South Australian Crop and Pasture Report

2026-27 Seeding Intentions

May 2026

Government of South Australia
Department of Primary Industries and Regions

Crop and Pasture Report South Australia

Information current as of 14 May 2026

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Key link to Weather information

Bureau of Meteorology - Weather and rainfall observations

Notes on the calculation of crop estimates

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 PIRSA 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.

State Crops and Pastures – 2026/27 Seeding Intentions

Summary

Good early rainfall in 2026 (figure 1) has seeding underway, with multiple associated benefits; The rain has enabled growers to enter the season with stored soil moisture for the first time in several years. Spraying operations have focussed on controlling volunteers and summer weeds to manage the green bridge, and there has been a germination of key in-crop weeds providing an opportunity for knockdown control ahead of seeding. The rain has also reduced the risk of herbicide residue carryover in many paddocks and will provide better conditions for pre-emergent herbicide activity. All of these factors are a substantial improvement on recent years at this time.

Mice and locusts are key risks this season. Increasing mouse activity is evident across parts of the Adelaide Plains, Yorke Peninsula and Mid North. Australian plague locusts have been reported in several cropping regions and pose a potential threat to early emerging crops. Monitoring and baiting programs are ongoing as crops are sown.

Ongoing supply-chain disruption is creating concern among growers, with uncertainty about availability of fuel, fertiliser and crop protection inputs. Rising freight costs and higher input prices are likely to put pressure on tight margins and profitability. Despite this, there have been only minor changes to cropping program plans.

The preliminary estimation of total cropped area is higher than the 2025/26 season. An early break to the season has seen increased planting in more marginal areas of the state. Dry starts in recent seasons precluded this.

Wheat and barley continue to be the dominant crops. Wheat area is similar to 2025/26 and close to the 5-year average, while barley area has increased slightly. Durum has rebounded from a lower area sown last year to be close to its 5-year average. Lentil area is forecast to increase again, by an additional 12% across the state compared to the 2025/26 season. This firmly establishes lentils as the third largest crop area behind wheat and barley. The area sown to canola has increased by 5% compared to season 2025/26.

As seeding continues, grain production for 2026/27 is estimated to be 9.0 million tonnes, based on the assumption that yield potential is close to the 10-year average. Achieving average yields will ultimately depend on growing season rainfall and the impact of any in season stress events.

For livestock, rainfall has significantly improved pasture growth and feed availability, supporting a return to near average feed on offer in many areas. As a result, livestock condition has improved with reduced pressure on producers. Follow up rainfall, however, will be critical to maintain pasture persistence, particularly for annual species. Despite the improvement, supplementary feeding remains important in some regions as producers cautiously manage recovery following earlier dry conditions.

Sown crop area and production for previous six seasons

Seasons	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	*2026-27* *Estimated*
Area sown (ha)	3,942,000	3,942,000	4,011,000	3,860,000	4,069,000	*4,215,000*
Production (t)	8,445,000	12,788,000	8,703,000	5,170,000	8,860,000	*9,010,000*
Farm gate value	$3.3 billion	$4.8 billion	$3.3 billion	$2.1 billion	$3.1 billion	

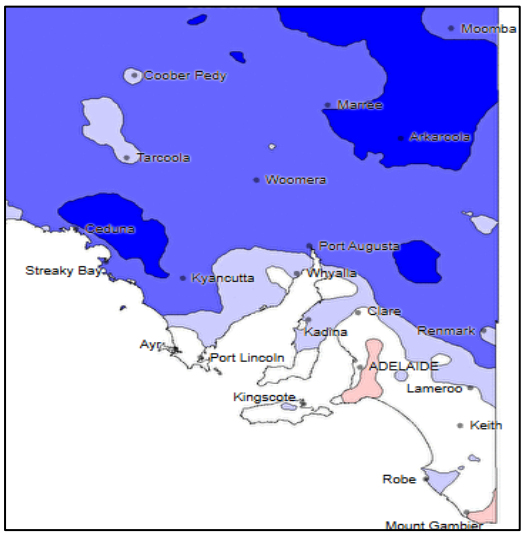

Figure 1: Rainfall deciles for the 4-month period 1st January 2026 to 30th April 2026 (issued 30 April 2026).© Commonwealth of Australia 2026, Bureau of Meteorology

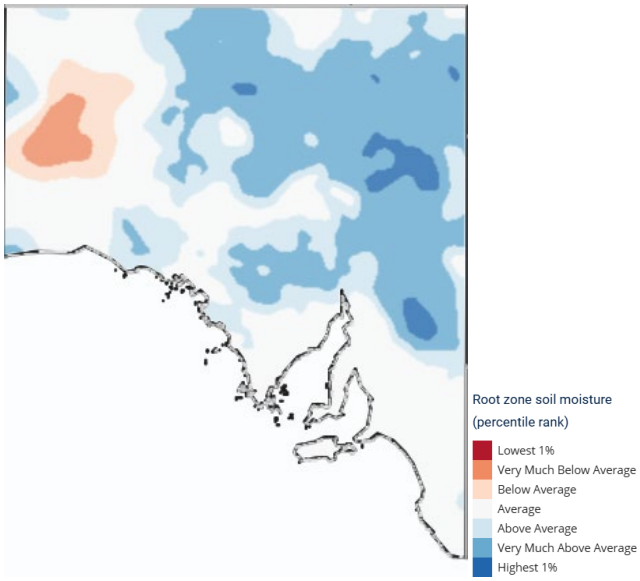

Figure 2: Rootzone soil moisture relative to average (accessed 11th May 2026).
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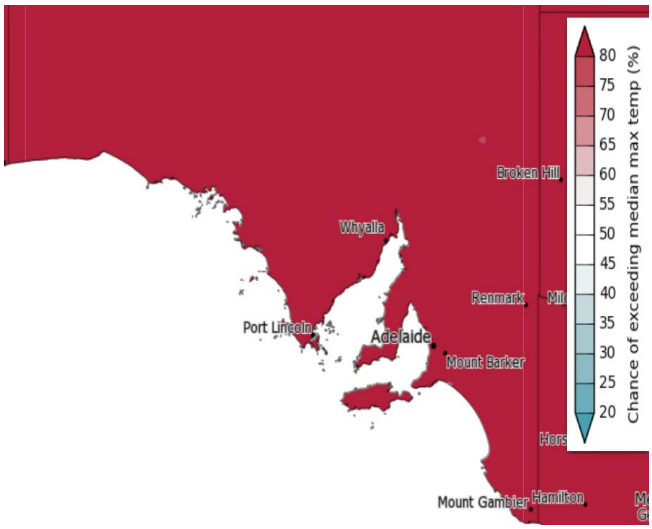


Figure 3: Chance of above median maximum temperatures for June to August 2026 (issued 7 May 2026).
Commonwealth of Australia 2026, Bureau of Meteorology

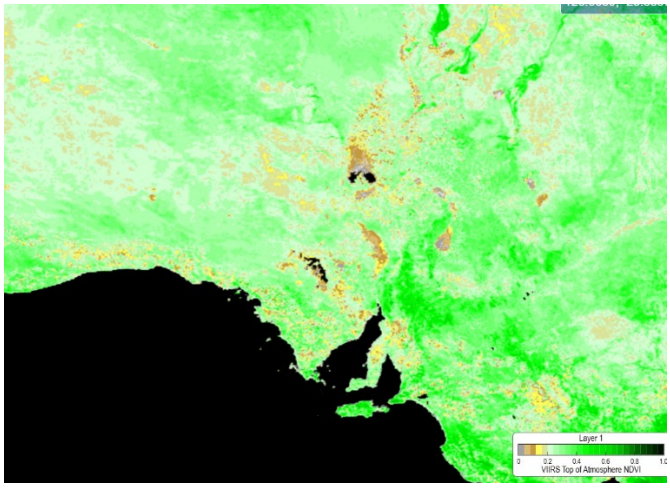


Figure 4: NDVI (Normalised Difference Vegetation Index) for South Australia, showing widespread green growth, (issued 9 May 2026).
NOAA, JStar Mapper Website

Season 2026/27

Weather

Recent conditions have been characterised by above-average early season rainfall, delivering widespread soaking events and constituting a well-timed season break for many districts (figure 1). Since then, warmer and more settled weather has dominated, allowing seeding to progress, with minimal paddock trafficability issues, although producers in many areas were monitoring forecasts closely for the next significant rain event before continuing.

The sought after follow up rain did occur in late April early May and was concentrated across southern agricultural regions, with between 15–35 mm recorded across Eyre Peninsula, Yorke Peninsula, Kangaroo Island and the Adelaide Plains, while central districts received more moderate totals of around 10–25 mm. In the Upper North, falls were lighter (generally 2–10 mm) with isolated higher gaugings.

Season outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology's May–July long-range outlook indicates rainfall is likely to be below average for parts of south-eastern South Australia, with the strongest dry signal in July. Maximum and minimum temperatures (figure 3) are likely to be above average across South Australia, increasing the likelihood of warmer days and nights through early winter.

Both El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) are neutral at present, although some models are projecting an increased likelihood of El Nino forming. Sea surface temperatures (SST) are driving the higher temperature outlook, and to a lesser extent the lower rainfall indication. There is higher confidence in the temperature outlook compared to the rainfall signal.

Subsoil moisture

Soil moisture profiles are generally favourable following the earlier rainfall (figure 2), with good subsoil reserves supporting crop and pasture establishment. While surface layers have begun to dry under recent warm conditions, retained moisture at depth remains sufficient in most areas, providing a solid foundation as the season develops.

Crop mix

The crop mix continues to be dominated by cereals, particularly wheat and barley, reflecting favourable establishment conditions and some confidence in pricing. There is also steady interest in canola where moisture has allowed timely sowing. Increases in lentil area are evident in some regions. In some Mallee districts, pulse areas have been trimmed due to a need to maintain ground cover on erosion prone areas.

Cropping progress

Seeding is progressing steadily, with many growers already well into planned cropping programs. After early rains, warm, dry conditions have supported good paddock access and efficient operations. For some, programs are being carefully timed to align with surface moisture conditions, aiming for consistent emergence. Follow up rain in early May has allowed a continuation of sowing programs.

Challenges and opportunities

Pests and diseases

Establishment pests including red legged earth mite (RLEM) and lucerne flea are present at typical levels in early-sown crops but are not yet widespread. Earlier in autumn, high populations of budworm caterpillars were noted in pastures and unsprayed paddocks.

Mice remain a key risk in several South Australian cropping regions, particularly the Adelaide Plains, Yorke Peninsula and parts of the Mid North, where CSIRO monitoring indicates moderate to high and increasing activity, while pressure remains more variable in other areas.

There are reports of Australian plague locusts across several South Australian regions, including the Riverland, Mallee, Eyre Peninsula and parts of Yorke Peninsula, with adult locusts observed in early emerging crops. Growers are actively monitoring and enquiring about control options.

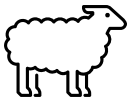
Adequate summer/autumn weed management ahead of sowing, has meant that the “green bridge” has been generally well controlled in cropping paddocks, although there remains a lot of green growth across the broader state (figure 4). This helps reduce early pest and disease pressure in emerging crops, particularly those that rely on carryover hosts between seasons. Ryegrass control has proven a challenge in some areas, with increased incidences of herbicide resistant populations suspected.

Regional issues and adverse events

As already highlighted, mice and locusts will need to be carefully monitored. These pests increase the risk of crop damage at emergence.

Ongoing uncertainty due to supply chain disruptions has created considerable concern among growers for the upcoming season. Unknown availability of fuel, fertiliser and other inputs such as pesticides, coupled with increasing freight and other costs are a concern. Higher costs erode margins and impact overall profitability. Despite this, there have not been major changes to cropping program plans.

Pastures and livestock condition



Pasture cover

Pasture cover has increased significantly following rainfall during late February and March (figures 5 and 6). Prior to this rainfall, feed levels in many districts had declined and were low relative to the 10-year average for this time of year. Subsequent rainfall has enabled pasture growth to recover and, in many areas, feed on offer has caught up to or surpassed average levels.

Where perennial pastures are well established, rainfall has had a particularly positive impact on pasture cover and feed availability. Annual pastures have germinated following the March rainfall; however, warmer conditions during April have led to some areas drying off, and pasture persistence into winter may be challenged without further rainfall.

Pasture growth across the pastoral districts is very high relative to the 10-year average (figures 5 and 6), reflecting the strong response to summer–early autumn rainfall after a prolonged dry period.

Seasonal Conditions

Rainfall through late February and March, combined with cooler conditions, enabled strong levels of feed growth for that time of year across much of the state. These conditions provided timely relief following a period where feed availability was becoming increasingly limited in some districts.

Warmer conditions experienced through April have proved challenging for annual pastures that germinated in March, with growth slowing in some areas. Ongoing conditions over the coming months will be important in determining the persistence and productivity of autumn feed heading into winter.

Supplementary Feeding and Containment

Improved pasture cover has enabled stock in many areas to be released from containment earlier than in recent years. Despite this improvement, autumn is typically the lowest point for pasture availability across much of the state, and supplementary feeding is still occurring in some regions to manage ongoing feed gaps.

Supplementary feeding remains an important management tool to support livestock condition while pastures establish and recover, particularly where annual pastures have failed to persist or feed availability or cover remains limited.

Livestock Condition and management responses

In the pastoral districts, destocking was being considered prior to the late February and March rainfall due to declining feed availability and impacts on livestock condition and pregnancy status. Improved pasture growth has eased pressure, with livestock condition now recovering and some producers beginning to consider restocking.

In other regions, livestock condition has improved where green feed has been available, supporting positive production outcomes and providing a good foundation for the season ahead. Most areas are not expected to make significant changes to stock numbers at this stage.

The Upper North and Mallee regions are expected to focus on gradually rebuilding stock numbers as conditions improve, following multiple years of drought and associated reductions in carrying capacity.

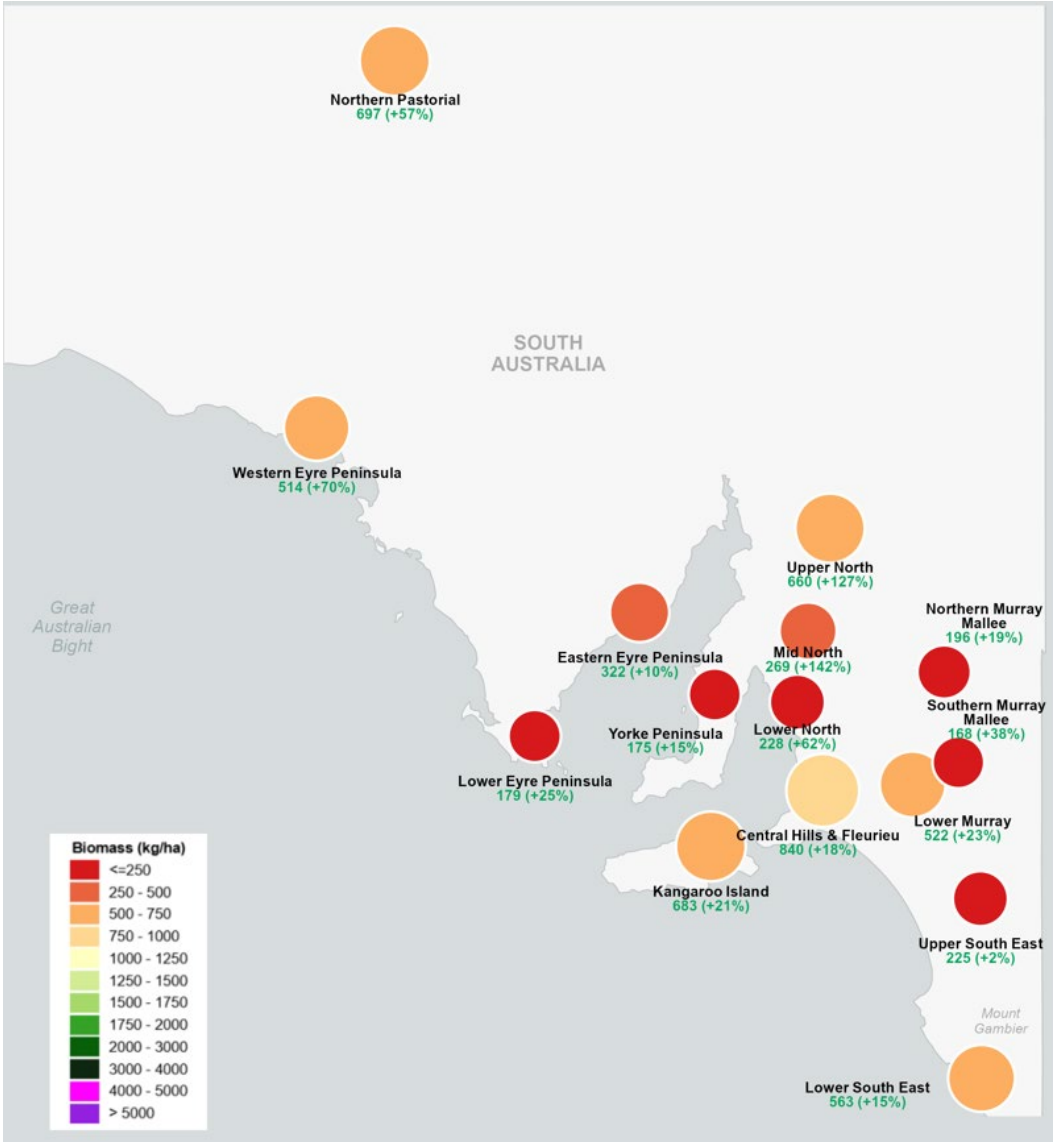


Figure 5: April 2026 pasture coverage (Total Standing Dry Matter). Bubble size and colour represent Total Standing Dry Matter (kg/ha). The percentage shown is the change relative to the 10-year average for the same month, highlighting regional patterns and seasonal differences.

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*	450,000	145,000	370,000	170,000	240,000	240,000	60,500	3,800
	t	675,000	551,000	703,000	644,300	494,400	696,000	223,850	11,780
Durum	*ha*	0	0	0	12,500	5,000	6,000	3,800	0
	t	0	0	0	42,500	11,650	16,440	12,160	0
Barley	*ha*	70,000	50,000	70,000	136,000	102,000	95,000	20,640	3,200
	t	119,000	192,500	154,000	524,960	208,080	282,150	70,176	11,520
Oats	*ha*	12,500	0	1,500	4,200	8,000	4,000	2,000	2,000
	t	16,250	0	2,400	11,970	11,920	9,400	5,200	5,800
Rye	*ha*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	t	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Triticale	*ha*	0	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	400	100
	t	0	0	0	3,200	0	2,470	1,200	300
Peas	*ha*	2,500	0	1,500	8,500	9,000	9,000	3,600	400
	t	2,500	0	1,500	16,150	12,060	13,860	6,300	600
Lupins	*ha*	1,500	7,500	5,000	1,000	2,500	1,800	500	1,000
	t	1,375	15,000	6,000	1,800	2,750	2,196	900	1,600
Beans	*ha*	500	8,000	1,000	9,000	11,000	12,500	3,200	3,200
	t	750	19,200	1,000	20,160	15,510	22,125	7,360	6,720
Chickpeas	*ha*	0	0	0	2,500	2,000	2,000	400	0
	t	0	0	0	4,825	2,400	2,360	600	0
Lentils	*ha*	95,000	55,000	95,000	165,500	40,000	33,000	17,500	0
	t	85,500	137,500	114,000	334,310	56,800	47,190	30,625	0
Vetch	*ha*	2,000	2,000	0	1,800	5,000	3,500	300	0
	t	1,600	4,000	0	2,268	2,750	2,590	300	0
Canola	*ha*	5,000	80,000	9,000	12,500	17,000	26,500	4,500	3,400
	t	5,750	208,000	11,250	26,625	23,970	45,315	9,900	8,840
Hay (not in total)	*ha*	15,500	10,400	21,000	12,000	20,000	44,000	14,500	7,600
	t	36,236	44,614	51,610	55,200	70,400	153,120	60,900	26,600
Total	*ha*	639,000	347,500	553,000	524,500	441,500	434,300	117,340	17,100
	t	907,725	1,127,200	993,150	1,633,068	842,290	1,142,096	368,571	47,160

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	54,300	200,000	120,000	77,600	26,200	2,163,200
	t	18,560	89,595	160,000	240,000	194,000	115,280	4,816,765
Durum	*ha*	0	400	0	0	6,500	800	35,000
	t	0	560	0	0	15,600	3,200	102,110
Barley	*ha*	7,200	60,000	120,000	100,000	39,000	7,000	880,040
	t	22,320	97,800	84,000	220,000	111,150	35,770	2,133,426
Oats	*ha*	500	2,800	3,200	3,300	22,500	6,000	72,500
	t	1,300	3,500	2,240	5,280	56,250	24,600	156,110
Rye	*ha*	0	1,200	3,000	3,500	1,600	0	9,300
	t	0	1,368	2,400	4,200	1,760	0	9,728
Triticale	*ha*	500	2,200	1,500	7,000	1,000	500	15,200
	t	1,300	3,036	1,200	9,100	2,000	2,200	26,006
Peas	*ha*	500	2,800	2,500	1,800	2,900	400	45,400
	t	1,000	3,248	500	1,260	4,350	900	64,228
Lupins	*ha*	1,200	1,700	7,000	12,000	11,000	2,700	56,400
	t	2,040	2,227	2,100	14,400	14,850	5,400	72,638
Beans	*ha*	1,200	700	0	1,500	33,700	16,000	101,500
	t	2,760	791	0	600	77,510	46,400	220,886
Chickpeas	*ha*	200	2,400	7,000	0	600	1,000	18,100
	t	200	2,304	2,100	0	900	1,100	16,789
Lentils	*ha*	500	5,500	10,000	23,000	2,900	200	543,100
	t	650	4,730	2,500	27,600	4,640	360	846,405
Vetch	*ha*	100	3,500	12,000	6,000	2,000	0	38,200
	t	100	3,220	6,000	6,000	2,167	0	30,995
Canola	*ha*	4,000	5,000	5,500	6,000	37,000	21,600	237,000
	t	7,600	5,000	1,650	4,800	86,210	69,120	514,030
Hay	*ha*	33,400	15,000	6,000	33,000	33,100	27,100	292,600
(not in total)	*t*	153,640	46,800	10,533	132,000	158,880	130,080	1,130,614
Total	*ha*	21,700	142,500	371,700	284,100	238,300	82,400	**4,214,940**
	t	57,830	217,379	264,690	533,240	571,387	304,330	**9,010,116**

TABLE 2 CROP ESTIMATES AGAINST FIVE YEAR AVERAGE

		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	5-year average	2026/27
Wheat	*ha*	2,195,400	2,185,955	2,230,600	2,014,500	2,120,600	2,149,400	2,163,200
	t	4,705,500	7,330,250	4,866,005	2,736,700	4,739,210	4,875,500	4,816,765
Durum	*ha*	35,800	37,200	36,600	34,400	28,000	34,400	35,000
	t	108,350	142,200	101,470	61,280	84,780	99,600	102,110
Barley	*ha*	917,400	858,600	842,700	798,140	843,540	852,100	880,040
	t	2,151,700	3,080,500	2,232,310	1,241,664	2,132,466	2,167,700	2,133,426
Oats	*ha*	75,300	75,700	72,600	73,900	73,900	74,300	72,500
	t	162,400	230,950	143,410	84,270	161,900	156,600	156,110
Rye	*ha*	6,600	9,100	9,000	6,700	9,600	8,200	9,300
	t	4,600	16,250	8,240	2,630	10,160	8,400	9,728
Triticale	*ha*	21,400	18,300	17,600	14,800	16,600	17,700	15,200
	t	30,150	49,600	32,480	13,640	28,400	30,900	26,006
Peas	*ha*	66,800	69,700	62,700	50,800	48,900	59,800	45,400
	t	92,500	137,550	90,050	39,620	73,515	86,600	64,228
Lupins	*ha*	45,900	54,200	52,900	55,200	56,800	53,000	56,400
	t	63,400	124,650	73,510	45,280	69,869	75,300	72,638
Beans	*ha*	107,300	102,100	105,700	105,400	100,100	104,100	101,500
	t	247,280	318,800	217,425	116,320	224,545	224,900	220,886
Chickpeas	*ha*	13,500	43,500	38,400	20,800	18,500	26,900	18,100
	t	15,450	81,650	33,900	10,680	19,200	32,200	16,789
Lentils	*ha*	197,200	191,600	240,200	408,600	485,600	304,600	543,100
	t	339,180	527,250	362,260	447,955	776,099	490,500	846,405
Vetch	*ha*	34,400	37,900	34,400	35,100	40,500	36,500	38,200
	t	15,050	63,950	24,405	17,839	33,353	30,900	30,995
Canola	*ha*	224,700	258,400	267,200	241,300	226,150	243,600	237,000
	t	509,750	684,000	518,000	351,810	506,602	514,000	514,030
Hay (not in total)	*ha*	220,800	210,600	218,300	296,760	301,800	249,700	292,600
	t	852,000	989,950	910,940	741,272	1,227,283	944,300	1,130,614
Total	*ha*	3,941,700	3,942,255	4,010,600	3,859,640	4,068,790	3,964,600	**4,214,940**
	t	8,445,310	12,787,600	8,703,465	5,169,688	8,860,099	8,793,100	**9,010,116**