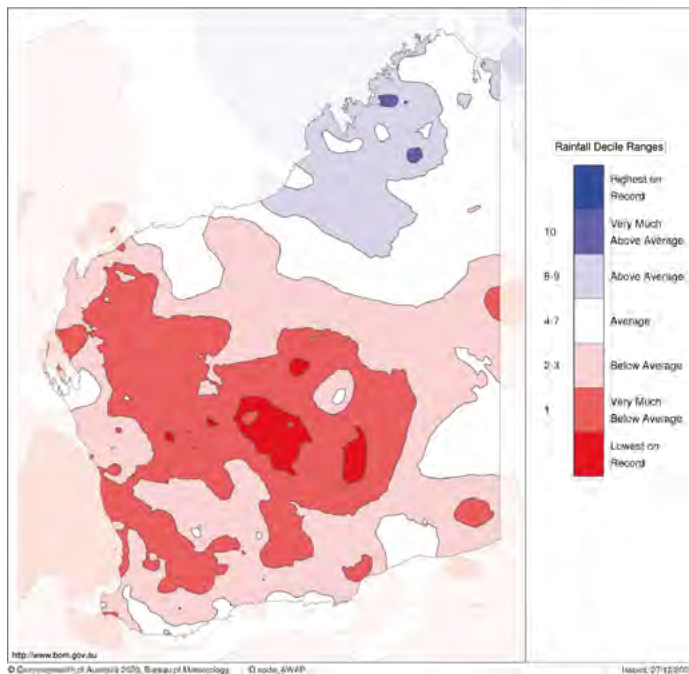


# District Reports...

January–February 2021

## Western region

Western Australia rainfall deciles – April 1 to November 30, 2020  
Australian Bureau of Meteorology



Growing season rainfall in WA for 2020 was very much below average in the grain growing regions. But harvest results were generally excellent given the limited – but well timed – in-crop rainfall.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA SUMMARY

In the final wash-up it is expected that the 2020 Western Australian grain harvest will have outperformed expectations right across the state. Tonnage estimates for all crops in early spring of just under 15 million tonnes (mt) proved conservative. The final figure is closer to 16.5 mt – a figure that most thought was unachievable following the very dry finishing conditions.

Harvest estimates in the September and October GIWA *Crop Reports* underestimated the ability of all crops to finish so well on very little rainfall. It has turned a below average year into one that will now be above average. Mild conditions, lack of frost, favourable timing of rainfall events and large areas of ameliorated soils have combined to give us this incredible result.

Wheat grain quality has been good with a much higher proportion in the premium grades than recent years. Wheat grain protein has held up in 2020 due to adequate fertiliser application by growers from early season predictions of an above average rainfall year and the grain filling slowly through spring.

Barley grain yields have been exceptional and with final tonnage likely to be around 4.5 mt in a year with reduced plantings of 1.65 million hectares, the average grain yield across the state will be around 2.72 tonnes per hectare which is equal to the near record grain production year in 2018.

Canola tonnage is back to the levels of several years ago with average grain yield likely to be around 1.45 tonnes per hectare, just behind 2018 where average canola grain yields were 1.46 tonnes.

Oat grain quality has been very good with some impressive yields. Growers reacted quickly to the fading season by knocking down droughted crops for hay early to maximise price, leaving the better areas to go to grain.

The reduced lupin area in 2020 still produced a reasonable tonnage with crops in the traditional northern regions yielding very well and the majority of the planted area further south yielding above long-term averages.

Grain Industry Association of WA – Crop Report  
December, 2020

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## NORTHERN DISTRICT

In mid-January much of the region is dry with no summer spraying required. There are other areas with rain in early November and patchy thunderstorm rain through December that have – or have had – summer weeds growing on them. Growers in these areas are either currently spraying summer weeds or have almost finished.

Melons, caltrop, tar vine, roly poly and some button grass are the main weeds being sprayed out. Some growers are also targeting couch grass patches.

Optical sprayers are getting plenty of work with many paddocks only having a sparse covering of summer weeds.

Some lime spreading and machinery maintenance are the other jobs growers are chipping away at.

There is some rain forecast for our region later this week (17 – 18 January). Hopefully if it comes there is 50 mm plus to make the spraying worthwhile.

Outside of this it is the holidaying season with most growers taking a break in a coastal town somewhere. Hopefully it is a restful break with plenty of time to recharge for the 2021 grain growing season.

**Peter Norris**

**Agronomy For Profit and Synergy Consulting, Geraldton**  
January 15, 2021

## SOUTH COAST

Seasonal conditions on the South Coast have been dry since mid November. As a result, most growers had finished the harvest of the various winter crops before December 20 with around 2.7 million tonnes of grain delivered to CBH in the Esperance Port Zone.

This tonnage has exceeded pre-harvest estimates by 15 to 20 per cent and is a fantastic result given a dry finish and lower than average growing season rainfall.

With the early November rainfall – bringing on good weed germinations – most growers have now completed one full summer weed knockdown to control the green-bridge and to conserve soil moisture.



**A roadtrain full of Scepter wheat snakes its way past a 'pink lake' at MKM Farming near Scaddan on WA's South Coast. Super saline water conditions and warm weather are needed to support the green algal blooms which release a red pigment when competing with other lake organisms for limited nutrients in the very stressful environment. The result is a spectacular pink lake. (PHOTO: Quenten Knight)**

# District Reports...

**January–February 2021**



**The total tonnage delivered to CBH in the Esperance Port Zone exceeded pre-harvest estimates by 15 to 20 per cent – a fantastic result given lower than average growing season rainfall. Here Scepter wheat is being loaded at MKM Farming near Scaddan, WA. (PHOTO: Quenten Knight)**

The emphasis is now on soil amelioration activities with deep ripping, clay spreading and delving, and plenty of lime and gypsum being spread.

**Quenten Knight**

**Agronomist, Agronomy Focus, Esperance**  
January 15, 2021

## Southern region

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA SUMMARY

#### Spring weather conditions

September rainfall in the agricultural areas of SA was mostly near average while October varied from average in the South East and Southern Murray Mallee to very much above average in the Upper North, Southern Yorke Peninsula and most of Eyre Peninsula.

Mean maximum and minimum temperatures for September were above average to very much above average across the state. October mean maximum temperatures were generally average for all agricultural areas.

Many cropping areas experienced strong, hot northerly winds on September 6 and 7 while there were some generally light frosts in several districts in late September.

#### Winter crops

Late 2020 spring estimates of total winter crop production in SA were for around 8.8 million tonnes (mt) to be delivered from a crop area of 4.0 million hectares. If realised, this production is well above the previous 5-year average of 7.5 mt.

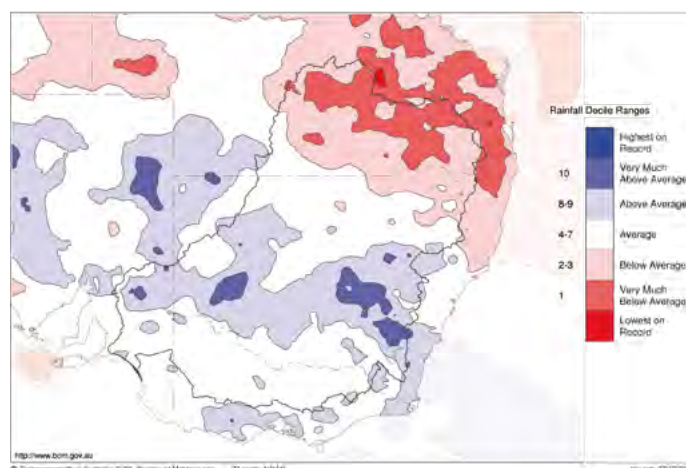
Average to above average September and October rainfall,



# District Reports...

January–February 2021

Murray–Darling Basin rainfall deciles – April 1 to November 30, 2020  
Distribution based on gridded data  
Australian Bureau of Meteorology



**The 2020 growing season rainfall – and its timing – for NSW and much of Victoria was close to ideal. Most of South Australia enjoyed average rainfall while the taps were well and truly turned off in southern and central Queensland. Harvest results mirrored the rainfall.**

combined with average maximum temperatures in October, provided ideal conditions in most areas of SA for crops to flower and fill grain.

Hot northerly winds in early September severely stressed crops in parts of Western and Eastern Eyre Peninsula, Upper and Mid North and Northern Yorke Peninsula. But rain following these winds allowed pulse and wheat crops to partially recover.

Despite many barley crops being stressed in the hot northerly winds causing some loss of potential, barley yield remained above average overall across the state.

Slow ripening of crops and continued damp conditions delayed harvest for most farmers until mid-November, even in the traditionally early districts.

Despite the wet spring, most farmers proactively managed disease with only minor incidences of infection in most crops.

Some farmers began cutting hay in mid-September and those with small areas were able to get it baled with minimal weather damage. But larger-area hay producers suffered significant weather damage.

Frost in late September caused significant damage to crops in low lying areas in a number of districts. The worst affected crops with more than 50 per cent yield loss were cut for hay but those with less damage were left for grain harvest, given lower hay returns.

Ideal late-season growing conditions enabled many of these crops to compensate with more and larger grains, resulting in only minor over-all yield loss.

Farmers began windrowing canola crops in mid-October. A larger area was windrowed in 2020 compared to the previous season, due to the risk of high seed losses, patchy ripening and late germination of ryegrass.

Chickpea crops benefited from the October rain and those with low disease levels yielded well.

Native budworm, etiology and other larvae were in moderate to high numbers in most districts. Aphids were in moderate to high numbers in pulse crops and Russian wheat aphids were widespread in cereal crops with many crops sprayed to control numbers.

Aphid populations increased too rapidly for beneficial insects to provide effective control.

Diamond back moth larvae numbers have increased in canola and brassica crops in a number of districts and crops were sprayed to reduce damage.

There was a rapid germination of grasses and summer weeds following September rains and many farmers in a number of districts began spraying summer weeds while waiting for crops to ripen.

**PIRSA Crop and Pasture Report South Australia  
November 5, 2020**

## VICTORIA WIMMERA & MALLEE

Rain late in the 2020 season was a welcome relief for local growers and helped many later maturing crops and varieties.

Generally, growers were happy with yields but as expected, there were some lower yielding areas in the north east of the

Mallee while areas that suffered in the north west in previous seasons, enjoyed a good season.

The rainfall tallies are in and the southern Mallee received anywhere from 180 to 250 mm of growing season rainfall. Most areas across the Mallee received similar to long-term average growing season rainfall but the rain did not fall evenly throughout the season. There were below average falls in the June/July period but then a slightly wetter than average spring in many areas.

Despite predictions of a wet harvest, conditions were mostly ideal with the majority of growers finishing a couple of weeks before Christmas. There were only very small areas of 'novelty crops' – including safflower – which were the last to be harvested in mid-January.

Growers are indicating that average wheat yields were around 2.5 tonnes per hectare in the northern Mallee and 3.8 tonnes in the south – with some areas well above this.

Barley yields ranged from 2.0 to 5.0 tonnes per hectare and canola yields 1.3 to 2.5 tonnes in the northern and southern Mallee respectively.

Pulse crop yields ranged from 1.0 to 2.0 tonnes per hectare across the Mallee.

### Grain quality

Grain quality was challenging with the softer finishing conditions. Wheat was generally low in protein across many areas recording high yields. It was not hard for barley to achieve malt grade, but the premium for malt was insignificant meaning yield was still the key driver of profitability.

Mixed farmers have decent stubbles to put sheep onto this season while keeping an eye out for fly-strike is a key task at this time of year. Prices remain above average for lambs.

Preparation for the new season is already underway with summer weed spraying needed across the Mallee after the rain over Christmas. Other activities keeping farmers busy include soil sampling, fertiliser budgeting, seed ordering and finalising paddock plans.

**Brooke Bennett  
Research and Extension Officer, Birchip Cropping Group  
January 23, 2021**

## NSW SUMMARY

Recovery from drought has continued across most of NSW. In December 2020, around 97 per cent of the state was in the *Recovery* or *Non-Drought* categories.

December rainfall continued to support recovery in many regions, especially in parts of north-eastern NSW where drought persisted late into 2020. The official climate outlook indicates moderate to high probabilities of above median rainfall across NSW for the next three months.

The large 2020 NSW winter crop harvest was mostly completed in December. Rainfall during the month caused harvest delays but the rain has also begun to replenish soil moisture levels for the upcoming 2021 winter crop.

This rain will also support the summer crop that is currently mid-way through the growing season.

There were also reports of increased streamflow in parts of the northern irrigation area during December, however, reservoir storages generally remain low.

The La Niña event continued to progress in the Pacific Ocean and was likely a dominant influence on the high rainfall totals received across north-eastern areas of NSW in December.

La Niña typically increases the chance of higher than median rainfall across NSW. But high rainfall variability or irregularity can still be common due to the influence of localised short-term synoptic weather patterns.

**NSW DPI Seasonal Update  
December, 2020**

# District Reports...

**January–February 2021**

## Northern region

### DARLING DOWNS

December rainfall of around 100 mm and then some more January (to date) totals of 25 to 100 mm, has set up the summer crop nicely. It has also encouraged further planting, especially mungbeans.

The spring sown crops may not have emerged as well as hoped with some gappy populations, but those crops in the grain fill stage are looking promising.


The warm and humid weather over the past few weeks has really pushed all the crops along.

The main issue across the Downs is that the rainfall has been inconsistent, with more opportunities for planting on the eastern Downs than in the western areas.

### Summer crops

The spring planted crops of sorghum have started to be

## Seasonal rainfall across the grain regions – 25 year averages and year to date

<i>Brought to you in association with</i>  <b>JOHN DEERE</b>	<b>25yr Annual Average (mm)</b>		<b>2021 rainfall to date (mm)</b>		<b>Summer 25yr Annual Average (mm)</b>		<b>2020–21 to date</b>		<b>Autumn 25yr Annual Average (mm)</b>		<b>2020</b>		<b>Winter 25yr Annual Average (mm)</b>		<b>2020</b>		<b>Spring 25yr Annual Average (mm)</b>		<b>2020</b>	
Emerald Qld	563		50		256		92		106		69		69		42		124		134	
Toowoomba Qld	670		94		273		219		142		53		88		92		167		106	
Roma Qld	561		77		249		122		118		49		74		52		124		62	
Goondiwindi Qld	607		63		242		182		126		23		99		1		138		75	
Narrabri NSW	622		33		214		199		123		152		122		63		158		124	
Gunnedah NSW	631		35		208		263		113		150		126		104		179		143	
Dubbo NSW	591		50		178		171		132		280		131		154		148		121	
West Wyalong NSW	440		44		113		71		84		239		124		165		119		172	
Wagga Wagga NSW	520		18		124		80		110		201		145		155		140		211	
Swan Hill Vic	306		5		67		32		66		109		84		57		88		88	
Bendigo Vic	494		6		98		29		110		233		154		119		131		151	
Horsham Vic	368		14		74		25		73		110		120		88		101		126	
Lake Bolac Vic	509		74		106		103		106		140		152		148		146		219	
Murray Bridge SA	356		19		63		22		81		108		118		84		94		103	
Kadina SA	326		15		58		29		77		40		106		77		84		114	
Cummins SA	394		8		48		24		93		100		173		142		79		140	
Esperance WA	615		8		89		15		134		31		253		309		140		164	
Wagin WA	387		5		51		5		88		60		165		105		84		84	
Northam WA	396		0		53		4		80		55		186		116		77		71	
Mingenew WA	347		1		34		3		84		46		173		188		57		39	
Moora WA	376		7		47		8		76		41		186		134		67		66	
Mullewa WA	310		5		50		14		88		49		129		155		42		41	

Last rainfall reading January 28, 2020.



# District Reports...

January–February 2021

harvested, but the hot and dry weather through November took its toll, and yields of these crops are below average.

A large area of sorghum is now filling grain, but having to battle a less common pest – mice – and lots of them.

These critters have started attacking the heads during the flowering stage and many crops have needed aerial baiting.

Helicoverpa numbers are enough to warrant control with Vivus Max but are not out of control, and only a few midge are present.

On the Western Downs grass hoppers are starting to become an issue.

Fall armyworms are back for their second round in the maize, attacking summer sown crops in the vegetative phase with control measures targeting the moths.

Maize cobs have also been stripped by mice and again have needed control through baiting.

Fall armyworm is also starting to attack sorghum in the western areas, and the spring corn out west has been cut early for silage.

The mungbean planting window has stretched from Christmas to mid-January, and there is a large area planted on the eastern Downs. Planting will continue into February for the western Downs. All paddocks have needed mice bait control before planting and are emerging well.

There have also been some soybeans planted on the Downs for the first time in quite a few years.

Early sunflowers are now flowering and the summer plant is emerging.

The millet area is well back on last year's record, but more crops have been planted as cover to protect the soil this summer.

The cotton area is about half of the long term average, but well up on last year's tiny area.

## The outlook

All agronomists follow a number of weather forecasters – and despite the break coming about two months later than predicted for a La Nina season – the rest of summer hopefully will be wet enough and cool enough to deliver some solid yield results.

**Hugh Reardon-Smith**

**Senior Sales Agronomist, Nutrien Ag Solutions Pittsworth**

**January 15, 2021**

## ANSWER TO IAN'S MYSTERY TRACTOR QUIZ

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**A large area of Darling Downs sorghum is now filling grain, but mice – and lots of them – have had to be baited to minimise damage to sorghum and other summer crops.**