

The 2017 Season Summary

While a long way behind the 2016 total production of 18.2m tonnes, the final 2017 season production at 14.27m tonnes for all grains (whole farm production) in Western Australia well surpasses initial predictions. With estimates of almost 9 million tonnes in July 2017, the turn-around was unprecedented thanks to spring rains in September and October and a soft finish.

Wheat production was 25 per cent lower than the record year of 2016 due mainly to the poor year in the north and northeast of the state. Lupin production was down 37 per cent from 2016 reflecting the poor season in the north where the majority of the lupins are grown.

Production of barley and canola in the state was down slightly from 2016. The majority of barley is grown in the southern regions where growing conditions in 2017 were good. Canola production held up from 2016 due to increased plantings in 2017 and good yields in the southern areas of the state, although seed supply was an issue.

More good news for the Esperance port zone with a record year of just under three million tonnes production for all grains.

2017 GIWA WA Crop Production Estimates (tonnes)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Field pea	State total
Kwinana	3,550,000	1,510,000	610,000	305,000	210,000	20,000	6,205,000
Albany	1,400,000	1,300,000	580,000	165,000	65,000	4,000	3,514,000
Esperance	1,450,000	920,000	565,000	5,000	25,000	20,000	2,985,000
Geraldton	1,200,000	70,000	145,000	5,000	150,000	1,000	1,571,000
Totals	7,600,000	3,800,000	1,900,000	480,000	450,000	45,000	14,275,000
Compared to 2016 harvest	-25%	-8.8%	-11.6%	-48.2%	-37%	25%	-21.4%

Note: the grain totals reported are for whole farm production. This includes on-farm seed and feed requirements as well as trade outside of the CBH network.

2017 WA Crop Yield estimates (tonnes per hectare)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Field pea
Kwinana	1.31	2.74	1.27	2.05	1.69	1.530
Albany	1.70	2.79	1.45	2.53	1.66	1.30
Esperance	2.57	2.92	1.61	2.50	1.78	1.33
Geraldton	1.31	1.40	1.03	0.62	0.83	1.00
Averages	1.62	2.78	1.41	2.20	1.40	1.41

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2017 Season grain quality comments

Grain weight was high in all regions and screenings low, a function of the soft slow finish with minimal frost. Little grain was rain affected at harvest and/or downgraded from adverse climatic events.

Protein in wheat and barley was generally low due to dilution from higher than expected yields. It was a difficult year for growers to manage their inputs as most had not experienced such a late start combined with such a good finish. The comment from several of the consultants contributing to this report last year was “you could only get protein off a legume, not out of the bag”.

There was more noodle wheat produced than predicted with increased production from the north and south of the state.

Canola oil quality was high due to the slow cool finish and contributed significantly to the profit margins of canola crops.

Lupin tonnage was hit hard by the poor season in the north of the state where traditionally most of the lupins are grown. Some of the newer varieties performed well in the central and south of the state and may in future contribute more to production than in the past.

Milling oats have been steadily increasing in area and depending on price stability, may continue to do so as current demand continues to increase.

Field peas finally had a good year and whilst growers may move into more plantings based on success in 2017, there was a noticeable increase in chickpea, lentil and faba bean test plantings around the state.

Geraldton Zone

Grain production in the Geraldton port zone exceeded all expectations, with delivery estimates just prior to harvest commencing, underestimating production by one third. Total production was over 1.5 million tonnes from an estimate of 1.1 million tonnes at the start of July 2017.

The majority of the grain was produced in the western areas with grain yields in some regions close to average. The eastern areas of the zone from Gutha, Morawa, Perenjori down to Latham and Buntine hit hardest from the dry year and very little grain was delivered. In the north and central regions of the zone the better crops were produced off the lighter country and the country that had been deep ripped. Big areas of the heavy country was fallowed early in the season or sprayed out in the spring.

Grain quality from the zone was good with no significant weather events resulting in the downgrading of quality. The rain events at the start of harvest did not have an impact on quality as growers harvest the more susceptible varieties first and the small amount of noodle wheat harvested was already in the bin when it did rain.

Wheat grain protein was good with about 50 per cent of grower deliveries making APW, about 20 per cent AH and the remainder ASW and ANW.

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Kwinana Zone

The Midlands

The Midlands area of the Kwinana zone was a continuation of the Geraldton zone with the western areas producing the majority of the grain and production dropping off dramatically as you moved east.

The areas west of Watheroo and Moora ended up with average grain yields, although moving east towards Miling, Ballidu and Pithara grain yields dropped off. Very little grain was produced in the Dalwallinu Shire in 2017, reflecting the very poor growing season in the region.

Kwinana West

Grain yields were mostly above average for the western areas of the region. Although reliable areas north of the Great Eastern Highway from Goomalling and Dowerin to Wongan Hills were below average. The season was average or above average for most regions south of the Great Eastern Highway in the western areas of the zone.

Wheat grain protein was good in the western areas of the zone and equal tonnages of APW and ASW were delivered by most growers. Noodle wheat production in the western areas of the zone was more than expected, with most growers getting a high proportion of their noodle wheat production into ANW1.

Barley looked better than wheat for most of the year and grain yields at harvest confirmed this with average wheat yields for the western parts of the zone being up to half a ton lower than barley. Around 40% of grower deliveries made the malt grade which is about normal for the region.

The canola grain yields were slightly variable due to the tough start to the season, although the increased plantings resulted in tonnages similar to 2016 delivered. Oil content was consistently high and contributed up to \$50 per tonne to the base price for most deliveries.

Kwinana East

Harvest in the eastern areas of the Kwinana zone did not hold any surprises. The grain yields south of the Great Eastern Highway were mostly average except for the fortunate strip around Tammin/Kellerberrin and south to Quairading/Bruce Rock and Corrigin which was generally above average. These areas received slightly more rain which came earlier, allowing crops to germinate in May and make better use of stored moisture.

Grain yields started to fall off from the Great Eastern Highway as you moved north and areas around Koorda north to Kalannie and Beacon and east to Wialki and Bonnie Rock had a very poor year. Areas east of Merredin were below average and areas south of Merredin were variable. There were big differences in paddock yields on the same farm with one rainfall event often the difference.

It was a very frustrating season for most of the Kwinana East zone as good summer rainfall events contributing to significant levels of stored moisture, were not able to be utilised.

Wheat quality was mostly ASW with less APW than normal. Most growers backed off on fertiliser due to the poor season start, this was coupled with heavy reliance on cereals in the rotation and grain protein was well down.

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Albany Zone

Western Albany

The grain yields in the western areas of the zone were all above average. The combination of a good start and a long slow finish without too much waterlogging resulted in some very good grain yields for all crops.

Average grain yields for crops in the region exceeded the averages for the record year of 2016 and grain quality across the board was good. Around 40 per cent of barley deliveries made malt which is slightly above normal and equal quantities of wheat made APW and ASW grades.

Canola production for the zone was up by 25 per cent with oil quality in the high 40's.

Southern Albany

Grain yields for the region were well above average for wheat, barley and canola. The exception to this were areas of the western south coast where crops suffered severe waterlogging. The frost events in September extended further south than in previous years and for some areas around Ongerup and Jerramungup growers suffered significant yield loss. The grain yield loss in these areas was completely overshadowed by the exceptional yields in the remainder of the region.

Total grain production for the whole of the Albany port zone was nearly identical to the 2016 record year.

The split between malt barley and feed barley was around 30/70 which is normal for the region. Wheat grain quality was very good with large grain size and more of the crop going into premium grades than in regions to the north.

Eastern Albany (Lakes Region)

Grain production in the Lakes Region was above average for all crops except canola which averaged around 0.9T/ha, slightly below the last five year averages. Wheat averaged around 2.4T/ha, barley 2.6T/ha and lupins 1.4T/ha.

Some areas around Kulin and Lake Grace were well above average and crops around Pingrup that were not frosted were well above average. There was more country frosted than first thought, although the frosted areas were isolated to low lying drainage lines and did not extend up the slopes as it has in years when frost can have a significant impact on yield.

There was more ASW than APW wheat delivered in the region. Grain size was very good and contributed significantly to grain yields.

Esperance Zone

The Esperance port zone produced a record total grain tonnage of just under three million tonnes including stocks kept on farm and grain retained for seed. It was an exceptional year across the whole region and grain yields of 4T/ha for wheat and barley were not uncommon. Grain quality across the board was good although the ratio of malt to feed was a little lower than normal at about 20/80. There was little downgrading of grain at harvest due to weather events.

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Season Outlook, February 2018

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Summer rainfall for 2018 thus far has been well above average across most of the agricultural region, coming mainly from Tropical Cyclone Joyce in mid-January as well as thunderstorm activity. In contrast, rainfall along the South Coast has been light, see Figure 1. Soil moisture storage (Figure 2) follows the pattern of January rainfall with greater storage along the far eastern part of the northern agricultural region, as well as western parts of the central region. There is also stored soil water across much of the northern region (except western parts), in contrast to low levels of storage across eastern and southern parts.

The latest seasonal climate outlook modelling runs have reduced the expectation for above average rainfall over southern WA for February, thus reducing the chances for gains in soil moisture. Early outlooks for March to May suggest drier than normal conditions are more likely over southern WA. This scenario is similar to the lead up to the 2017 growing season.

Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook summary (February to April 2018)

- A wetter than average February to April is likely for most of WA except the southwest corner. Smaller patches in the tropical north and the far southeast of Australia are also likely to have a wetter three months.
- February is likely to be wetter than average for western and southern Australia, extending into southern Queensland.
- Weak La Niña conditions are present in the tropical Pacific Ocean. Models suggest this event will end by mid-autumn.
- Historical outlook accuracy for February to April rainfall is moderate across much of the eastern half of Australia, western WA, and the top end of the Northern Territory. Elsewhere, accuracy is generally low to very low.

Additional information can be sourced from:

[DPIRD: Seasonal Climate Information](#)

[DPIRD: Potential Yield Tool](#)

[DPIRD Extreme Weather Events Tool](#)

[BoM: Seasonal Rainfall Outlook, next 3 months](#)

[BoM: Decile rainfall for April to November 2017](#)

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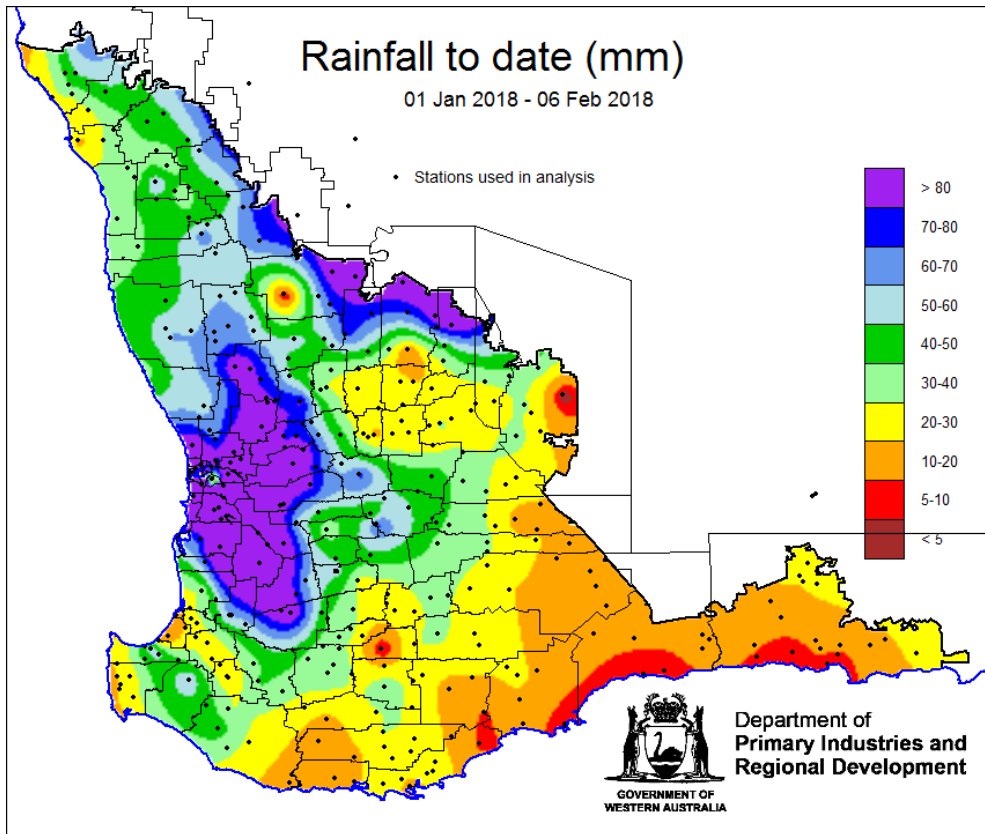


Figure 1. Rainfall totals (in mm) for 2018 to date.

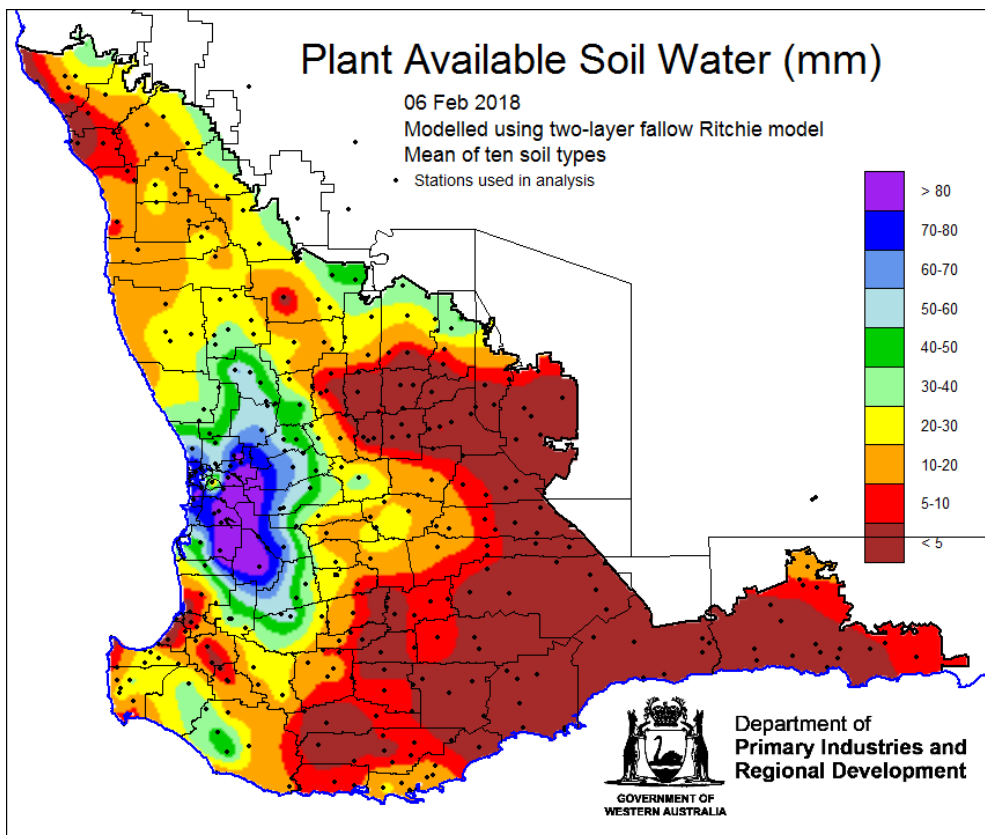


Figure 2. Modelled soil water storage a for mean of 10 soil types and assuming fallow conditions.

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