



# Crop and Pasture Report South Australia

2021–22 Crop seeding intentions

May 2021



**Government of South Australia**

Department of Primary Industries  
and Regions



# Crop and Pasture Report South Australia

Information current as of 5 May 2021

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This is a bimonthly report prepared by Rural Solutions SA, for the Agriculture, Food and Wine Division of the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA).

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# State Summary

## Weather

- March rainfall was above average to very much above average across most of the Pastoral Zone and below average on Lower Eyre Peninsula, Kangaroo Island and eastern parts of the Lower South East.
- Rainfall for April was below average for most of the State and very much below average for south west parts of the Pastoral Zone, the Murray Mallee districts, Mid North and Upper North.
- During March, the North Eastern Pastoral Zone had below average maximum temperatures as did the northern half of the North Western Pastoral Zone.
- April mean maximum temperatures were above average in many of the cropping districts in the east of the State and very much above average for much of the Eyre Peninsula and extending west across the Nullarbor Plain.
- Many districts experienced a few strong wind events in April which raised dust.

## Crops

- Surface and subsoil moisture levels are low to very low across most agricultural districts.
- Farmers with very large cropping areas commenced sowing into dry soils and are expected to complete up to 20% of their programs before pausing and waiting for rain. Most farmers are waiting for significant rainfall before commencing seeding.
- Reduced demand for export hay has caused significant reduction in the area to be sown to hay in many districts. Reductions as high as 50% have been reported.
- Hay crops will probably be replaced with pulses and canola, and if significant rainfall does not occur until late in the growing season, these will be replaced with cereal crops.
- The area sown to beans is expected to decrease in most districts. Lentil area is expected to increase.
- The area of canola sown will decrease in most districts if conditions remain dry in early May.
- Mice numbers are relatively low in most agricultural districts and being monitored to ensure they do not increase to damaging levels. Mice numbers on Kangaroo Island are very high.
- In many districts there has been very limited germination of weeds and spilt grain.
- To avoid risking weedy crops later, most farmers are waiting for weeds and spilt grain to germinate before spraying and beginning to sow crops.

## Pastures

- There is limited pasture and stubble feed on Upper Eyre Peninsula and most farmers are providing hay and grain in paddocks or have moved livestock into containment areas.
- Good quantities of moderate to high quality livestock feed in crop stubbles in most districts was depleted since the last report. Farmers are providing supplementary feed to stock.
- There are adequate to high amounts of hay stored on-farm in all districts.
- Livestock are in good condition throughout the agricultural districts.

## Crop Estimates

- Crop estimates for the new season (2021-22) crop will commence with the Crop Establishment report (July 2021).

## Key links to other information

[Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources - Soil and Land Condition monitoring](#)

[Bureau of Meteorology - Weather and rainfall observations](#)



# District Reports

## Western Eyre Peninsula

### Weather

- In March, thunderstorms from tropical weather systems delivered above average rainfall to the northern part of the district.
- April rainfall was very much below average in the northern and western parts of the district, with below average rainfall in the remainder of the district.
- Maximum temperatures in March were average. April maximums were very much above average.
- Very strong, hot northerly winds on April 13 saw significant raised dust from cultivated paddocks near Wudinna.

### Crops

- Rapid germination of summer weeds, volunteer crops and pastures followed February and March rainfall, improving ground cover across much of the district.
- Most soils contain some sub-soil moisture, and lighter-textured soil profiles in areas that received good early rains have high amounts of stored moisture.
- Surface soils across the district are dry.
- Some farmers began sowing early feed crops in mid-April.
- Good opening rains will be required for farmers to start sowing the majority of their winter crops.
- Farmers continued to spray paddocks to control weed germination before seeding.
- Deep ripping and delving operations continued on sandy soils in the Wudinna, Minnipa, Mt Damper and Warramboos districts while dry conditions delayed seeding. This has left bare areas of loose soil susceptible to erosion.
- Early indications are that crop areas will be similar to the long-term average, with a small decrease in the area sown to peas due to frost damage in recent seasons, and a corresponding increase in the area of cereals.
- Isolated pockets of increased snail and mice activity have been reported in the eastern part of the district and farmers will bait higher risk paddocks at seeding.
- Insect pest numbers have been generally low. Most farmers will treat at least a portion of their seed with insecticide to protect early crops against Russian Wheat Aphid.

### Pastures

- Annual medic and grasses began germinating in pasture paddocks following February and March rainfall.
- Successive germinations of summer weeds including caltrop, heliotrope and melons have required spraying several times and this has slowed the growth of medic pasture.
- Livestock are in excellent condition. Farmers continue to supplementary-feed stock either on stubble paddocks or in containment areas to allow pastures to grow some bulk and protect vulnerable soils from erosion.
- Hay supplies in the region remain high, and most farmers have adequate supplies of hay and grain stored on farm.
- Most livestock producers are intending to only sow enough hay to replenish on-farm supplies.



## Lower Eyre Peninsula

### Weather

- Rainfall in March and April was below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for March and very much above average for April.
- Very strong, hot northerly winds were experienced across the region on April 13 with significant amounts of raised dust from paddocks where deep ripping and delving operations had been undertaken.

### Crops

- Summer weeds continued to grow well due to February and March rainfall and farmers sprayed paddocks several times to control successive weed germinations.
- Although surface soils are dry, most soil profiles contain some moisture at depth.
- Dry conditions during April provided farmers with an opportunity to continue soil amelioration practices, including deep ripping and delving.
- Gypsum and lime were applied to paddocks during this period as required.
- Some farmers burnt stubble residues in late April to control ryegrass and manage stubble loads prior to seeding.
- Early indications are that crop areas are not likely to be significantly different to long-term averages.
- Some early paddocks of vetch and oats for feed were dry sown in mid-April.
- Some farmers started sowing winter crops in the last week of April.
- Continued dry conditions have seen most farmers waiting for decent opening rains before sowing most of their crops.
- Snail, mice and insect pest numbers are low, and farmers will bait a few earlier-sown paddocks of vulnerable crops such as pulses or canola.
- Most farmers will treat at least a portion of their seed to protect early cereal crops against Russian Wheat Aphid.

### Pastures

- Most livestock are being fed hay and grain either in stubble paddocks or containment areas. This will allow pastures to establish and grow before being grazed.
- Livestock are in good condition and most farmers have enough hay and grain on farm to continue to feed stock until the end of June if necessary.
- Many farmers intend to cut sufficient hay to replenish on-farm supplies if spring conditions are favourable for hay production.



# Eastern Eyre Peninsula

## Weather

- Thunderstorms from tropical weather systems delivered above average March rainfall in the northern part of the district.
- April rainfall was below average across most of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average in March. April maximum temperatures were above average.

## Crops

- Rains in February and March germinated summer weeds, particularly melons, heliotrope, skeleton weed, and caltrop, and most farmers made at least one herbicide application to control these.
- Soil modification practices, such as deep ripping and delving, have been undertaken on large areas across the district.
- Some paddocks were sown with vetch and oats during April to provide early livestock feed.
- Farmers on more erodible soil types are waiting for decent opening rains to sow most of their winter crop.
- Early indications are that crop areas are likely to be around the long-term average.
- Drier autumn conditions and frost risk could cause some growers to slightly reduce the area sown to riskier crops such as canola, lentils and peas and replace these with cereals.
- Given generally good hay supplies around the region, the area sown to hay is likely to be around the long-term average.
- There are no reports of significant numbers of insect pests, mice, or snails.
- Most farmers will treat at least a portion of their seed to protect early crops against Russian Wheat Aphid.

## Pastures

- Most farmers are providing supplementary feed to stock either on stubble paddocks or in containment areas, to protect soils from erosion.
- Livestock are in excellent condition. Most farmers have adequate supplies of hay and grain stored on farm to sustain stock into late May.
- Despite some March rainfall, dams continue to have little water in them. Most livestock producers are carting water for stock.



## Upper North

### Weather

- Rainfall for March was average. April rainfall was very much below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures for March were below average in the northern half of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures in April were above average.

### Crops

- A few farmers in the northern part of the district cultivated some bare pasture paddocks after rain in March.
- Some farmers in the northern part of the district began dry sowing pasture in mid-April. Farmers with large crop areas continued sowing lentils, oaten hay and some wheat.
- There has been very little germination of weeds and farmers are carefully selecting paddocks to dry sow to avoid contamination with difficult-to-control weeds.
- There are still significant quantities of spilt grain on the ground in some paddocks and farmers will wait for a rain to germinate this before spraying and sowing.
- Further south, a few farmers began sowing pasture feed and pulse crops in the last week of April.
- Most areas and soil types have limited stored soil moisture. Any stored moisture present is generally deep in the sub soil.
- Mice numbers have remained relatively low in the northern part of the district but are present around houses and sheds.
- In the southern part of the district, mice numbers have increased to moderate levels, particularly between Gladstone and Gulnare, in paddocks that experienced high grain losses before harvest.
- Export hay processors have reduced hay contract tonnages because of uncertainty in their markets. Long-term hay producers have still received reasonable tonnage contracts whereas more recent producers have very low tonnage or, in some cases, no contracts.
- Areas previously sown to hay will mostly be replaced by canola.
- The area sown to barley and lentils is likely to increase slightly compared to last year and the area of beans will decrease.
- The area intended to be sown to canola has increased but this will begin to be replaced by wheat if there are no significant rains before mid-May.

### Pastures

- Most pastures have been well grazed yet still contain sufficient density to provide adequate ground cover.
- Most farmers have lower than usual stock numbers which has reduced grazing pressure and helped maintain pasture cover.
- Crop stubbles have also been well grazed, and because most contained high quantities of spilt grain, have provided quality feed for longer than normal.
- Most farmers only commenced supplementary-feeding livestock in April and still have adequate levels of hay and grain on-farm.
- Dry sowing of pasture and other crops will increase during May.



## Mid North

### Weather

- Rainfall was average for March.
- April rainfall was very much below average in the north eastern part of the district and below average across the remainder.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for March and above average for April.

### Crops

- Farmers have been undertaking machinery maintenance and cleaning seed during March and early April.
- Farmers with large areas to sow, and those that sow by the calendar, began sowing on April 20 or soon after. Most have sown pasture feed and those in higher rainfall areas have sown canola as well. Sowing of lupins and beans commenced in late April.
- There has been very limited germination of weeds and spilt grain requiring farmers to be careful selecting paddocks for dry sowing to avoid weedy crops later.
- Most farmers are waiting for a germination of weeds and spilt grain before spraying and beginning to sow.
- Stored soil moisture both at surface and at depth is very low across the district.
- Hay processors have requested farmers to reduce the areas they normally sow to hay by 30 to 40%, reflecting the export market downturn. Most farmers have done this, although some smaller hay producers still plan to sow their usual area.
- The oaten hay area is being replaced by barley, and where seed is available, pulses and canola.
- The area sown to beans is likely to remain similar to last year.
- There will probably be an increase in the area of lentils due to an increase in their price, while the area sown to currently lower priced peas will shrink.
- The area of wheat may increase slightly with more wheat sown on last year's wheat ground because of the current high prices.
- Mice are present in low numbers and unlikely to cause significant damage to crops.

### Pastures

- There is very limited dry pasture feed in most paddocks across the district.
- Stubble paddocks have been well grazed and most now contain limited amounts of quality feed.
- Most livestock producers began supplementary feeding livestock with hay and grain in late March or early April and some are already considering purchasing more hay to ensure they have enough supplies.
- The area sown to pasture is likely to be similar or slightly more than normal. Some farmers are considering sowing an extra paddock of barley that can be grazed if necessary.
- Some ewe flocks are starting to lamb and will require high amounts of quality feed to maintain condition.
- Most livestock are in reasonable condition throughout the district.



## Lower North

### Weather

- Rainfall was average for March and below average for April.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for March and above average for April.

### Crops

- Seed cleaning is completed across the district.
- Some “speed tilling” has been carried out to control summer weeds, incorporate surface lime deeper into soils and manage stubbles for easier seeding operations.
- Some farmers with large areas to sow have started seeding into dry soil.
- Farmers are awaiting substantial rain to germinate cereal grain remaining in paddocks from last year’s crops.
- There is no subsoil moisture and only a very small amount of topsoil moisture accumulated from light rains in April.
- Mice are active at scattered locations. Some farmers intend baiting after seeding to reduce numbers.
- Increased snail numbers are again posing a minor problem in the Pinery fire area.
- The area of beans and chickpeas will likely be reduced compared to last year due to lower prices and seasonal uncertainty. The area sown to canola will be slightly reduced and may drop further if substantial rain does not fall soon. The area sown to oaten hay will be reduced.
- Beans will mainly be replaced by lentils, and oaten hay by barley and some wheat.
- There are many new herbicide products available this season for grasses and broadleaf weeds which should enable improved weed control.
- If substantial rain does not fall soon, there will be some weedy crops because knockdown herbicides will not be used, and new herbicides do not work effectively without soil moisture.

### Pastures

- There is no green pasture. Dry stubble and pasture feed quantities are low.
- Cereal/ryegrass and medic mixes have been sown for pasture. Lesser areas of pure cereal and traditional medic pasture have been sown.
- Only a limited amount of supplementary feeding has been required.
- The area of hay expected to be sown for both export and domestic sales may be reduced by more than 50%.
- There is plenty of hay still being stored on farm and some is being sold to local customers. Interstate sales are very low.
- Quantities of on-farm storage of feed oats and barley remain high.
- Livestock are in good condition. Farmers are keen to provide high quality feed to maximise returns, given high livestock prices.
- Very high yields of medic seed crops provided enough seed to supply two years of normal demand.
- New varieties of medic will be planted this year to provide more seed of these varieties for 2022.
- Other varieties of pasture seed have been in low supply, especially sub clovers.



# Yorke Peninsula

## Weather

- Rainfall for March was average. April rainfall was below average for most of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for March and above average for April.
- Strong winds in the middle of April caused wind erosion on sandy soils in some areas.

## Crops

- Soil moisture levels are very low across most of Northern Yorke Peninsula.
- Small areas south of Port Broughton and Moonta have moderate subsoil moisture from localised rainfall events.
- Subsoil moisture across Southern and Central Yorke Peninsula ranges from low to average.
- A significant opening rain is required across the district to properly wet up the topsoil for seeding.
- Due to the dry conditions, very little sowing has been done in April.
- Some sowing of canola commenced in late April on southern Yorke Peninsula.
- Farmers in Northern Yorke Peninsula are contemplating the risks of dry sowing, and the implications for the use of pre-emergent herbicides in dry soil.
- The area sown to oaten hay for export will be reduced. This will be replaced predominantly by lentils. If the opening break is quite late, more barley will be sown instead.
- Less canola will be sown due to the lack of rain in April and dry subsoils. The amount of canola sown will decrease further if conditions remain dry in early May.
- Planned sowings of cereals remains relatively unchanged from last year.
- There has been insufficient rainfall across the majority of the district to germinate all of the spilt grain from the 2020 season so there are still significant amounts on the ground in some paddocks.
- Mice have been prevalent in paddocks since harvest, with activity increasing as sowing approaches.
- A lot of baiting is already planned for 2021 due to the high level of mice activity.
- Baiting 2-3 nights before sowing has previously proven to be the best method. Paddocks with moderate to high populations will receive another baiting immediately after seeding.
- Snails have been very active in areas that received rains in February or smaller rainfall events in mid-March and this gave farmers excellent opportunities to bait adult snails before they laid eggs and thereby reduce populations before seeding.

## Pastures

- Little quality feed remains throughout the district.
- Some parts of Central and Southern Yorke Peninsula received better rains during late summer and early autumn so had a germination of volunteer cereals that provided more feed.
- Sowing of pastures commenced in late April across the district but are yet to establish. Most are either a mixed species blend or pure oats or barley.
- Most farmers plan to allow sown pastures to grow a good volume of bulk before grazing them.
- Stock condition is average to above average.
- A significant amount of hay and feed grain from 2020 remains on farms. The lack of paddock feed has resulted in the rapid utilisation of these stores to maintain stock in good condition.



# Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu & Kangaroo Island

## Weather

- Rainfall for March was average in the Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu Peninsula and below average on Kangaroo Island. Rainfall for April was below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures in March were above average for the western half of Kangaroo Island. In April they were very much above average on the western half of the Island and above average across the remainder of the district.

## Crops

### *Central Hills/Fleurieu Peninsula*

- Burning of heavy stubbles has been undertaken in preparation for seeding.
- Minimal dry seeding is occurring due to concerns of a late break. Farmers are waiting for significant rain before commencing most of their crop sowing.
- Soil moisture contents are low to very low across the district.
- There has been an increase in the area to be cropped due to the high cost of replacement livestock.

### *Kangaroo Island*

- Limited field preparation has occurred to date, apart from burning of stubble.
- Dry seeding started late in April on a few of the larger farms.
- There is minimal soil moisture in both topsoils and subsoils, so most farmers are waiting for significant rainfall before starting seeding.
- Some mature weeds remain from earlier summer rainfall events but there is sparse germination of new weeds.
- Mice numbers are very high with reports in some places of numbers being the worst in living memory.
- Snails are becoming active with mild weather and rain showers.

## Pastures

### *Central Hills/Fleurieu Peninsula*

- The amount and quality of pastures, both dry and green, are dwindling due to lack of rainfall.
- No pastures have been sown while farmers wait for sufficient rainfall.
- The area of hay expected to be sown is significantly less due to the export market downturn.
- There are good supplies of domestic hay left over from last year.
- Limited containment feeding of livestock is taking place.
- Supplementary feeding is being carried out in paddocks, especially of pregnant ewes, to maintain stock in good condition.

### *Kangaroo Island*

- There is little growth of perennial pastures. Dry feed is poor in quality and quantity.
- An increase in seeding of perennial species is planned over the growing season. There is no change in the area to be sown to annual pasture.
- The area sown to hay will increase as on-farm stocks are being depleted. This will return hay reserves back to normal levels.
- There has been an increase in containment and supplementary feeding of livestock this summer and autumn, with more being planned.
- Adequate levels of hay and grain remain on-farm and some producers are sourcing extra grain as there are concerns as to when good rains will arrive to boost pasture growth.
- Livestock are in good condition prior to lambing.



## Lower Murray

### Weather

- Rainfall was average for March.
- April rainfall was very much below average in the northern half and below average in the remainder of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for March and above average for April.

### Crops

- Some soil amelioration activities such as deep ripping, delving and clay spreading were undertaken across the district in March and April.
- Summer weed spraying was limited because dry conditions inhibited the emergence of summer weeds.
- There is very low surface soil moisture but some moisture at depth.
- Dry seeding of vetch and hay crops has commenced across the district.
- Early indications are that crop areas are not likely to be significantly different to the long-term averages despite the dry conditions.
- Mice and snails are in low numbers.

### Pastures

- Good amounts of dry pasture remain across most parts of the district and are providing reasonable feed.
- Supplementary feeding is taking place in paddocks to keep livestock in good condition.
- There has been little containment feeding.
- River flats are bare and being sown with pastures for the coming season.
- Hay area is likely to be similar to last year with average quality hay still available on farm.



## Northern Murray Mallee

### Weather

- Rainfall was average for March and very much below average for April.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for March and above average for April.

### Crops

- After a very dry summer and autumn there is minimal stored soil moisture.
- A lack of rainfall greatly reduced the need for summer weed spraying.
- It is likely that the area sown to canola will be significantly less, and lentils, chickpeas and peas will be taken out of the seeding plans if the dry start to the growing season continues.
- Areas not sown to oilseed and pulse crops will most likely be replaced with barley or wheat.
- Some dry sowing of both crops and pastures has begun and farmers will generally sow up to 20-30% of their cereals on their cleanest paddocks.
- Low numbers of mice are present in the northern part of the district while some farmers are reporting higher numbers in the southern part of the district.
- Sandy rises on many farms are becoming an erosion risk, particularly where grazing is involved.

### Pastures

- Stubble and pasture feed availability is diminishing, increasing the need for supplementary feeding.
- Livestock are still in good condition.
- There are generally low hay reserves available in the Northern Mallee.
- Some dry sowing of pastures is taking place in preparation for opening rains.



# Southern Murray Mallee

## Weather

- March rainfall was average across most of the district.
- April rainfall was very much below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for March and above average for April.

## Crops

- Soil amelioration activities such as deep ripping, delving and clay spreading have continued across the district.
- There has been sporadic weed germination and minimal summer weed spraying into autumn due to dry conditions significantly suppressing weed establishment.
- There is very little moisture in surface soils but still some moisture at depth.
- Dry seeding began in the district in mid-April.
- Mice and snail numbers have not been significant.
- It is not expected that significant changes will be made to the district's usual cropping activities although this may change if dry conditions extend to mid-May.
- The area of long-season winter wheat varieties is likely to be reduced and replaced with shorter-season spring wheat.

## Pastures

- Annual pastures are yet to germinate.
- Perennial pasture growth is stagnant and dry conditions are hastening feed drying off.
- Livestock remain in good condition and good stubble feed is still available.
- Supplementary feeding is happening across the district to maintain stock in good condition.
- There are good quantities of hay remaining on farm.
- The area sown to hay for domestic and export markets is expected to be down by 15-20%.



## Upper South East

### Weather

- March rainfall was average.
- Rainfall in April was below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures for March were average, and April temperatures were above average for most of the district.

### Crops

- Some farmers are dry sowing beans and canola, but most are waiting for improved rainfall forecasts before sowing crops.
- It is anticipated that most sowing will be carried out in May.
- The uptake of grid-based soil sampling to assist with variable rate spreading has been noticeable this season.
- There are low to moderate amounts of stored soil moisture, depending on soil type and previous crop type.
- In the southern part of the district the majority of farmers have not started seeding yet.
- A few have dry sown beans, canola, some Balansa and Shaftal clovers for hay production and early feed for livestock.
- Mice numbers are relatively few but being monitored.
- Snail numbers are low and not expected to cause problems.

### Pastures

- Stubble feed is totally depleted, and supplementary feed is now being provided in paddocks.
- More containment feeding is taking place than previously.
- Summer pasture growth has been minimal to non-existent due to dry conditions and paddocks are being managed to ensure there is enough cover to reduce erosion risk.
- Sheep are well into lambing and ewes are being given high quality supplementary feed.
- There has been more pregnancy scanning of ewes to detect singles, twins and triplets for targeted feed rationing.
- On-farm hay and feed grain stocks are plentiful. Regional supplies are also plentiful and at a low price currently.



## Lower South East

### Weather

- Rainfall for March was below average in the north western and north eastern parts of the district.
- April rainfall was below average in the north eastern quarter of the district and average for the remainder of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for March and April.

### Crops

- Surface soil moisture levels are low.
- Paddocks are being prepared for seeding.
- Those with larger areas to be cropped are sowing beans, canola and annual pastures into dry soils.
- Most producers are waiting for decent rainfall before beginning seeding.
- Slightly more gypsum is being applied this year for both soil structural improvement and sulphur for crop growth.
- Little weed spraying has been required over summer and autumn.
- Slug and snail damage is expected to be greater after recent good seasons. Their numbers are being carefully monitored.
- Some baiting for field crickets was undertaken in localised areas where their numbers threatened to damage pastures and emerging crops.
- Mice numbers are being monitored but are not of concern.
- Cooler conditions encouraged the emergence of cockchafer and red legged earth mite. These are being monitored and treated as required.

### Pastures

- There is still plenty of dry pasture remaining in paddocks.
- Some areas have had “green pick” throughout summer which has persisted until the present.
- Most farmers are now supplementary feeding stock to maintain their condition prior to lambing and calving.
- Rain showers in mid-April promoted some germination of pastures which may persist and develop if more rains are received in early May.
- Livestock are in good condition.
- There is plenty of hay and grain stored on-farm and feed availability in the region is excellent.





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