

Crop and Pasture Summary

PIRSA

Issue 1 Season 2021-22: Crop Seeding Intentions - May 2021

Summary

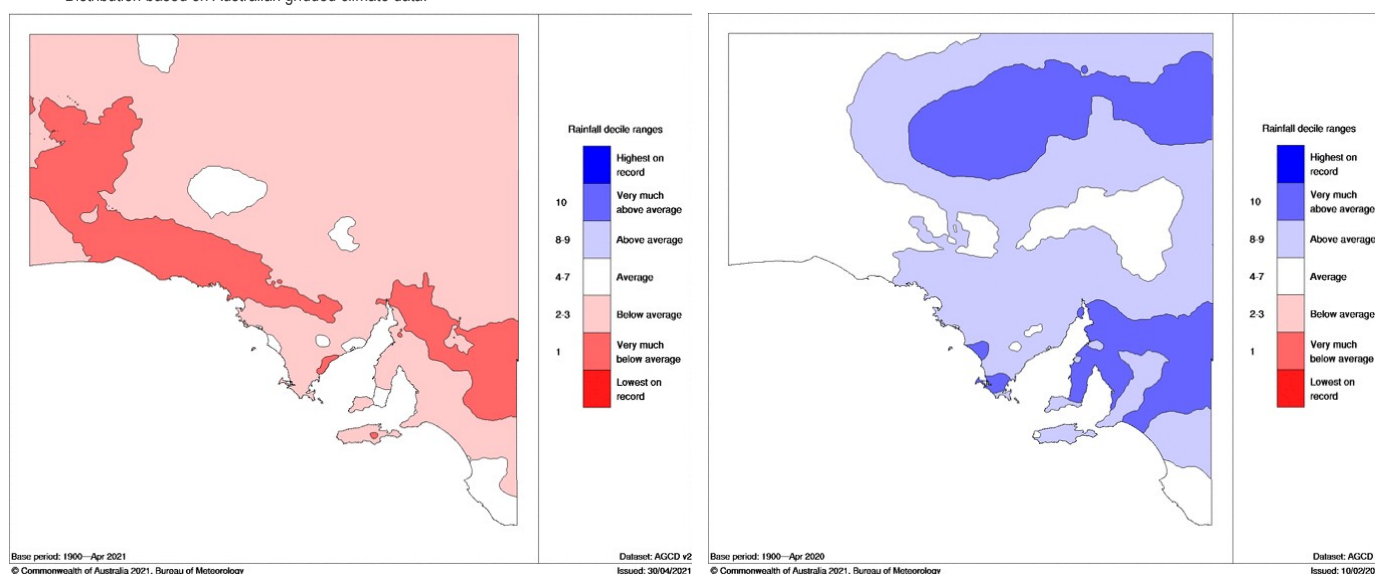
Rainfall for the first three months of 2021 was mostly average across the State, with parts of the northern agricultural districts below average for the period. In contrast, parts of the western Eyre Peninsula and lower South East were above average having received 50 mm or more rainfall in January with further rains in February. However, in contrast to April last season, the 2021 April rainfall was below average to well below average (Figure 1) across the State.

Growers with intentions for a large cropping program commenced dry seeding during April, but other growers are holding off waiting on opening rains. With no significant rains to date in May, once farmers exhaust intended cropping paddocks that are suitable candidates for dry seeding, this activity will pause until they arrive.

The drier start to 2021 and the large crop grown last season has dried soil profiles, with root zones dry and deeper soil moisture levels well below average. The later the opening rains arrive, the more likely this will become a key in determining final crop mix for this season and cropping outcomes will become more dependent on winter-spring rains.

The area of wheat, the largest grain crop, is unlikely to change significantly. Intended areas of canola and pulses are dependent on the timing of opening rains, with increasing likelihood of being swapped for a cereal crop the longer rains are delayed. The area intended for export hay has significantly reduced due to a decline in export hay demand.

Figure 1. Contrasting Season Start: South Australian April Rainfall Deciles for 2021 (left) compared with last season April 2020 (right).
Distribution based on Australian gridded climate data.



Sown crop area and production for previous six seasons

Seasons	2015–6	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21
Area sown (ha)	3,821,000	3,894,000	3,565,000	3,572,000	3,898,000	4,003,000
Production (t)	7,211,000	11,145,000	6,921,000	5,795,000	6,467,000	9,135,000
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 July 2021 – Seeding and Crop Establishment

2021-22 Crop estimates commence with the July 2020 report.

Information accurate as at 18 May 2021.



Government of South Australia
Department of Primary Industries
and Regions

The season so far...



RAIN – Year-to-date rainfall has been below average through many areas of the State, particularly in the east, while the pastoral districts have had mostly average rains to date. Rainfall for April and May to date have been below average across the State with no rain event to date qualifying as a “season opening”.



SUBSOIL MOISTURE – Soil root zones are dry, but several districts have limited moisture deeper down the soil profile from summer rain. Lack of April rainfall combined with limited summer rains has not replenished moisture deficits created by a large crop last season.



CROP MIX – The area of wheat is unlikely to change significantly. Barley export prospects has not been as badly affected as first feared since China imposed tariffs, as traders switched markets resuming exports to past markets like Saudi Arabia and opening new markets. Barley remains a viable option for farmers, particularly given the later season start. Domestic and particularly export hay areas are being significantly reduced due to a decline in export hay demand. The longer opening rains are delayed the more likely area sown to canola and pulses will decline with these areas plus hay area likely to be switched out to barley or wheat.



SEEDING – Most farmer’s seeding operations are on hold waiting for opening rains. Farmers with large cropping programs commenced dry sowing during April expected to comprise 20% of their intended cropping. Once paddocks suitable for dry seeding are finished, sowing will pause until the opening rain arrives. Sowing too early will not allow time for control of a germination of weed seeds and spilt grain from last harvest, increasing risk of weedy crops.



LIVESTOCK CONDITION AND FEED – The majority of livestock are in good condition. Producers in most districts have resumed supplementary feeding livestock given last season crop stubbles are now exhausted.

Outlook for the year

RAINFALL OUTLOOK – The Bureau of Meteorology’s most recent update of the season outlook for the June to August period (issued 13 May 2021, Figure 2) shows increased probability of a wetter than normal winter across the entire State, with warmer temperatures in the south.

The Bureau of Meteorology’s outlooks during May tend to be more reliable than late summer and early autumn.

Challenges and opportunities

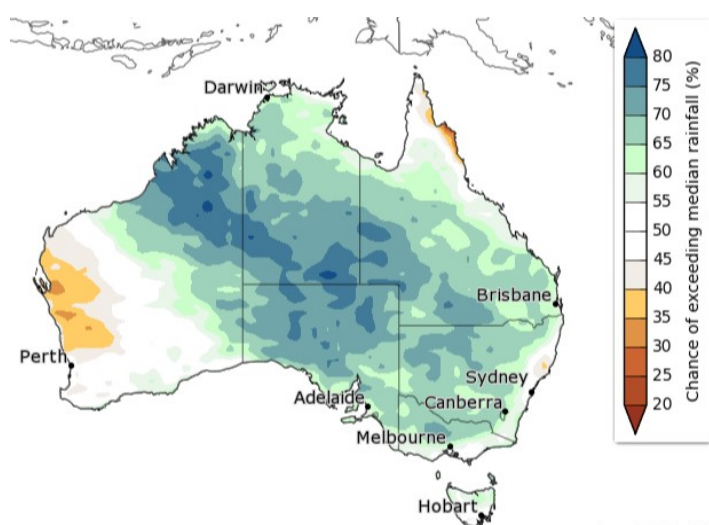
PESTS AND DISEASES – Mice numbers are relatively low in most of the State except for Kangaroo Island, Yorke Peninsula, and parts of the northern agricultural districts. Mice are not at the widespread extensive plague numbers reported in the eastern States. Paddocks with high mice numbers are being baited before sowing. Snails have been active in several districts, with baiting to reduce numbers before egg laying.

ADVERSE EVENTS – To date apart from the dry conditions, there has been no adverse events. Unconfirmed reports of pre-season shortages of fertiliser and other inputs has not been pressing due to the later opening rains and slow start to the seeding program.

MARKET DRIVERS – The COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt markets. Chinese Government tariffs on Australian Barley has resulted in traders moving to other barley export markets. China replacing Australian barley with other sources of coarse grain has shifted global feed supply and demand, indirectly supporting Australian barley prices. International crop production forecasts have increased market price volatility, but most industry commentary supports softening of prices on last season.

REGIONAL ISSUES – No significant regional issues from current seasonal conditions. Financial recovery from earlier years of drought and the areas affected by recent severe bushfires remains an important focus of recovery efforts in support of affected communities.

Figure 2. Bureau of Meteorology Season Outlook, Three Months June-August 2021, showing increased probability of rainfall exceeding the median.



Issued: 13 May 2021

May 2021	July 2021	Sept 2021	Nov 2021	Jan 2022	Apr 2022
This update	Next Update				
Seeding intentions	Seeding and crop establishment	Winter crop performance	Spring crop harvest	Harvest	Final summary and estimates