

Summary

Widespread rains across the WA grainbelt in the week ended 25 June came at just the right time to put the WA grain crop back on track for an average year for the total WA crop.

Whilst the recent rains proved a welcome relief the seasonal conditions vary widely across the grainbelt. Crops in most of the Geraldton Zone, the eastern districts of the Kwinana Zone, the south east districts of the Albany Zone and the Esperance Zone could return above average yields. Crops in the bulk of the western and central districts of the Kwinana Zone, the north western districts of the Albany Zone and an area around Mingenew and the Three Springs districts in the Geraldton Zone are mostly tracking for below average yields but with the potential to recover to return average yields.

The plant available soil moisture map provided by the Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre (AEGIC) as at 30 June, two months into the growing season, shown on page 4 highlights these contrasting yield potentials.

Weed control has been largely very effective this year due to the timing of the summer and early season rainfall events. Pests and disease problems are not significant at this stage but with warmer than average temperatures in May and June there are areas throughout the grainbelt reporting sclerotinia in canola, rust in wheat and net blotch in barley. There has been a spike in pest problems in the west of the Albany Zone with reports of snails, slugs, green pea aphids, Lucerne flea and earwigs.

The nitrogen status of crops is considered adequate with growers largely holding off to assess the need for further applications depending on the timing of future rainfall events.

Due to the dry weather continuing into early June, some further wheat area was not planted in the southern end of the Geraldton Zone, as growers reached decisions on planting the final paddocks in their programs.

The Bureau of Meteorology is forecasting average rainfall conditions across the grainbelt for the July to September period. Meanwhile, based on analogue years, AEGIC is predicting continuation of a drier than average year as characterised by the first two months of the growing season. However, soil moisture levels are generally good across the grainbelt for this stage of the season, and as always, final yields will depend as much on the timing of rainfall events as the total quantity of rainfall.

WA planting area estimates (hectares)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Field pea	State total
Kwinana	2,457,000	493,000	418,000	136,000	104,000	6,000	3,614,000
Albany	717,000	445,000	316,000	86,000	29,000	4,000	1,597,000
Esperance	500,000	288,000	270,000	6,000	9,000	12,000	1,085,000
Geraldton	850,000	26,000	139,000	8,000	155,000	1,000	1,179,000
Totals	4,524,000	1,252,000	1,143,000	236,000	297,000	23,000	7,475,000
% change from 2014	1%	18%	-9%	31%	6%	-4%	2.5%

Growers' cropping plans were essentially enacted in all zones and there are no major changes to the GIWA forecast for the area planted of each grain commodity, apart from a further small adjustment downwards in the amount of wheat planted.

Kwinana Zone

The season potential for the Kwinana zone, is average overall. Potential crop yields across the Zone are highly variable due to varying soil moisture levels. Varying management strategies are also significant in the different levels of crop development across the districts in the Zone. Crops that went in early on the back of good soil moisture levels following summer rains have had good growth and have a high yield potential.

Overall, eastern districts are in good condition, central districts are average, while western districts (high rainfall) have suffered a more patchy result because seeding progressed at a slower pace.

In the eastern districts out to Southern Cross, rainfall events at the right time have resulted in above average potential crop yields. Canola and lupins are already starting to flower with wheat and barley at the tillering stage.

In the Central districts from Koorda to Bruce Rock, which missed out on any significant summer rain and really only had the first significant rainfall events in the week ending 25 June, crop yields are currently tracking below average but could recover to average levels.

The good efficacy of double knock weed control pre-sowing means there are few weed control issues now and there are no major pests or diseases evident at this stage.

Nitrogen levels are considered adequate for most of the crops, with decision on further applications on hold until further rainfall events.

Albany Zone

Cropping programs have been completed with no major changes to the planned programs. As for elsewhere, the rains in the week ended 25 June put the crops back on track for average yields with the potential for above average yields in the southern eastern districts of the Albany Zone.

In the Lakes districts crops are very patchy with early sown crops doing well. Canola is starting to flower and most cereal crops are at the 3-5 leaf stage. Crops in the Kulin and Lake Grace districts are in good condition.

Crop yields are back on track for the districts east of Katanning out to Broomehill. Nitrogen applications are starting to go out with potential yields of 5 tonnes for barley and 3-4 tonnes per hectare for wheat.

In the west of the Albany Zone there were virtually no significant rainfall events before the middle of June and there have also been two or three frosts in the Darkan to Kendenup areas in June. Accordingly, crop yields are expected to struggle to make average. Depending on the follow up rains nitrogen programs are expected to be scaled back. There are also a significant array of pest problems emerging with pea aphids, slugs, snails, Lucerne flea and even earwigs. Pastures are also suffering from the drier than average start to the season and supplementary feeding of livestock with hay and grain is continuing.

Esperance Zone

All crops are up and away with full soil moisture profiles following the recent rains. Conditions are generally very good in the Esperance Zone and the area is set for above average yields. Cropping plans didn't change significantly during seeding.

The northern districts (Grass Patch to Salmon Gums) are probably the exception. Conditions in these areas were very dry before the late June rainfall events and the recovery has been patchy with rainfall varying from 25 to 60 mm across these districts.

A lot of nitrogen went out before the rains and more nitrogen is expected to go out to try and take advantage of high levels of soil moisture.

Weed control was good and there are no major pests or diseases. There are some signs of sclerotinia in canola and spots of net blotch in barley but pests are largely being kept at bay.

Geraldton Zone

Crops went in as planned apart from some last paddocks that would have been sown to wheat that were left off the program. Crop conditions are very patchy across the zone with a huge variation in crop growth but on track for an average to above average crop for the Zone as a whole.

North of Mullewa to Northampton the crops are in very good condition and likely to yield well above average with early sown canola already 40 to 60% in flower and wheat in head. Crops in the Kalannie, Cadoux, Coorow and Latham districts are also tracking well.

By contrast Mingenew, up until the last rains in the week ended 25 June, had the lowest growing season rainfall on record. The Mingenew, West Arrino, Three Springs, Morawa and North Canna districts are all still suffering from a very dry start to the season and crops in these areas may struggle to catch up and achieve average yields.

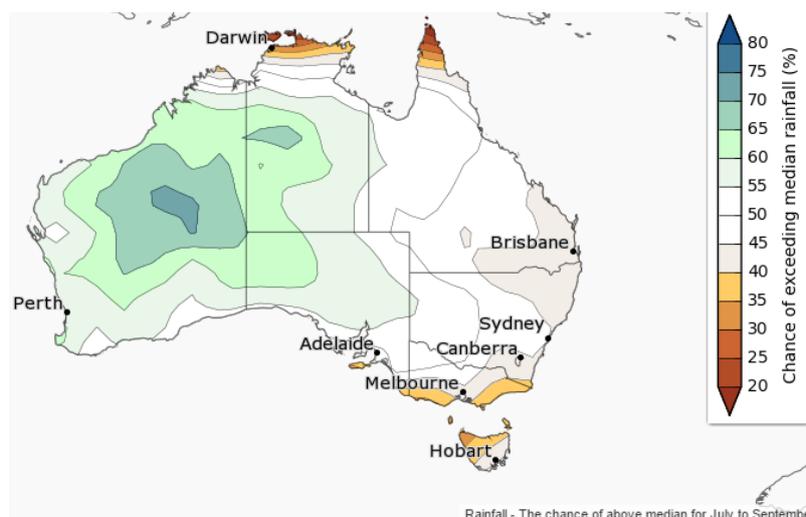
Again generally very good early weed control but with a note that wild radish is becoming harder to control. Temperatures in June were warmer than average and there were some signs of sclerotinia in canola crops. Otherwise there are no other disease issues at present. There are not many insect problems, only a very small amount of Diamond Back Moth present in some canola crops.

Season Outlook

Bureau of Meteorology Outlook for July to September 2015

- There is an increased chance of a wetter three months over central and northern WA, as well as adjacent areas over the WA border. Most of eastern Australia has a roughly equal chance of a wetter or drier July to September.
GIWA note: The forecast for the WA grainbelt is for average rainfall from July to September.
- For most of the country, warmer nights are likely, with warmer days likely for the southern coastline and parts of northern Australia.
- El Niño persists in the tropical Pacific Ocean, and has seen reduced cloud cover and rainfall to Australia's north. Sea surface temperatures (SSTs) in the Indian Ocean remain notably warmer than average. The combination of a warm Pacific and warm Indian Ocean represents an unusual set of circumstances.

Chance of above median rainfall in the July to September, 2015 period



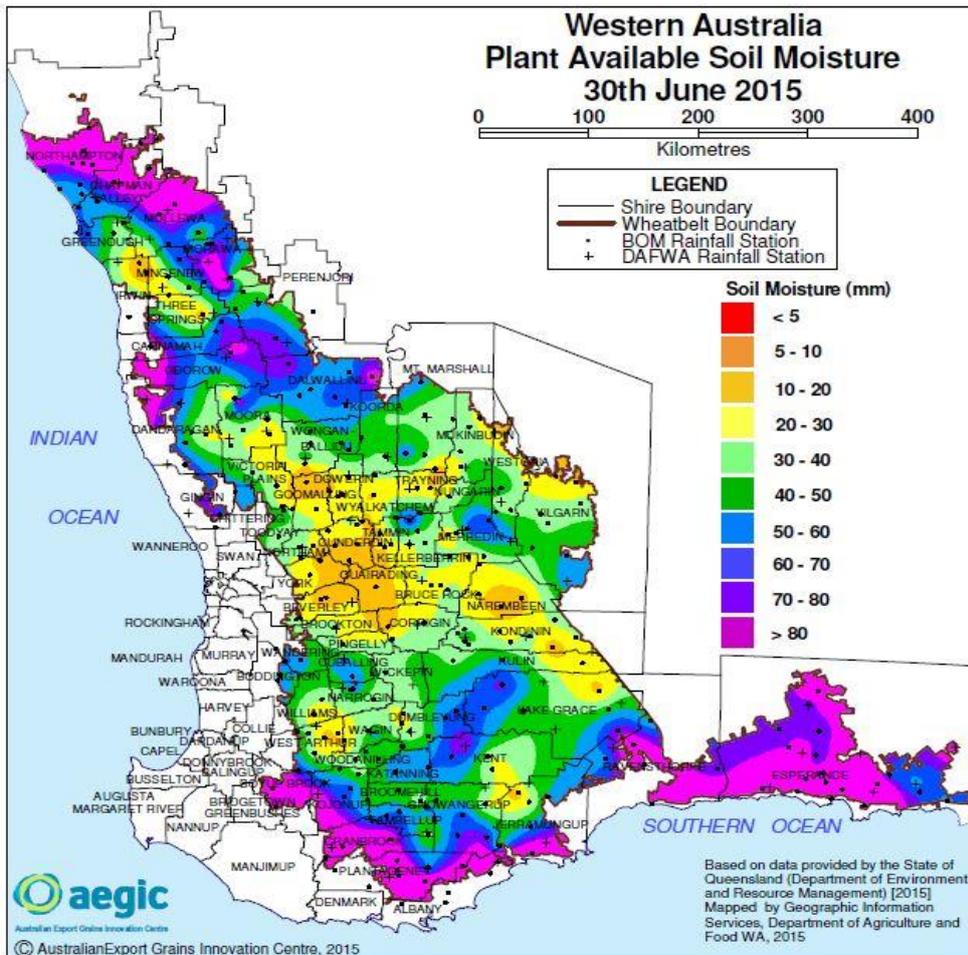
Source: Bureau of Meteorology, Issued 25 June, 2015

Soil moisture conditions- Dr David Stephens

Australian Grains Export Innovation Centre

The following map shows the current (June 30) soil moisture conditions in Western Australia.

- Soil moisture content across the Western Australian grainbelt is generally average for this time of the year along the eastern edge of the grainbelt with some areas of the far north and northern parts of the Esperance Shire wetter than normal. However, in the western parts of the Kwinana, Albany and Geraldton zones soil moisture reserves are below normal. A dry strip is also noticeable from Narambeen down to the north-east of the Lake Grace Shire.
- The relative soil moisture rankings should decline further in the next fortnight with not much rain forecast at this stage.



Additional information can be sourced using hyperlinks from:

- [AEGIC: Yield and Seasonal Forecasting](#)
- [AEGIC: ENSO Summary webpage](#)
- [AEGIC: Western Australia Plant Available Soil Moisture](#)
- [DAFWA: Statistical Seasonal forecast](#)
- [BoM: WA Seasonal Rainfall Outlook, next 3 months](#)
- [BoM: Month to date rainfall for WA](#)
- [BoM: 16 day rainfall outlook \(WX maps\)](#)
- [BoM: Decile rainfall](#)