Crop and Pasture Summary

Issue 4 Season 2021-22: Spring Performance – November 2021

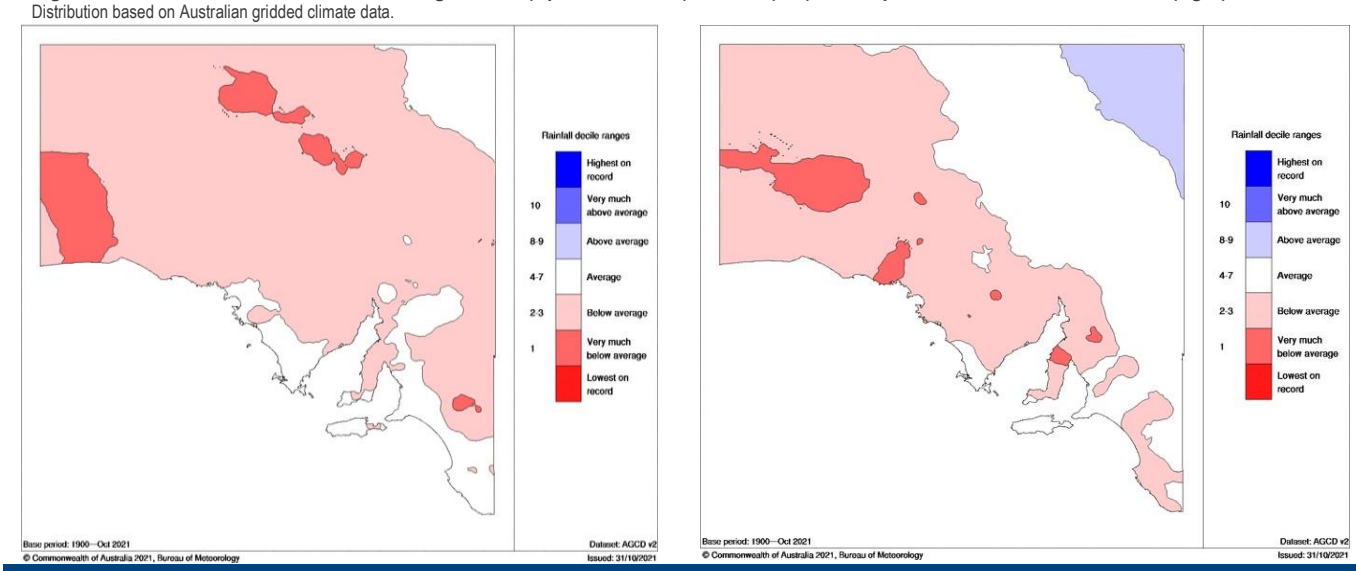
Summary

Growing season rainfall from April to October in the agricultural areas was below average to average - Figure 1 (left). Most of the growing season rain fell in the wet period between the mid-June opening to the end of July. Rainfall for October was also average. The months of April and May received well below average rainfall. The rainfall for the critical months of August and September - Figure 1 (right) was also below to well below average.

In some districts as much as 70% of the crop was sown into dry soil due to the late arrival of the opening rains in June. Dry sown crops did not establish particularly well until the opening rains, which also germinated grassy weeds requiring control in emerging crops. Generally good growing conditions prevailed in winter except for waterlogging in the wetter areas. The June and July rainfall replenished soil moisture providing important reserves for crop growth during the drier August and September. Frosts in late September and October damaged crops, in some districts severely, but the high grain prices discouraged cutting frosted crops for hay. Severe storms in late October and early November caused hail and storm damage to grain crops in many districts.

The combination of late and slow crop establishment, wet period crop recovery, dry critical growing season months, hot winds in early September, spring frosts and severe storms limited crop production prospects to near the ten-year average production. With high global grain prices, this crop returns a record high Farm Gate Value of nearly $3 billion.

Figure 1. South Australian Rainfall: Growing Season (April to October) Deciles (left) and September-October 2021 Deciles (right).
Distribution based on Australian gridded climate data.



Sown crop area and production for previous six seasons

Seasons	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 *estimated*
Area sown (ha)	3,894,000	3,565,000	3,572,000	3,898,000	4,003,000	*3,898,000*
Production (t)	11,145,000	6,921,000	5,795,000	6,467,000	9,135,000	*7,717,000*
Farm gate value	$2.2 billion	$1.7 billion	$1.7 billion	$2.0 billion	$2.5 billion	*$3.0 billion*

Next update for release November 2021 – Spring Crop Performance

Information accurate as at 19 November 2021.

Government of South Australia
Department of Primary Industries and Regions

The season so far…

RAIN – Year-to-date rainfall is below average to average with almost all the rain falling in summer, June, July, October and to date in November. April to October growing season rainfall varies from below average to average and a small area of well below average in the Murray Mallee. Growing season rains arrived late, starting mid-June extending through July, but August and September were well below average followed by a near average October. Pastoral districts were below average for the months of April to October.

SUBSOIL MOISTURE – Rainfall since the opening filled soil profiles, but crops and pastures have utilised this moisture during the drier conditions of late winter and spring to finish. Crops in most districts have now depleted all moisture from soil profiles.

CROP MIX – The area of wheat is near average. Farmers opted to use barley in place of longer season pulse crops due to the late season opening. Barley area sown increased to above average but is a smaller crop than the previous season. High canola price outlook was an incentive to stay with the crop despite the late start. Export hay areas were reduced due to a decline in export hay demand.

SEEDING – Farmers commenced dry sowing during April, with seeding into dry soil during May into early June. For some cropping districts, as much as 70% of the crop was sown into dry soil. The late arrival of opening rains and dry seeding of crops before weeds germinated resulted in weedy crops, successfully treated with herbicides.

LIVESTOCK CONDITION AND FEED – Pasture growth and feed availability started slow due to the late opening rains and in some districts, subsequent waterlogging during the wet mid-winter, recovering in the drier spring conditions. Most livestock are in good condition. Farmers are moving stock onto crop stubbles as harvest progresses. In drier areas, farmers are feeding livestock in confinement areas to reduce erosion risk. Grain and hay reserves are replenished during spring hay cut and with harvest.

Outlook for the year

RAINFALL OUTLOOK – The Bureau of Meteorology's most recent update of the season outlook (issued 18 November 2021) for the three-months December-February shows most of South Australia to have equal chances of above or below median rainfall. The temperature outlook for the December-February period is for a greater chance of exceeding maximum median temperature in the east of the State. Warmer minimum temperatures are more likely for all the State except the far west.

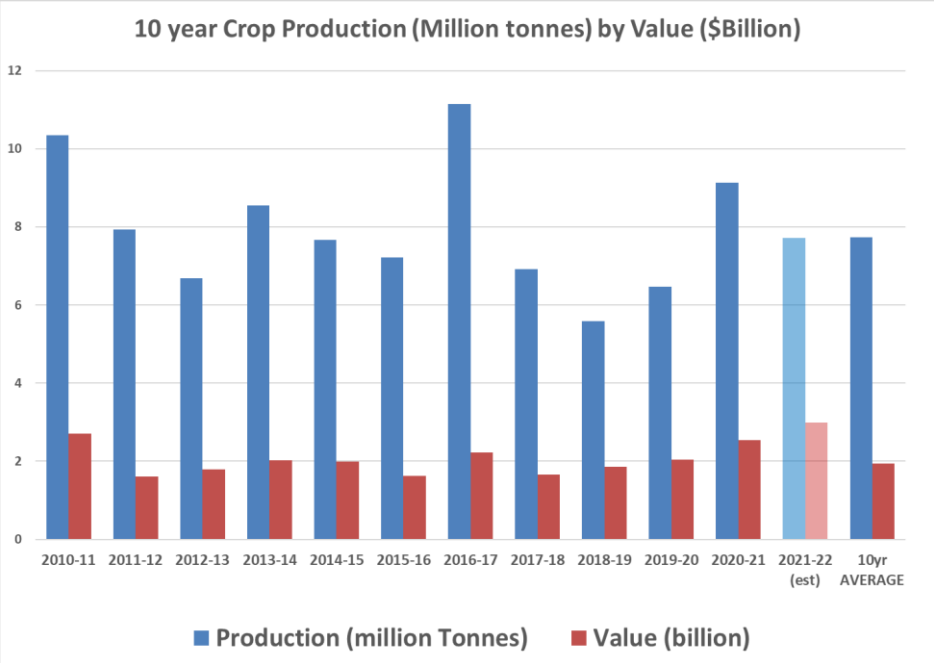
Challenges and opportunities

PESTS AND DISEASES – The crop did not have significant pest or disease issues. Mice numbers were successfully baited to control numbers and minimise crop damage and seed loss, but with grain on the ground after severe storms, will provide good food source to allow numbers to build. Snails are at normal levels.

ADVERSE EVENTS – Severe spring storms has resulted in crop production losses from hail and strong winds.

MARKET DRIVERS – A drought affected crop harvest in all major northern hemisphere crop exporting countries has reduced exports. Global wheat and barley prices are supporting the record high farm gate value estimate for the current crop. The drought affected production in Canada has caused canola and lentils to reach near record prices but have recently eased slightly on easing of demand.

REGIONAL ISSUES – The dry late winter and spring period combined with mid-spring frosts and storms has caused some lost grain production in several districts. The



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

rain from storms boosting production of undamaged later crops. Crops were insured against hail damage in many instances. Assessments of storm damage to grain crops are being finalised.

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