

Summary - The 2017 Season as at July

The June winter rainfall has been much lower than average and there has been inconsistency in growing season rainfall across the grainbelt, in particular being significantly lower in the north and eastern grain growing regions of the state. With the season looking so patchy and areas still waiting on good rains, the total grain production for Western Australia is going to be down significantly on the record harvest achieved in 2016.

At this stage, we estimate the total 2017 harvest to within a range of 10 to 12 million tonnes.

Recent rainfall over the last weeks of June turned the season around in the western Kwinana and Albany port zones, these zones now have the potential of at least average grain yields for this harvest. The Esperance port zone is on track for above average cereal grain yields and at least average canola grain yields.

The recent rainfall events did not reach the north and eastern Geraldton port zone and the north and eastern Kwinana port zone. These regions still have large areas of land where crop has not emerged. At this stage, around 30 percent of intended crop area in the Geraldton port zone will not be harvested and about 10 percent of intended crop area in the north and eastern Kwinana port zone will not be harvested.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) reports that 'much of the northern and central regions have received less than 20 percent of normal rainfall since April'.

Pasture production has been very poor across all port zones of the State and growers are faced with the prospect of hand feeding livestock for several more months. Consequently, the large volume of feed grain stored on farm from the 2016 harvest is expected to be run down to low levels by the start of the 2017 harvest.

2017 WA Crop Area Estimates (hectares)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Field pea	State total
Kwinana	2,631,000	504,000	436,000	136,000	124,000	9,000	3,840,000
Albany	794,000	478,000	331,000	59,000	39,000	6,000	1,707,000
Esperance	539,000	290,000	281,000	6,000	9,000	15,000	1,140,000
Geraldton	775,000	48,000	147,000	8,000	160,000	1,000	1,139,000
Totals	4,739,000	1,320,000	1,195,000	209,000	332,000	31,000	7,826,000
% change from June 2017	-2.8%	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%	-5.1%	0.0%	-1.5%

Due to the late start to the growing season, GIWA will commence the provision of grain production estimates in the August 2017 Crop Report.

Geraldton Zone

GIWA gratefully acknowledges the support of DPIRD and contributions from independent agricultural consultants and agronomists in the production of this report.

The areas to the north and east of Geraldton missed out on rain once again in June with some farmers facing the prospect of not even recovering seed for next year. At least 30 percent of the zone will not harvest a crop, and whilst the remaining areas will probably put a header over the remaining crop, grain yields will be very low.

The biggest impact will be on lupin tonnages, as this region usually produces more lupins than the rest of the other zones combined. The increase in canola plantings in the region will also amount to very little canola tonnage coming from this zone.

There has been some improvement in crops in the western areas close to the coast north and south of Geraldton from recent rains. Early sown crops on the eastern fringe that were sown into stored moisture are still growing, although as most of this region has had less than 15mm of growing season rainfall, it is uncertain how long the crops can hold on for without further substantive rain events.

Kwinana Zone

The Midlands

Along with the Geraldton zone and Kwinana East zone, this region has been hit hard by the lack of winter rain. Agronomists in the region are commenting that they have never seen it as bad at this time of the year, particularly in the more reliable areas close to the coast. At this stage 90 percent of the crops in the zone will be harvested but for many yields will be just to recover seed. Agronomists still haven't written off the season completely as there are still good reserves of sub-soil moisture in many areas to enable crops to return more than seed if it rains over the next few weeks.

The rain in the last weeks of June saw an improvement in patches, but in large areas of the region, crops have still not emerged.

Kwinana West

The crops in the western Kwinana port zone have picked up following rainfall events at the end of June. Crops that were up before the rains have their roots down into the subsoil moisture and plants in sections of paddocks that were yet to germinate have now come through and are filling in the gaps.

Crops have noticeably greened up and are looking much healthier than two to three weeks ago. Where there was no activity a few weeks ago there is now post emergent weed spraying and some post emergent fertiliser application.

Overall, the outlook for the region is for a below average season for most growers due to crops being behind in growth stage and the late start to the growing season. In comparison to other very dry years and late starts, the crops this year have good stores of sub-soil moisture and this is starting to show up, particularly where weeds in the summer were sprayed out early.

Kwinana East

The situation in the Kwinana East zone has improved over the last few weeks, particularly south of Great Eastern Highway, as several rainfall events of more than 10mm have revived prospects of at least an average harvest for those that received rain.

Cereal crops are generally looking okay in the western and southern regions of the zone, but are patchier and have less potential to the east and north.

Canola and lupin crops are poor over most of the zone and have low grain yield potential.

Albany Zone

GIWA gratefully acknowledges the support of DPIRD and contributions from independent agricultural consultants and agronomists in the production of this report.

Western Albany

Rain over the last few weeks turned around the grain yield prospects of the zone dramatically from the June report. Generally, crops have emerged well and are some of the more evenly germinated in the state. Most of the region west of Albany Highway has now had at least 15-20mm of rain over the last two weeks and crops are down into the subsoil moisture. Canola is cabbaging up and cereals are growing nicely.

Agronomists in the region are still only expecting below average grain yields at this stage as total growing season rainfall is still well below average but the crops look good for the rainfall that has fallen. Pastures are struggling as recent frosts have pulled back growth.

Southern Albany

Recent rainfall has improved the outlook for the region and growers are now looking at close to or average grain yields for all crops. The exception to this is in the strip from Tambellup / Cranbrook down to Kendenup which is still a little dry. The stored moisture is low in the region for this time of year so there is going to need to be a good amount of rainfall through until spring to push yields higher. One positive with the lower stored moisture is the areas prone to waterlogging and reduced crop yield from waterlogging are at less risk.

The timing of spraying out summer weeds is still showing up in crops, with those paddocks that were sprayed out early, more even and more advanced than those kept green for longer before being sprayed out.

Pasture growth is poor across the whole region and most growers with livestock are hand feeding.

Threats to the current crop are widespread with green peach aphid and turnip aphid in canola and the potential of barley leaf rust infection from the wet areas close to the south coast present in susceptible barley varieties.

Eastern Albany (Lakes Region)

The region has benefited from the rains over the last few weeks and most of the later sown crops waiting for rain have now emerged. There are still dry patches south of Newdegate and Dunn Rock but there are less of these poorer areas now.

Crops are growing well around Lake Grace and Kulin where some of the higher falls of rain have been recorded and areas that have had up to 20mm in the last few weeks are now looking forward to at least average grain yields.

Esperance Zone

The Esperance port zone continues to be the one bright spot in the state with further good rainfall for most of the region on 30th June and 1st July 2017. It is slightly drier in the Salmon Gums and Beaumont areas, but the rest of the zone from Ravensthorpe to Condingup has adequate soil moisture.

Wheat and barley crops have above average grain yield potential at this stage of the season and canola has at least average grain yield potential. Pasture is still tight for stock, and hand feeding is continuing for most growers.

Crops are growing away from any previous bug or grub damage and leaf diseases are at low levels in cereals and canola. Snails continue to be an emerging issue in the region, and there are low levels of turnip aphid and diamond back moth in canola crops.

Season Outlook

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

The past three months have seen very low seasonal rainfall across the agricultural areas. Much of the northern and central regions have received less than 20 percent of normal rain since April. While rain during early July has been welcome, many northern and eastern locations have received only light falls so far.

The seasonal rainfall outlook for July to September 2017 continues a high level of agreement among models for below average rainfall being most likely over most of WA.

Overview:

- Climate models have given up on El Nino in the Pacific Ocean, and are indicating neutral conditions to be likely for the rest of winter and spring. In the Indian Ocean, support for an IOD positive event has weakened, with only half the models expecting its development.
- Current climate conditions in the Pacific and Indian Oceans are neutral, the Pacific having relaxed back from earlier warming trends.
- Seasonal climate outlooks for rainfall over WA from Australian and international climate models are indicating below average rainfall being likely for July to September.
- Atmospheric pressure has been higher than average over the southern Indian Ocean and Australia, and is the likely cause for poor seasonal rainfall so far.

Bureau of Meteorology: Seasonal rainfall outlook July to September 2017

Summary

- July to September rainfall is likely to be below average over parts of south-eastern and south-western Australia.
- July to September day-time and night-time temperatures are likely to be warmer than average for most of Australia. Chances are highest in the southeast and southwest, where there is a greater than 80 percent chance of warmer than average days and nights.
- This outlook is influenced by higher than average pressure over southern Australia predicted during July to September.

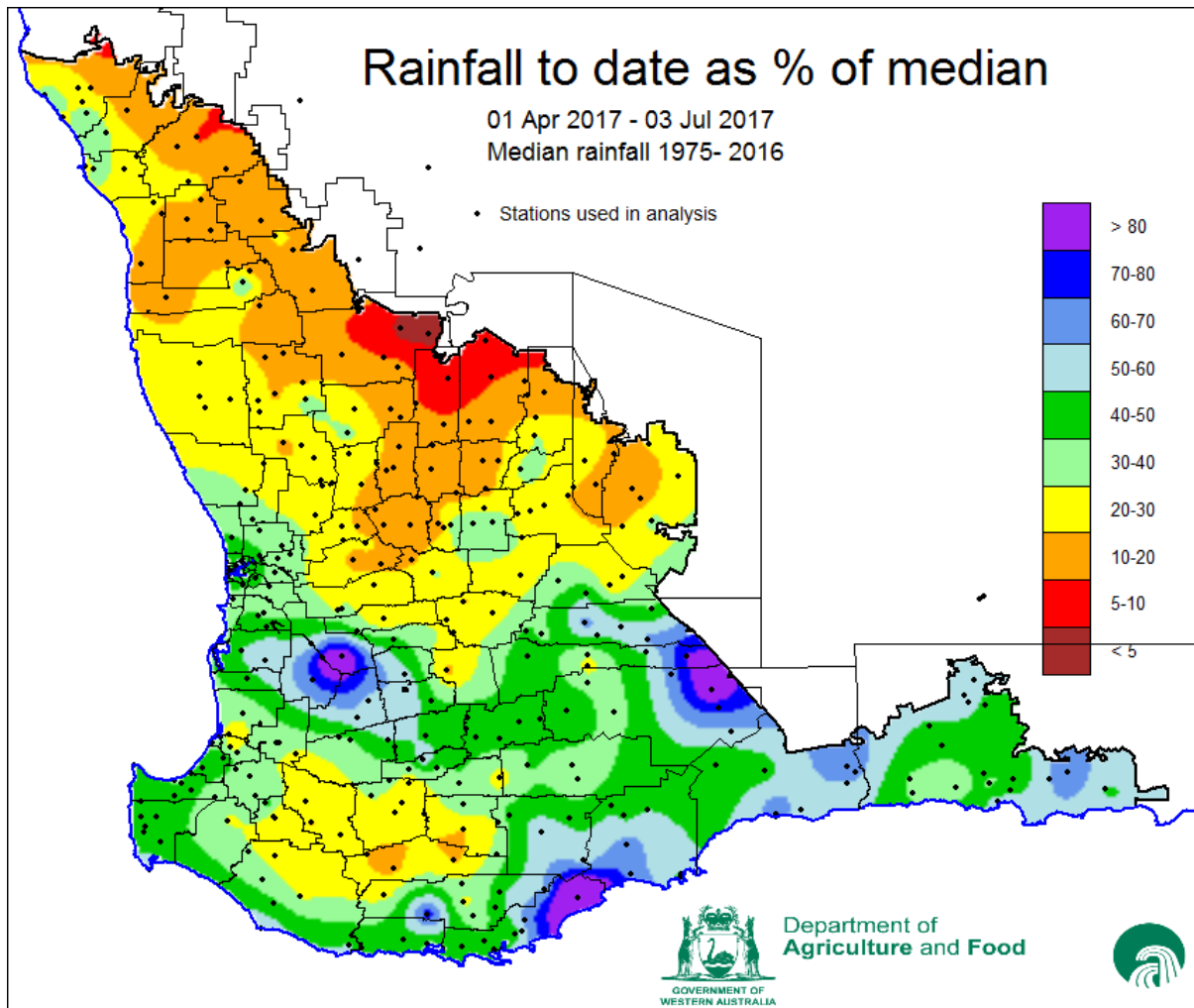


Figure 1. Rainfall totals to date since 1 April 2017, expressed as a percentage of median rainfall. Rainfall data from Bureau of Meteorology and Patched Point database.

Additional information can be sourced from:

- [DPIRD: Seasonal Climate Information](#)
- [DPIRD: Soil Water Tool](#)
- [BoM: WA Seasonal Rainfall Outlook, next 3 months](#)
- [BoM: Decile rainfall for April to June 2017](#)
- [BoM: Landscape soil water balance](#)

GIWA gratefully acknowledges the support of DPIRD and contributions from independent agricultural consultants and agronomists in the production of this report.