed was sown dry.

Lower Murray

WEATHER

- Temperatures were slightly below average during March and slightly above average during April.
- Reports of gusty damaging winds during April.
- Rainfall was above average for March and average for April.

CROPS

- March rains prompted the early germination of some winter weeds.
- Paddock preparations have included full cultivation, disc/prickle churning and weed spraying.
- There is no real change to the area sown to crops expected. This may change if significant rainfall is not received in the next couple of weeks.
- No major pest issues to report.

PASTURES

- Some early germination of pastures in March, however warm temperatures and an absence of adequate follow up rainfall has caused some pastures to struggle and die off.
- Livestock are in good condition with some supplementary feeding taking place.
- There has been some dry sowing of cereal crops for feed.

Northern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Temperatures during March were mild to warm with below average temperatures, while April had above average maximum temperatures.
- Good rainfall was received in March
- Rainfall events in April were average, but have been spread out causing soils to dry out on the surface.
- A significant wind event in late April caused some soil erosion on bare paddocks.

CROPS

- Wheat plantings are expected to remain the same as last year.
- Canola plantings are still expected to increase slightly unless a significant rainfall event does not occur in the next few weeks.
- There have been some reports of increased snail numbers in some areas of the district.
- Paddock preparations have included cultivation and weed spraying with a small percentage of paddocks burnt.
- No-till farmers began some dry sowing at the end of April but conventional farmers are still looking for more rainfall to make a start.

PASTURES

- There is still some green pick from weeds and self sown pastures as a result of March rains.
- Most pasture paddocks have reasonable cover
- Livestock are in fair to good condition.

Southern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Temperatures for March and April have been mild to warm with low night temperatures and dewy mornings.
- Rainfall deciles for March were 9-10 across the district. Rainfall for April was average to slightly below average
- Several notable wind events have caused some drift on exposed paddocks.

CROPS

- The canola area is expected to increase slightly this season as a result of the canola price outlook
- Tighter canola rotations are becoming common place with concerns about the risk of black-leg.
- The use of fungicides on seed, on fertiliser (Intake in furrow®) and foliar fungicides will be needed to reduce the risk of black-leg.
- The area sown to barley may be reduced and replaced with pastures.
- Snails are a problem in some areas with early baiting taking place after March rains.
- Paddock preparations have involved spraying autumn weeds, cultivation and to a lesser degree burning.
- Some early sown and volunteer feed crops that emerged in March have been under moisture stress and have either died or gone to head early.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed is still available in most areas with the emergence of autumn weeds and self sown cereals.
- Livestock are being supplementary fed in some areas and are maintaining condition.

Upper South East

WEATHER

- Overall the temperatures for March and April have been mild with above average minimum daily temperatures and below average maximum temperatures.
- Monthly totals for March (Keith 32mm (21.5), Kingston 29mm (23.5) Coonalpyn, 47 mm (21.3)) were above average
- Monthly totals for April (Keith 20 mm (32.9 mm), Kingston 41 mm (44.4 mm), Coonalpyn 32 (35)) were below average.

CROPS

- There have been very few summer weed issues due to lack of summer rainfall.
- Since the opening rains on 20th of April most of the lighter soils have had a weed germination whilst heavy soils are still waiting for a good germination.
- Some producers have dry sown beans and canola will be sown within the next couple of weeks.
- Oats and barley have been sown by many with mixed livestock and cropping enterprises to get some early feed for livestock.
- Snails are a significant issue with producers baiting and/or burning to control numbers.
- Stubble burning is being carried out strategically by producers, only in instances where there is excessive trash/stubble remaining in a paddock or the paddock has a significant snail issue.
- Producers are increasing the amount of pulses and in particular beans that are being planted for break crop reasons.
- Most producers are planning to significantly increase the area sown to canola due to the high returns relative to most other crop options.
- Many producers are decreasing the area planted to cereals due to forecast low returns with some producers dropping wheat completely from their cropping programs.
- A lot of grain still remains in storage as producers are not prepared to sell at the current prices being offered.
- Some producers are looking at durum varieties of wheat due to the contracts being offered.
- Producers are increasing the area planted to milling oats due to the increased demand by Blue Lake milling and the contracts available to producers for a wide range of milling oat varieties.
- Ryegrass control will limit the amount of milling oats most growers will be prepared to sow.
- Many producers are looking to diversify their cropping programs to include more niche seed crops such as clover and lucerne as a result of seed contracts that are available.

PASTURES

- Pastures have germinated and are growing quickly with warm soil and no competition from dry standing feed.
- Feed reserves on many properties in the Upper South East are currently at critical levels with pasture availability inadequate to support livestock.
- Livestock are in very poor condition as a result of the dry spring and summer and low reserves of conserved fodder.
- Many producers have finished lambing or calving or are currently lambing and calving and there have been reports of significant losses of ewes and lambs as a result of poor nutrition and higher than normal calf losses.

- Increased incidence of calving problems in first calf heifers due to the dry spring and summer resulting in poor pasture growth impacting on target heifer weights not being met.
- Many producers are concerned about significant potential impacts on next years' reproduction rates of ewes and cows particularly maiden ewes and first calf heifers.
- Many producers are confinement feeding sheep and some cattle to protect pasture paddocks.
- Some producers are looking at agistment options for cattle as far away as NSW.
- Hay prices have increased significantly by at least \$40 - \$50 per tonne across all hay types.
- Producers have sown increased areas of pasture mixes to generate feed for livestock.

Lower South East

WEATHER

- Maximum temperatures were near average during March and above average for April
- Rainfall for March was generally above average (Naracoorte 29 mm; Mt Gambier 50mm) across the district.
- Rainfall was below average for April (Naracoorte 19 mm; Mt Gambier 40 mm) despite reasonable falls in the last few weeks of the month.

CROPS

- Snail numbers are extremely high and widespread baiting of snails occurred towards the end of April
- There has been significant burning of stubbles to control snail numbers and reduce weed seed levels before sowing.
- Some lupin and bean crops have been sown dry,
- With limited sub-soil moisture, most growers are waiting for further follow-up rain before commencing their seeding program.
- The area sown to cereals is likely to be down significantly due to low forecast prices.
- Much of this reduced cereal area will be sown to canola.
- The area sown to oaten hay is likely to increase to replenish depleted fodder reserves.
- The area sown to lupins is likely to remain similar to last season.
- A large amount of last seasons' bean production is still in storage, which may limit the amount sown this season.

PASTURES

- Wingless grasshoppers and crickets caused significant damage to perennial pastures over summer and autumn.
- Following the rain in mid to late April there has been a good germination of pasture on the lighter soils, but only limited germination on heavier soils.
- South of Penola there is now adequate pasture supply from germinating annual pastures and perennials.
- Perennial pastures have grown rapidly across the district since the rain in mid April, due to the mild conditions and warm soil.
- Livestock lost condition in late summer and most producers have been supplementary feeding for the last few months and have now used up all of their fodder reserves.
- A few growers have sown pasture feed dry including cereal rye to provide quick early feed.