

2018 Season Update

The wide spread rain over the majority of central regions of the state immediately following the October Crop Report arrested the slide in grain yields from the very dry September and added at least 500,000T of potential total grain for Western Australia. Since then, the very mild temperatures and lack of heat shock has seen grain yield potential increase further. Paddocks harvested to date are in most cases yielding higher than expected.

The northern agricultural zones where most of the harvest activity is occurring are returning above average grain yields for all crops with some outstanding individual paddock yields being recorded. This trend is expected to continue as harvest gets going in the West Kwinana and West Albany zones over the next few weeks.

Barley grain yields for the East Kwinana zone have generally been disappointing and growers are hoping wheat may have made better use of the rains during early October.

The season has been a roller coaster and grain tonnage estimates have varied widely over the year from a potential record harvest in mid-August to a significant reduction at the end of August and September from frost events and lack of rain, to a big spike in expectations following the late rains in October and continuing mild conditions during grain-fill. Total tonnage for the state is now on track for an above average harvest with some upside to our current estimates.

Barley area planted for the state this year is the largest on record and wheat the lowest on record, this trend is likely to continue as barley expands further to the north in recent years where wheat has been the dominate crop. Canola tonnage in the state will be the lowest for several years and has exposed the fragile crop in a very difficult year.

2018 GIWA WA Crop Production Estimates October (tonnes)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Pulses	State total
Kwinana	4,500,000	2,000,000	470,000	285,000	140,000	5,000	7,400,000
Albany	1,500,000	1,100,000	450,000	230,000	55,000	1,000	3,336,000
Esperance	1,200,000	600,000	300,000	20,000	50,000	40,000	2,210,000
Geraldton	1,900,000	200,000	240,000	15,000	350,000	2,000	2,707,000
Totals	9,100,000	3,900,000	1,460,000	550,000	595,000	48,000	15,653,000
% change to Oct 2018	11.7%	10.5%	2.8%	0%	9.2%	2.1%	9.9%

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.

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Geraldton Zone

Crops harvested to date for the region are yielding higher than expected. The northern agricultural zone missed out on the October rain that fell in the central regions and growers were watching their grain yield potential fall from the very high expectations earlier in the year as time passed. Most were fearing the worst knowing that when the heat came on in the spring, the lack of rain would make it difficult for crops to finish. As it turned out September and October were very mild and these mild temperatures have had a significant effect on allowing crops to mature more slowly and achieve higher yields. Whilst this was also the case for the rest of the grain growing regions, the impact has been greater in the north where there was more of a “bucket” of moisture to access.

Early indications are that the wheat is yielding “as good as it looks” and is closer to earlier predictions with paddocks harvested to date around 3.0T/ha rather than 2.5T/ha. Most barley is yielding at least 3.0T/ha and in the southern higher rainfall regions of the zone, well above this. There is some barley leakage out of the zone to the southern regions where there are more segregations and marketing options for malt. Canola is yielding between 1.5T/ha and 1.8T/ha with some in excess of 2.0T/ha on the deeper better soils. This is well above earlier predictions of 1.2T/ha to 1.4T/ha where the later start and time at flowering was expected to limit top end yields.

The few lupin crops harvested so far are yielding very well with some going close to 3.0T/ha.

The standout all year has been crops on the ameliorated country, with growers now regularly differentiating their crop potential on ameliorated and non-ameliorated paddocks.

Kwinana Zone

The Midlands

Moving to the middle of the grainbelt less crop has been harvested with the general comment around barley crops yielding higher than expected and the few swathed canola crops also yielding higher than expected. Barley yields in the western areas of the region are in the 3.6 to 3.7T/ha range and 2.75T/ha to 3.5T/ha in the east. La Trobe has yielded well in the east although most is going to feed grade. Planet barley is returning some very high grain yields in the western areas on the better soils although screenings are high.

Few wheat paddocks have been harvested although indications during final grain fill point to Scepter possibly out yielding Ninja due to its’ flowering timing coinciding more with the September frost followed by the two to three hot days. Ninja crops look to be around the 2.5T/ha mark and Scepter slightly higher.

Canola grain yields are coming in about 0.1 to 0.2T/ha more than expected with paddocks going 1.5 to 2.0T/ha in the western areas, paddocks in the eastern areas are around 1.0 to 1.5T/ha. Canola oil percentages are more in the mid-range of 44 to 47 per cent rather than the high 40’s as was expected due to the cool mild finish.

Lupins are well podded and look to be around 1.8 to 2.2T/ha potential in the west and 1.4 to 1.6T/ha in the east. Most crops are hanging on and there are no reports of harvested yields at this stage.

The western area of the zone is a relatively large export hay growing region, and the cold weather has held things up and resulted in a drawn out process to get the hay baled up and out of the paddocks. Yields have been exceptional with 7 to 9T/ha for good oaten hay country.

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Overall for the zone, waterlogging damage in the western areas has limited potential grain yields, the medium rainfall zones are looking excellent and the eastern areas are holding up well and will contribute significant tonnages to the region.

Kwinana West

There is very little crop off in the West Kwinana zone. Going on indications further north, most growers are quietly optimistic about the upcoming harvest with grain yields for all crops expected to be above average. The waterlogged areas have slowly recovered and the better areas look to have well above average grain yield potential. Most crops were able to take advantage of the October rains and combined with the slow cool finish should yield very well.

The eastern end of the West Kwinana zone that had an earlier start than the rest of the state has suffered more from the September frost events and most growers who cut the low lying areas for hay are happy they did. Grain yields will be closer to average because of having the top taken off paddock yields due to the frost.

Kwinana East

The barley crops in the region were too advanced to benefit from the rain in October with paddocks harvested to date mostly under 1.5T/ha north of Merredin. The low rainfall areas in the east and north of the region were patchy all year depending on soil type, rain from isolated storms or if it was fallowed last year, resulting in a wide range of grain yield potential. Barley crops in the Kwinana East zone are ranging from barely a ton to over 2T/ha. Moving south and west, yields are pretty reasonable with crops around Kellerberrin down to Bruce Rock going 2.5-3.0T/ha. The wheat looks to have benefited more from the rain as it was less advanced and while many wheat crops were pinching off from the tops of the heads when the rain came, most should out-yield barley.

Canola seems to have held up fairly well being aided by the cool finish to the season and most should yield at least average in the southern regions of the zone.

Lupins have podded up well as they have in most areas of the state and grain yields of 1.5-2.0T/ha are expected.

Albany Zone

Western Albany

The cereals in the western Albany zone look exceptional. Crops are still filling and the recent rain will benefit wheat crops. Barley has 'looked the goods' all year and will return above average grain yields. The barley in the region got off to a good start and held up well in early August when some paddocks became quite waterlogged. Management of most barley crops was excellent for the region this year with the expectation of high prices and this is starting to show up now as the crops get close to harvest.

Canola in most cases will be only just average with expected tonnage down on recent years.

The frost events in September seemed to have had a limited effect on the cereals as most were not advanced enough to be affected. Grain yields in the western areas will hold up the zone, as you move to the eastern areas and southern areas yields fall away due to the dry conditions and frost. For some areas in the eastern areas of the zone grain yields will be well below average, particularly around Gnowangerup, Nyabing and Ongerup.

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Southern Albany

The Southern Albany zone has continued to improve all year following the very difficult start and now has a chance of achieving average grain yields. This is a general overview as individual paddock yields are going to be hugely variable. The canola paddock yield range could be between 400kg/ha to 2.5T/ha depending on establishment density, timing of rain, frost influence and management during the year. The cereals will not have quite this range although they are also going to be variable.

The potential drops off dramatically as you move to the eastern areas of the zone bordering the Esperance Port zone. South of the ranges from Wellstead west, most grain yields for all crops will be average. The extra barley sown late on failed canola crops has been impacted by the very dry September and October. Overall barley tonnage will be down from increased area planted. The wheat is struggling from lack of finishing rain and is starting to go off quicker than growers would have liked. Cereal crops mostly escaped the frost along the coast and will be at least average. Conditions deteriorate dramatically travelling east towards Gardner and north of the ranges from the well below average rainfall and frost.

Eastern Albany (Lakes Region)

The lack of rain all year combined with several frost events has severely limited the grain yield potential for the region. There is a dramatic slide in grain yield potential from north to south with some wheat crops around Kulin, Kondinin and Hyden likely to exceed 3T/ha, as you move south to Lake Grace and Newdegate, wheat will be in the range of 1.2 to 1.5t. Most growers in the northern and eastern areas are expecting above average grain yields for cereals and yields well below average in the southern areas, particularly where there was a lack of rain and several frost events. There are pockets of frost right through the region. First thoughts in September was that barley would be the worst affected although it is now clear canola has taken more of a hit. Wheat has been affected to a greater extent than first thought and parts of paddocks on the lighter soils and low lying areas will push paddock averages down.

Most canola crops look pretty ordinary and grain yields will be closer to 500kg/ha than 1.0T/ha. Whilst lupin crops are short, they are carrying a lot of pods and are expected to go around 1T/ha.

Esperance Zone

The Esperance port zone is still on track for an average year. The good areas in the central region have been promising all year and continue to be on track for some exceptional grain yields. Although the lack of rain in the north and waterlogging along the coast coupled with the very dry and frosty conditions in the eastern areas will put a big hole in total tonnage for the zone.

Barley harvested so far is in the range of 2.5 to 2.7T/ha with most going to feed due to germ-end stain. This is earlier than normal and could indicate barley deliveries may struggle to hit malt grades. The wheat is still green in some areas and would have benefited from the recent rainfall events. Most wheat in the medium and higher rainfall regions will need a blast of hot weather to finish off.

Canola harvested to date is not breaking any records with those looking 1.5T/ha going closer to 1.3T/ha.

Early lentil yields coming in are around the 2.0 to 2.5T/ha range in the non-waterlogged areas. The recent interest in lentil production for the zone will continue on the back of these good results.

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Season Outlook, November 2018

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

DPIRD Climate Summary

The rainfall rollercoaster over cropping regions has continued, with a wet August being followed by a dry September, with an average to wetter October. Crop yield potential has been helped as well by generally mild temperatures over September and October. Frosts in September do not appear to have had the impact initially feared. Figures 1 and 2 below show maximum daytime temperatures across southern WA in September and October. These were mostly near-normal, with fewer hot days.

The seasonal rainfall outlook from DPIRD's statistical model for November 2018 to January 2019 indicates below average rainfall is more likely for western and south-western parts of southern WA. Over 60 per cent of international climate models also have a preference towards drier than normal conditions in this period, with the remainder having a neutral seasonal rainfall outlook.

Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook summary

- The November to January climate outlook, issued 25 October 2018, indicates large parts of Australia are likely to be drier than average.
- November, in particular, is likely to be drier than average in many areas.
- November to January days are very likely to be warmer than average for most of Australia. Nights are also likely to be warmer than average, except for areas surrounding the Great Australian Bight.
- A drier and warmer than average three months would mean a low chance of recovery for drought-affected areas of eastern Australia.
- Current observations and model outlooks indicate the chance of El Niño has increased and a positive Indian Ocean Dipole is likely underway.

Additional information can be sourced from:

[DAFWA: Seasonal Climate Information](#)

[DAFWA: Soil Water Tool](#)

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

[BoM: Decile rainfall for August to October 2018](#)

[BoM: Landscape soil water balance](#)

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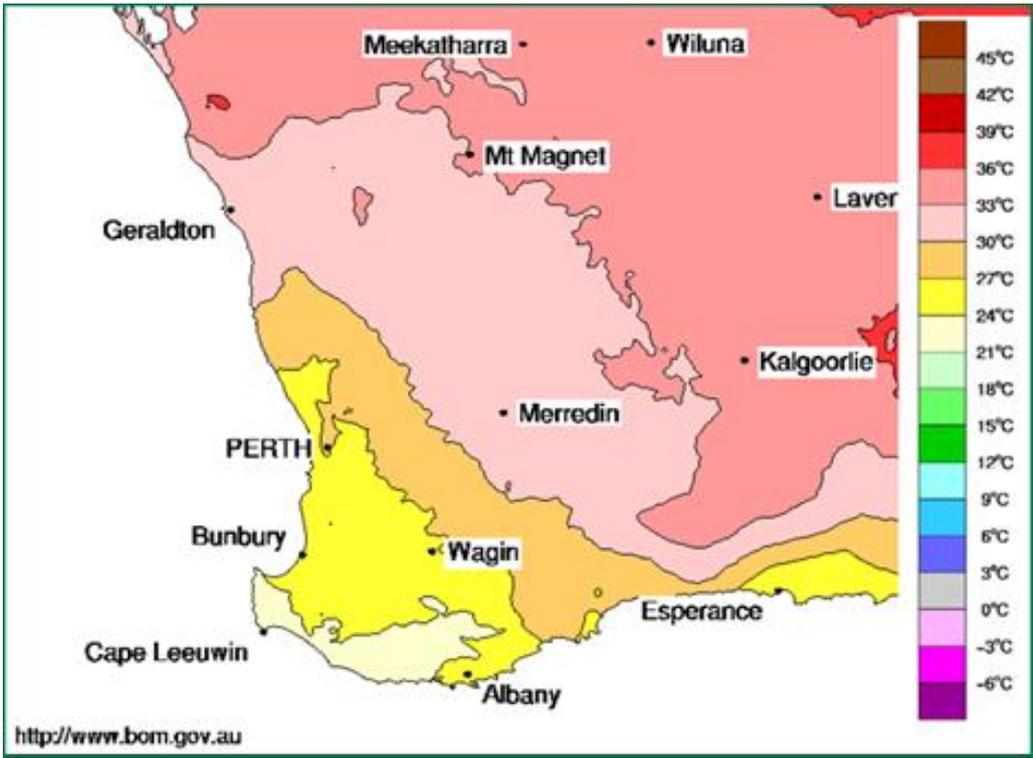


Figure 1. Maximum daytime temperatures for September 2018, enlarged from the original [Bureau of Meteorology](http://www.bom.gov.au) map.

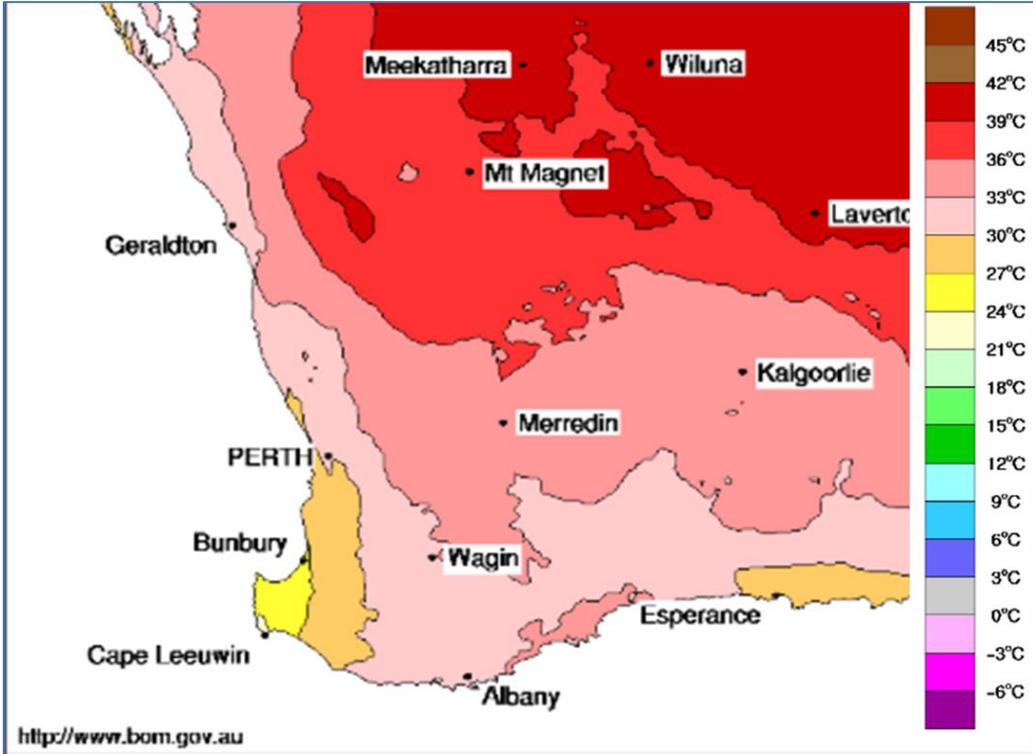


Figure 2. Maximum daytime temperatures for October 2018, enlarged from the original [Bureau of Meteorology](http://www.bom.gov.au) map.

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