

Crop and Pasture Summary

Issue 5 Season 2020-21: Harvest – January 2021

Summary

Harvest proceeded with few interruptions from rain or high fire risk days. Harvest was mostly completed by the end of December, except for on Kangaroo Island, the Central Hills, lower South East and eastern parts of the Mid and Upper North, which were still harvesting in January with cool, humid conditions delaying completion.

Crop yields on the Western and Eastern Eyre Peninsula, Northern Yorke Peninsula, western parts of the Mid North and the northern part of the Lower Murray were below average. Yields in all other areas were average to above average, with well-above average yields in some districts. Hot northerly winds in late November and early December caused grain loss in ripe crops, particularly barley and oats, and some losses in wheat and canola crops. Despite these losses, total crop production for 2020-21 is well-above the long-term average (22%), estimated at 9.16 million tonnes from a crop area of 4.0 million hectares. Grain quality was average to above average in all districts with high test weights, low screenings and average to above average grain protein.

Annual and perennial pastures responded to September and October rains, allowing some recovery from poor growth during the dry winter conditions. Production was insufficient in most of the low and medium rainfall districts to maintain stock over summer. Livestock are now grazing on abundant stubbles available post-harvest. Cut hay and kept grain will provide enough feed reserves for livestock, with good supplies of hay available in most districts.

Figure 2. Root zone soil moisture, October 2019.

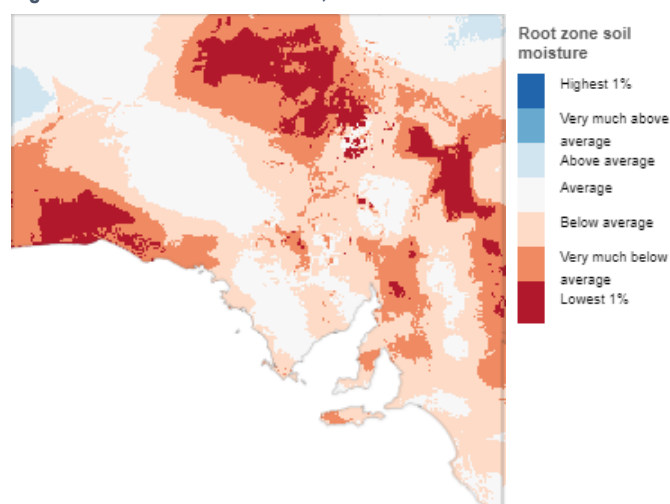
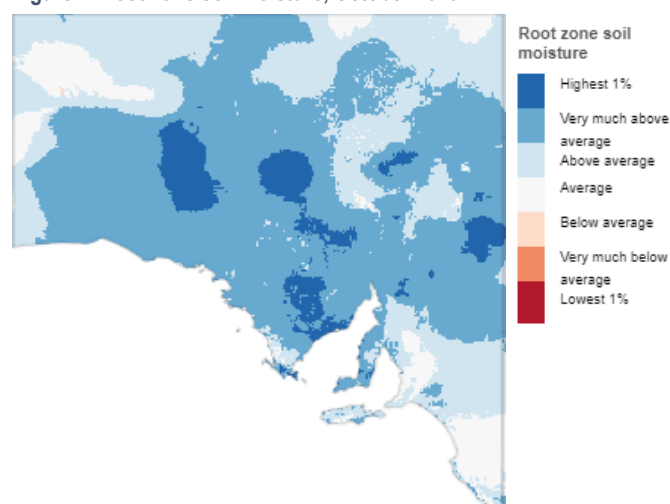


Figure 1. Root zone soil moisture, October 2020.



Sown crop area and production for 2020-21 and previous five seasons

Seasons	2015–6	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21 estimate
Area sown (ha)	3,821,000	3,894,000	3,565,000	3,572,000	3,898,000	4,013,000
Production (t)	7,211,000	11,145,000	6,921,000	5,795,000	6,467,000	9,160,000
Farm gate value	\$1.6 billion	\$2.2 billion	\$1.7 billion	\$1.7 billion	\$2.0 billion	\$2.5 billion

Next update for release March 2021 – Final Season Summary

Information accurate as at 29 January 2021.



Government of South Australia
Department of Primary Industries
and Regions

The season so far...



RAIN – Good pre-season and opening rains were important in establishing crops. Below average rainfall from May to the first week of August slowed growth. Late winter/spring rains across the state supported crop performance and promoted strong new feed growth. Below average to average rainfall in most cropping districts for November to December allowed harvest to proceed with few interruptions.



SUBSOIL MOISTURE – Last season's crop depleted soils of moisture (figure 1). Spring rains later in September and October replenished losses from the dry winter, allow crops to fulfill their yield potential, leaving above average soil moisture in October across the state (figure 2).



CROP MIX – Canola, lentil and bean crop areas increased significantly on last year while the wheat area increased slightly. While some barley crops swapped for other crops at the last minute, the area increased on recent season crops. Changes to the area sown to domestic and export hay varies between districts, but overall, the area is smaller than last season.



CROP GROWTH – The crop was mostly sown by end of May and established well, except late sown crops. Frost damage in late September was more severe than expected in a few districts. Due to late rains, more than normal cereal and pulse crops were sprayed prior to harvest to ensure even ripening and weed control.



LIVESTOCK CONDITION AND FEED – Pastures were actively growing in Autumn until the drier, frosty conditions in winter arrested

growth rates. Rain during spring rejuvenated pasture growth, but final biomass was below average with what was produced being insufficient to maintain stock over summer in most of the low and medium rainfall districts. Livestock are currently grazing on crop stubbles in the cereal/livestock area with most providing reasonable to excellent amounts of high-quality feed. There are very good supplies of hay available in most districts. The late winter and spring wet conditions in the pastoral zone has improved feed and refilled water sources, allowing restocking.

Outlook for the year

RAINFALL OUTLOOK – The Bureau of Meteorology's most recent update of the season outlook (issued 28 January 2021) models the three-month February to April outlook slightly favouring a wetter and cooler than normal climate.

Challenges and opportunities

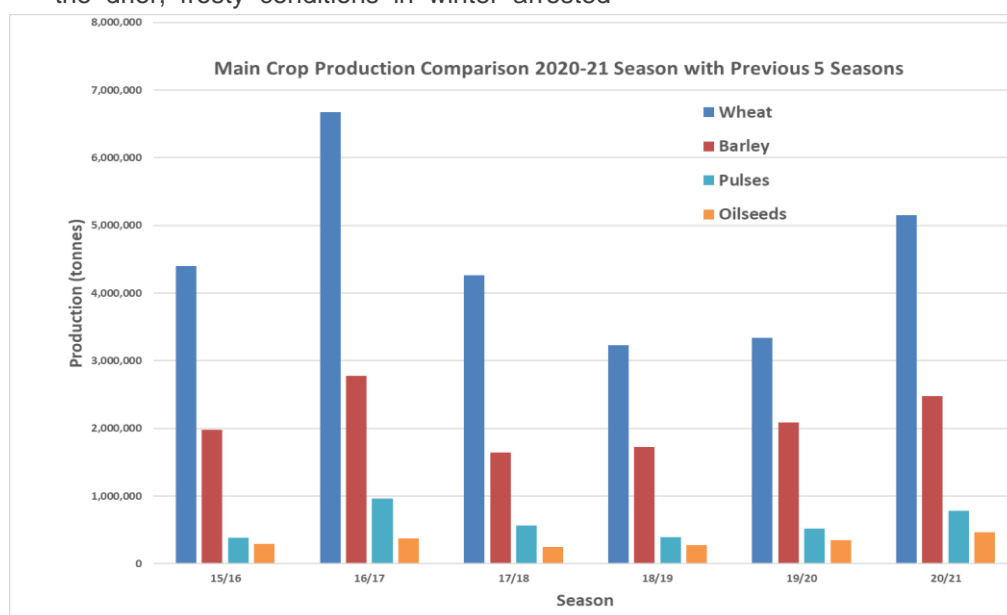
PESTS AND DISEASES – Crop disease and pest problems were minimal this season. Leaf diseases requiring treatment were limited to barley net blotch and wheat stripe rust.

ADVERSE EVENTS – The December 2020 Blackford fire impacted a number of farm enterprises in the lower South East. Around 14,000 ha was burnt, with significant losses to livestock and fencing.

MARKET DRIVERS – Buoyant demand for wheat and coarse grains, particularly in China, combined with lower than usual grain production in the Black Sea region and Argentina, and restrictions on wheat exports from Russia, have driven strong demand for Australian wheat and supported above average prices. Industry expects the recent reports of large purchases of US corn by China to have flow on effects on wheat and barley providing stronger price outlooks for Australian grains next season.

REGIONAL ISSUES

– Areas recovering from several years of drought and those affected by severe bushfires over both this and last summer remain an important focus of recovery efforts in support of affected communities.



May	July	Sept	Nov	Jan 2021	Apr 2021
				This Update	Next Update
Seeding intentions	Seeding and crop establishment	Winter crop performance	Spring crop early harvest	Harvest	Final summary and estimates