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South Australian Crop and Pasture Report

2023-24 Crop Performance Summary

January 2024



Government
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Department of Primary
Industries and Regions

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Crop and Pasture Report South Australia

Information current as of 14 January 2024

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Key link to Weather information

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

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 dryland and irrigated.

The estimates are based on information provided to PIRSA 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 – 2023-24 Crop Performance Summary

Summary

Dry and warm conditions during November across South Australia enabled early commencement of harvest in many districts. With favorable harvesting conditions, growers in earlier districts completed their harvest by early December. Grain quality from crops harvested during this period was excellent.

December saw rainfall events which delayed harvest of later crops and downgraded grain quality. Gaugings were significant with most cropping districts experiencing Decile 8-10 rainfall totals over this period (Figure 1). Minor crop yield losses occurred during this period due to extended harvest delays and lodging, however the main impacts were on grain quality with much of the later harvested crop achieving feed grades. By January, most of the harvest was completed, however, there are crops still being harvested in the South East, Kangaroo Island, Fleurieu and Lower Yorke Peninsula due to weather delays.

Despite the quality downgrades, feed grain prices remain strong, which has reduced the financial impact on affected growers. Yields are generally meeting and, in some cases, slightly exceeding producer expectations with growers reporting mostly average to slightly above average grain yields. The exception is localised frost affected areas of the Upper Eyre Peninsula and Mid/Upper North, and poorer quality soils of the northern Mallee.

Late October frost events had a significant impact in some later maturing paddocks in parts of the Upper North, Mid North, Murray Plains and Upper South East regions, however many producers were unaffected. In most cases the very dry conditions during late winter and early spring were considered to have more impact on grain yields than frost.

December rainfall bolstered pasture feed supplies with germination of annual pasture species, volunteer cereals and summer weeds. Livestock condition is good.

Subsoil moisture is at historically high levels due to summer rainfall events and is predicted to be in the 90th percentile in some districts. This has potential to provide valuable soil water for 2024 crops with appropriate fallow management.

Crop production is estimated at 9.3 million tonnes, which is similar to the 2020-21 season. Grain prices are strong, resulting in an estimated Farm Gate Value of \$3.6 billion.

Sown crop area and production for previous six seasons						
Seasons	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 <i>estimated</i>
Area sown (ha)	3,572,000	3,898,000	4,003,000	3,942,000	3,942,000	<i>4,011,000</i>
Production (t)	5,795,000	6,467,000	9,135,000	8,445,000	12,788,000	<i>9,289,000</i>
Farm gate value	\$1.7 billion	\$2 billion	\$2.5 billion	\$3.3 billion	\$4.8 billion*	<i>\$3.6 billion</i>

*Value revised since last release

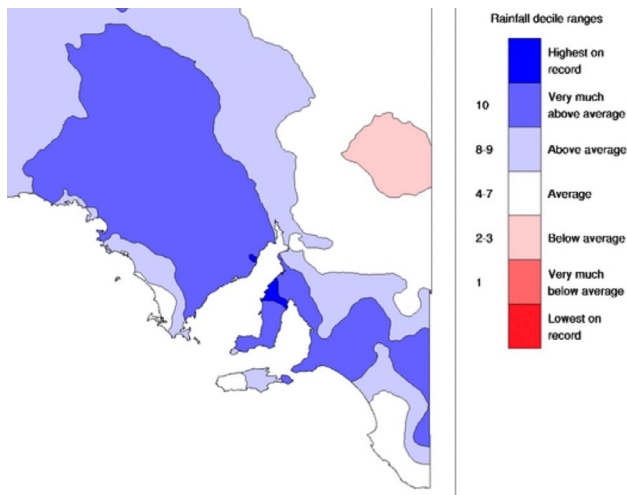


Figure 1: Rainfall deciles for the two-month period 1st November to 31st December 2023.

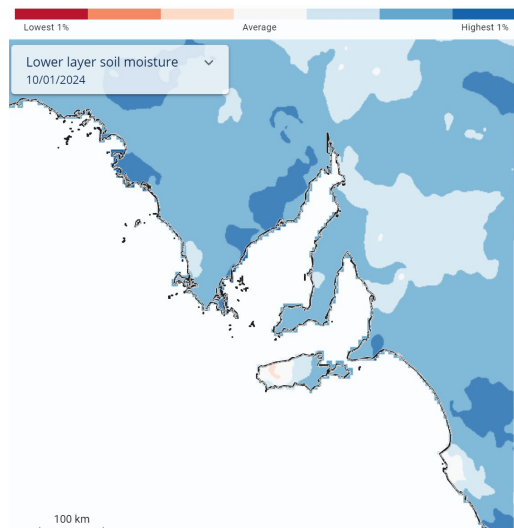


Figure 2: Lower layer soil moisture on 10th January 2024.

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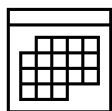
Season 2023-24

Weather



For the two-month period from 1st November to 31st December, total rainfall has been well above average for all grain producing areas of the State, with a number of districts experiencing decile 8-10 rainfall over the two months. Average maximum temperatures for the same period have been over 2°C above average in the northern regions, which enabled rapid harvest prior to rainfall events. Significant frost events in September and October impacted the yield potential for some producers, depending on location and plant growth stage at the time of the frost.

Season outlook



El Niño conditions are persisting; however, this has a reduced impact on Australian rainfall over summer. For much of South Australia, temperatures are predicted to be warmer than usual, however the rainfall forecast is more neutral. International climate models are predicting that El Niño conditions will return to neutral by late autumn.

Subsoil moisture



Subsoil moisture is at historically high levels due to summer rainfall events, with subsoil moisture predicted to be in the 90th percentile in some districts. With good fallow management, preservation of stored soil moisture to commence the 2024-25 will positively influence crop yield prospects for season ahead.

Crop mix



The area of lentils is expected to further increase in the 2024-25 season, with some producers intending to reduce sheep numbers and include more lentils in their programs. The area of field peas is likely to reduce in 2024-25 season due to proposed rationalisation of receival sites by a key bulk handler.

Cropping progress



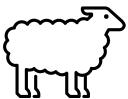
Harvest is nearly complete in most regions of state. Many producers experienced their earliest ever commencement and completion of harvest. Significant rainfall events in December and early January have slowed harvest progress in later areas. As a consequence, there are still significant areas of crop to be harvested in the Fleurieu, South East and Lower Yorke Peninsula regions.

In general, grain quality has been very good with the majority of wheat meeting AH and APW quality standards, however wheat crops harvested after the rain have experienced downgrading to feed grades. On the positive, strong prices for feed quality grain will reduce the financial impact from quality downgrades.

Cereal grain yields are generally good with average to slightly above average yields being reported in most districts. Canola yields have been average to slightly above, with lower oil contents reported in early finishing crops. Lentil yields have been variable because of the dry finish. Hay crops have achieved good yields and exceptional quality.

Some regions have reported lower than average crop performances (Upper Eyre Peninsula, Northwest Mallee), but generally these have been associated with poorer soil types. Impacts from spring frosts were highest on the upper Eyre Peninsula and later areas of the Mid and Upper North, however from a statewide perspective the exceptionally dry seasonal finish is likely to have more impact on yields than frost.

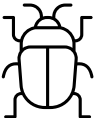
Pastures and livestock condition



Pasture growth has received a major boost with December and early January rainfall. Annual and perennial pastures have seen a significant increase in feed availability during December. Germination of crop volunteers and summer weeds has increased green feed for livestock on cropping paddocks, however fallow management will take priority for many producers with summer spraying well underway to preserve soil moisture for 2024-25 crops. Livestock remain in good condition.

Challenges and opportunities

Pests and diseases



None to report.



Regional issues and adverse events

Significant summer rainfall has delayed harvest of later maturing crops and has caused quality downgrades. Crop producers in the Mid and Lower South East have been particularly affected with up to 300mm of rainfall occurring in December to mid-January causing paddock trafficability and access issues and frustrating harvest efforts.

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	<i>ha</i>	450,000	145,000	371,000	170,000	241,100	248,000	73,000	5,400
	<i>t</i>	742,500	551,000	742,000	663,000	530,420	744,000	255,500	9,720
Durum	<i>ha</i>	0	0	0	13,600	6,000	5,000	4,200	0
	<i>t</i>	0	0	0	47,600	13,800	14,500	12,600	0
Barley	<i>ha</i>	75,000	67,000	74,000	159,000	91,500	90,000	21,000	2,200
	<i>t</i>	127,500	254,600	148,000	636,000	210,450	297,000	73,500	6,160
Oats	<i>ha</i>	14,100	0	4,600	4,200	5,300	4,400	2,300	1,600
	<i>t</i>	18,330	0	6,900	11,340	9,010	11,000	5,980	4,160
Rye	<i>ha</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>t</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Triticale	<i>ha</i>	400	0	500	1,000	1,200	1,700	400	100
	<i>t</i>	560	0	800	3,400	2,400	4,760	1,200	300
Peas	<i>ha</i>	2,800	2,000	4,200	10,000	10,000	13,900	6,000	400
	<i>t</i>	2,800	4,000	5,040	20,000	12,000	22,240	10,800	600
Lupins	<i>ha</i>	0	10,500	4,800	1,000	2,900	1,800	500	1,000
	<i>t</i>	0	18,900	4,800	1,800	3,190	2,340	900	1,000
Beans	<i>ha</i>	400	10,000	400	11,000	12,200	12,900	3,100	3,400
	<i>t</i>	600	25,000	400	25,300	18,300	23,220	5,890	5,100
Chickpeas	<i>ha</i>	0	0	200	4,000	2,500	2,300	400	0
	<i>t</i>	0	0	200	6,800	3,000	2,760	520	0
Lentils	<i>ha</i>	20,000	10,000	20,000	133,000	12,500	20,000	6,800	0
	<i>t</i>	16,000	25,000	24,000	266,000	16,250	30,000	12,240	0
Vetch	<i>ha</i>	2,400	0	2,000	2,600	5,600	4,200	300	0
	<i>t</i>	1,200	0	2,000	3,120	2,240	2,520	300	0
Canola	<i>ha</i>	5,100	80,000	9,000	14,500	28,300	25,400	4,600	4,200
	<i>t</i>	5,100	184,000	9,900	31,900	39,620	45,720	8,740	9,240
Hay (not in total)	<i>ha</i>	5,500	6,400	10,000	13,700	22,000	38,000	10,000	7,600
	<i>t</i>	13,750	28,800	27,000	61,650	74,800	167,200	40,000	31,920
Total	<i>ha</i>	570,200	324,500	490,700	523,900	419,100	429,600	122,600	18,300
	<i>t</i>	914,590	1,062,500	944,040	1,716,260	860,680	1,200,060	388,170	36,280

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	<i>ha</i>	8,300	62,500	220,000	130,000	81,000	25,300	2,230,600
	<i>t</i>	29,050	112,500	308,000	312,000	186,300	101,200	5,287,190
Durum	<i>ha</i>	0	500	0	0	7,300	0	36,600
	<i>t</i>	0	625	0	0	16,425	0	105,550
Barley	<i>ha</i>	7,000	55,000	60,000	94,500	39,500	7,000	842,700
	<i>t</i>	22,400	104,500	84,000	245,700	102,700	29,400	2,341,910
Oats	<i>ha</i>	1,500	3,000	2,200	3,500	21,200	4,700	72,600
	<i>t</i>	4,050	4,200	2,200	6,300	50,880	15,510	149,860
Rye	<i>ha</i>	0	1,500	3,500	2,400	1,600	0	9,000
	<i>t</i>	0	1,650	2,100	2,880	1,760	0	8,390
Triticale	<i>ha</i>	500	2,600	1,500	6,200	1,000	500	17,600
	<i>t</i>	1,350	3,640	1,800	9,300	1,900	1,750	33,160
Peas	<i>ha</i>	1,000	4,000	2,000	3,600	2,900	400	63,200
	<i>t</i>	2,200	3,600	1,000	4,320	3,770	920	93,290
Lupins	<i>ha</i>	1,600	2,000	3,000	10,100	11,000	2,700	52,900
	<i>t</i>	2,880	1,800	1,800	16,160	13,200	4,860	73,630
Beans	<i>ha</i>	1,000	1,100	0	1,200	34,500	14,500	105,700
	<i>t</i>	2,800	880	0	1,440	70,725	39,150	218,805
Chickpeas	<i>ha</i>	200	3,000	14,500	10,500	600	200	38,400
	<i>t</i>	200	2,400	5,800	12,600	720	300	35,300
Lentils	<i>ha</i>	200	4,000	4,300	6,300	2,900	200	240,200
	<i>t</i>	260	3,200	1,720	10,080	3,770	400	408,920
Vetch	<i>ha</i>	100	4,000	6,700	5,300	1,200	0	34,400
	<i>t</i>	200	3,600	2,345	7,420	1,320	0	26,265
Canola	<i>ha</i>	8,000	6,000	7,800	13,200	39,500	21,600	267,200
	<i>t</i>	16,000	5,400	2,340	19,800	71,100	58,320	507,180
Hay (not in total)	<i>ha</i>	23,900	7,200	5,000	13,800	28,100	27,100	218,300
	<i>t</i>	119,500	21,600	9,000	62,100	120,830	132,790	910,940
Total	<i>ha</i>	29,400	149,200	325,500	286,800	244,200	77,100	4,011,100
	<i>t</i>	81,390	247,995	413,105	648,000	524,570	251,810	9,289,450

TABLE 2 CROP ESTIMATES AGAINST FIVE YEAR AVERAGE

		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	5-year average	2023/24
Wheat	<i>ha</i>	2,000,400	2,112,100	2,201,600	2,195,400	2,185,955	2,139,100	2,230,600
	<i>t</i>	3,156,000	3,251,500	4,923,000	4,705,500	7,330,250	4,673,300	5,287,190
Durum	<i>ha</i>	42,000	42,900	37,800	35,800	37,200	39,100	36,600
	<i>t</i>	75,220	82,560	114,870	108,350	142,200	104,600	105,550
Barley	<i>ha</i>	818,600	990,000	953,500	917,400	858,600	907,600	842,700
	<i>t</i>	1,725,800	2,091,000	2,560,000	2,151,700	3,080,500	2,321,800	2,341,910
Oats	<i>ha</i>	74,700	72,800	77,700	75,300	75,700	75,200	72,600
	<i>t</i>	121,500	120,450	173,700	162,400	230,950	161,800	149,860
Rye	<i>ha</i>	5,300	5,700	8,600	6,600	9,100	7,100	9,000
	<i>t</i>	3,150	4,250	11,100	4,600	16,250	7,900	8,390
Triticale	<i>ha</i>	29,400	32,300	28,800	21,400	18,300	26,000	17,600
	<i>t</i>	33,470	42,250	70,750	30,150	49,600	45,200	33,160
Peas	<i>ha</i>	65,700	65,300	70,000	66,800	69,700	67,500	63,200
	<i>t</i>	53,620	70,100	113,700	92,500	137,550	93,500	93,290
Lupins	<i>ha</i>	61,000	51,100	50,600	45,900	54,200	52,600	52,900
	<i>t</i>	59,950	53,800	75,650	63,400	124,650	75,500	73,630
Beans	<i>ha</i>	63,100	98,400	100,600	107,300	102,100	94,300	105,700
	<i>t</i>	79,730	156,650	212,700	247,280	318,800	203,000	218,805
Chickpeas	<i>ha</i>	33,600	22,200	29,500	13,500	43,500	28,500	38,400
	<i>t</i>	23,870	17,000	44,050	15,450	81,650	36,400	35,300
Lentils	<i>ha</i>	149,800	164,300	186,700	197,200	191,600	177,900	240,200
	<i>t</i>	177,870	220,400	345,950	339,180	527,250	322,100	408,920
Vetch	<i>ha</i>	28,400	34,000	36,400	34,400	37,900	34,200	34,400
	<i>t</i>	5,810	9,420	27,750	15,050	63,950	24,400	26,265
Canola	<i>ha</i>	200,100	206,600	220,800	224,700	258,400	222,100	267,200
	<i>t</i>	278,900	347,400	461,800	509,750	684,000	456,400	507,180
Hay (not in total)	<i>ha</i>	436,000	320,600	263,500	220,800	210,600	290,300	218,300
	<i>t</i>	1,297,000	1,258,900	1,195,000	852,000	989,950	1,118,600	910,940
Total	<i>ha</i>	3,572,100	3,897,700	4,002,600	3,941,700	3,942,255	3,871,200	4,011,100
	<i>t</i>	5,794,890	6,466,780	9,135,020	8,445,310	12,787,600	8,525,900	9,289,450