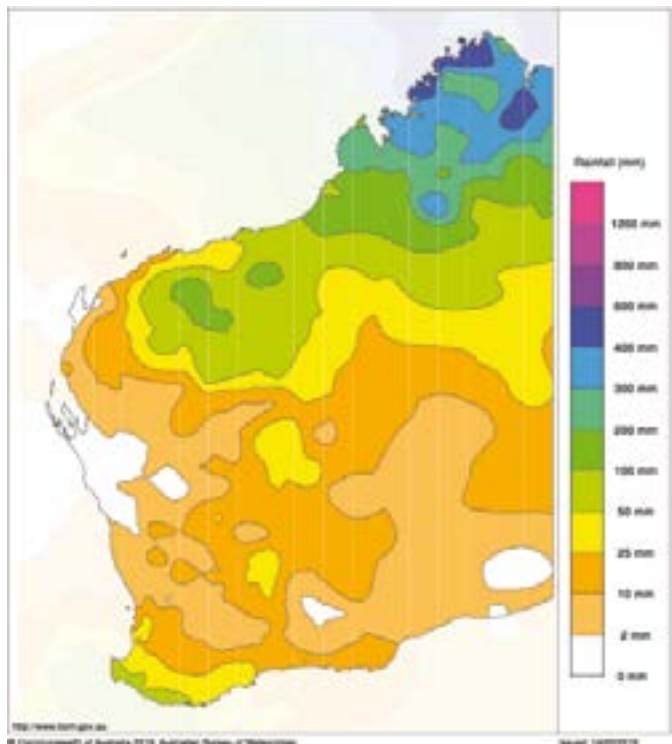


District Reports...

March–April 2019

Western region

Western Australia rainfall totals (mm) January 1 to March 14, 2019
Australian Bureau of Meteorology



Peter Nunn checking the spading depth of the Nufab Armadillo spader machine. Peter is the owner of Nufab Equipment, a local Dongara-based engineering company.

NORTHERN DISTRICT

It has been a very dry summer for most growers in the WA Northern Ag region. The odd strip that did have storm cells move over them have been sprayed. This dry summer has given most growers a chance to enjoy a summer break – and many have even managed an extra week.

The region has just had four to five days of continuous cloud

cover with a mid level cloud band but almost no rain at all was recorded. Hopefully we can score a good rain event in the next couple of months to build up some stored soil moisture and to provide a weed knockdown opportunity.

Most planning and budgeting has been done and many growers are now out and about getting prepared for the coming season. Spreading lime, deep ripping and preparing machinery for crop planting are the main activities on grain farms.

Livestock producers are busy keeping feed up to their animals while GRDC Crop Update meetings have also kept the calendar pretty full with most growers having attended a meeting or two in recent weeks.

We will happily take any rain from now on – the more the merrier at this time of year. Bring it on!

Peter Norris

**Agronomy For Profit and Synergy Consulting, Geraldton
March 12, 2019**

SOUTH COAST

Seasonal conditions on the South Coast have remained very dry over the past two months with less than five mm of rain recorded. Most growers have continued with soil amelioration projects, liming, gypsum, deep ripping, delving and clay spreading.

Domestic and stock water is starting to become an issue with some dams drying up and rain water tanks near empty.



The Armadillo spader in action doing trial strips on 'Moonyoonooka', the property of our district reporter, Peter Norris. A 400 plus horsepower Cummins engine drives the two spader rotors that are each 3 metres wide giving a 6 metre cut. The machine is ripping to around 450 mm and spading to 350 mm.

Southern region

SOUTH AUSTRALIA SUMMARY

Due to favourable late 2018 spring conditions on Eyre Peninsula and central and southern Yorke Peninsula, South Australia's 2018-19 winter grain harvest production estimate is now slightly above earlier expectations at 5.3 million tonnes. Many farmers also cut crops for hay due to the drought and the very strong demand for stockfeed.

While the harvest estimate is significantly under the 10-year long-term average of 7.9 million tonnes, the farm gate value of around \$2 billion is higher than in 2017–18.

Due to variable rainfall, soil type and frost damage, the harvest was very patchy with some farmers with record crops and some not harvesting at all.

Areas such as Southern Yorke Peninsula, Lower Eyre Peninsula and the Mid and Lower South East experienced average to above average yields.



Deep-ripping underway with a TQ Super Raptor at Daybreak Cropping Farm, West River, 240 km west of Esperance. Nicky Tesoriero (left) from Agronomy Focus checks on progress with farm manager, Levis MacKenzie.

Growers are still optimistic about the upcoming winter crop, but like most across Australia, they would welcome some good season-opening rainfall.

Quenten Knight
Agronomist, Agronomy Focus, Esperance
March 14, 2019

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

Brought to you in association with  JOHN DEERE	25yr Annual Average (mm)	2019 rainfall to date (mm)	Summer		Autumn		Winter		Spring	
			25yr Annual Average (mm)	2018–19	25yr Annual Average (mm)	2019 to date	25yr Annual Average (mm)	2018	25yr Annual Average (mm)	2018
Emerald Qld	564	35	251	52	106	2	67	29	125	113
Toowoomba Qld	679	39	276	73	138	15	86	36	180	184
Roma Qld	579	1	256	36	119	0	75	34	134	106
Goondiwindi Qld	619	16	253	66	123	4	98	45	147	174
Narrabri NSW	621	20	217	69	119	7	123	47	162	149
Gunnedah NSW	627	26	211	65	108	5	126	42	183	207
Dubbo NSW	588	83	184	117	125	0	129	57	152	166
West Wyalong NSW	437	72	118	84	79	8	120	60	122	86
Wagga Wagga NSW	531	59	134	110	109	5	147	77	141	149
Swan Hill Vic	308	15	69	57	64	0	87	59	88	41
Bendigo Vic	490	19	100	60	105	1	158	128	128	61
Horsham Vic	365	14	76	41	71	3	120	109	99	47
Lake Bolac Vic	506	27	108	72	103	7	153	165	142	73
Murray Bridge SA	358	8	66	30	80	2	120	83	94	47
Kadina SA	327	2	60	9	76	0	110	76	82	58
Cummins SA	390	3	51	6	89	1	174	241	76	48
Esperance WA	618	8	90	37	136	7	251	284	140	146
Wagin WA	391	19	50	7	90	17	165	213	85	61
Northam WA	407	4	61	32	87	2	189	263	80	55
Mingenew WA	347	0	33	0	86	0	171	203	57	40
Moora WA	385	2	46	6	82	0	189	286	68	65
Mullewa WA	320	1	56	12	90	0	131	165	43	24

Last rainfall reading March 14, 2019.

District Reports...

March–April 2019

Barley yields were higher than expected in a number of districts, while wheat yields were lower, mainly due to drought and frost.

Pasture feed in most districts has been exhausted and ground cover levels are very low, increasing soil erosion risk.

Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA)

VICTORIA SUMMARY

Winter crop production in Victoria in 2018–19 is estimated at around 3.7 million tonnes – the lowest since 2015–16. The area harvested for grain fell by more than 10 per cent because a number of wheat and canola crops were cut for hay.

Wheat production is estimated at around 2 million tonnes with the average yield at 1.39 tonnes per hectare.

Barley production was around 1.1 mt with a 46 per cent decline in the average yield to 1.43 tonnes per hectare.

Canola production fell to 300,000 tonnes at an average yield of 1.0 tonne per hectare.

**ABARES Australian Crop Report
February, 2019**

VICTORIAN MALLEE

Many Victorian Mallee farmers are continuing to see weeds germinate as a result of the large December rainfalls, but these farmers are on a mission to conserve sub-soil moisture. Consequently, some paddocks have been sprayed for the third or fourth time to control heliotrope and roly-poly. Sprayers won't have much downtime this year as it's only a matter of weeks before pre-emergent sprays are applied.

Farm plans are being confirmed ahead of the 2019 winter cropping season, with farmers carefully weighing up the best ways to manage weeds, nutrition, diseases and profits through the rotation of crop types and variety selection. Soil sampling is assisting farmers and their agronomists make these decisions – they are keen to know how much moisture and nitrogen is currently available for this year's crop.

All eyes are turning to the skies again, and the words 'autumn break' are impossible to avoid as you walk down the street. The traditional Anzac Day sowing deadline is looming. Some farmers will wait for the opening rain to commence sowing, while others will sow earlier. It's a decision that farmers are now making – assessing when to start sowing to get as much crop in during the optimal sowing window to minimise the yield penalties of sowing too late.

Final pre-sowing preparations are underway with many cleaning last year's cereal seed and ordering new canola seed. Fertiliser, mainly urea, super and MAP, is also being ordered, and the freight coordinated. Some trucks are getting more use collecting this year's fertiliser than they did delivering last year's harvest!

There is an increasing trend in the region to put more fertiliser in up-front, especially among barley growers, due to the limited opportunities available later in the season.

Maintenance and servicing of tractors and seeding equipment

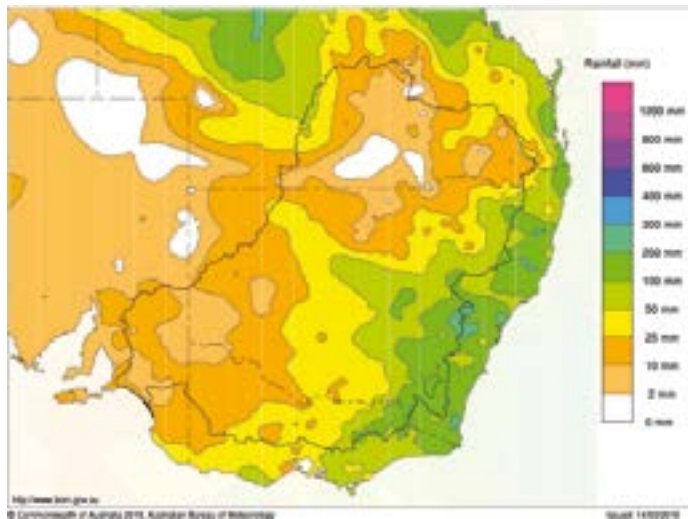


Soil samples in the Mallee are showing promising sub-soil moisture levels thanks to good December rain and diligent summer weed control.

is also keeping farmers busy, with most spending a lot of time under the bar making sure that everything is ready to go for when they believe is the best time to be sowing.

Mixed farmers are preparing for April lambing, and are keeping a close eye on the nutrition available to their gestating ewes. Hopefully, lambing percentages will be high, despite the hot weather during the joining period. Farmers who have bought in sheep to run on their stubbles over the summer are likely to be selling in preparation for sowing.

**Kate Maddern
BCG Research Agronomist, Birchip
March 14, 2019**



District Reports...

March–April 2019

DARLING DOWNS

January and February produced no rain across the Darling Downs and that has left the region's past three months' rainfall at 20 per cent of the 30 year average – and this is following on from a very dry 2018. Mid-March is now producing record high temperatures to finish off the driest and hottest summer most locals can remember.

Summer crop

Yields have been determined more by the amount of stored moisture in the paddock profile than choice of variety. And the moisture levels ranged from some good, to a lot of average, and way too many poor profiles at planting. The lack of in-crop rain left crops growing on the stored moisture alone.

Northern region

NSW SUMMARY

Seasonal conditions during December and January were generally unfavourable for summer crop planting. Below to very much below average December and January rainfall and prolonged heatwave conditions depleted soil moisture levels and reduced yield prospects for dryland summer crops.

The area planted to summer crops in New South Wales is estimated to have decreased by 32 per cent in 2018–19 to 419,000 hectares, reflecting low supplies of irrigation water and insufficient soil moisture in many regions for planting dryland crops.

Total summer crop production is forecast to fall by around 45 per cent to 1.2 million tonnes.

Area planted to grain sorghum in NSW is estimated to be around 150,000 hectares, 17 per cent below the 10 year average. With well below average December and January rainfall, and prolonged heatwave conditions in late December and January, yields are well down. Sorghum production of around 375,000 tonnes is estimated.

The area planted to cotton is estimated to have declined by 44 per cent to 174,000 hectares. A corresponding decline in production to around 1.6 million bales is expected.

**ABARES Australian Crop Report
 February, 2019**

QUEENSLAND SUMMARY

The area planted to summer crops in Queensland in 2018-19 was estimated at 606,000 hectares. The area planted to cotton declined to 106,000 hectares and a harvest of around 925,000 bales is expected.

The area planted to grain sorghum was around 385,000 hectares in 2018–19, which is below the 10-year average of 407,000 hectares. Production is forecast at 924,000 tonnes of sorghum with average yields down by nearly 10 per cent.

**ABARES Australian Crop Report
 February, 2019**

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District Reports...

March–April 2019

Sorghum has ranged from failed crops, crops cut for hay or silage, and highly variable. The Dalby area was lucky to receive some patchy storm rain on December 20 resulting in local sorghum crops producing 4 to 6.5 tonnes per hectare with a few as high as 8.0 tonnes. The average sorghum yield for the Downs was around 3.5 tonnes per hectare.

The sorghum screenings have also had a large range – generally from 2 to 30 per cent – with a few paddocks as high as 40 per cent.

Deliveries to date indicate that around 44 per cent of the sorghum harvested is going Sorghum 1 with 54 per cent in the Sorghum 2 bin. There have also been some Sorghum 3 loads.

Shorter season sorghum varieties have produced more from the limited moisture, but with the seed shortages at planting, there were plenty of paddocks planted with varieties not ideally suited to the season.

Harvest occurred earlier than usual with charcoal rot causing lodging due to the dry finish. Many growers harvested at up to 20 per cent grain moisture to get the crop in before it went flat. The grain was then aerated in silos to get the moisture down. Helioglyphs had to be controlled on the spring planted sorghum while midge attacked the small area of summer planted crop.

There was a small area of irrigated corn grown for silage or gritting. There were also a few irrigated mungbean fields. Dryland corn has not yielded with this season's different conditions.

The bulk of the limited irrigation water available went on cotton, although many growers finished up to two irrigations short, and some water was used on the vegetables in the Eastern Downs.

The mungbean plant was reduced to about 40 per cent of the usual area, and all were December/January planted. They had no in-crop rain and were harvested very carefully, being so short,



Corn being harvested on the Darling Downs.

with well below average yields of 0.3 to 1.0 tonnes per hectare. The few irrigated mungbean crops are expected to reach 2.0 tonnes.

Sunflowers have filled heads above expectations with lower plant populations, and these crops should be harvested soon.

Winter crop outlook

The outlook is not good with no better than average rain forecast and little chance of drought breaking falls. But for the few fallow paddocks with moisture, there are fair prices on offer for winter cereals and chickpeas. There is little interest in faba beans or canola.

The winter crop area will be back because of the lack of stored soil moisture, the very large area sown to sorghum this summer, and at this stage, very little chance of double cropping. Let us hope the weather surprises us.

Hugh Reardon-Smith
Agronomist – Landmark, Pittsworth
March 14, 2019



It was a very early harvest this summer on the Darling Downs with sorghum stubble showing some lodging, and dry, dry soil.

ANSWER TO IAN'S MYSTERY TRACTOR QUIZ

This amazing tractor is a Lanz Allrad Bulldog – and yes four wheel drive and articulated in 1925!

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