

2018 Season Update

The majority of the state is on track for a very good harvest with total crop production estimates increasing by almost 800 thousand tonnes since the August report. This increase has been driven mainly by an increase in tonnage of barley, oats and lupins out of the Kwinana Zone.

The cereals have had a dream run up until now with near perfect growing conditions for most of the winter. There has been little frost damage to crops except in the southern and eastern Lakes District and there has been little heat damage to crops to date.

Total wheat production is expected to be close to 10.1 million tonnes with most of the main wheat growing regions in line for average or above average grain yields. The wheat tonnage could still swing either way over the next three weeks depending on the weather conditions as the large wheat growing areas in the east of the state are starting to run out of moisture to finish off crops.

The barley production for the state could reach four million tonnes for the first time on the back of increased plantings in all regions of the state and favourable growing conditions.

The canola tonnage is likely to be lowest for five years due to decreased plantings from the late break, canola maturing later and poor establishment at the start of the season in the southern regions.

Lupin tonnage is likely to be up to recent levels and oats for milling similar to 2017.

2018 GIWA WA Crop production estimates (tonnes)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Pulses	State total
Kwinana	5,742,000	1,930,000	448,000	215,000	127,000	5,000	8,467,000
Albany	1,120,000	1,110,000	365,000	189,000	55,000	0	2,839,000
Esperance	1,240,000	632,000	319,000	20,000	50,000	48,000	2,309,000
Geraldton	1,980,000	133,000	216,000	15,000	344,000	2,000	2,690,000
Totals	10,082,000	3,805,000	1,348,000	439,000	576,000	55,000	16,305,000
% Change to Aug 2018	1.8%	7.2%	9.6%	25.4%	25.2%	17%	4.9%

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

The Geraldton Port Zone is still on track to produce up to one million tonnes of total grain more than the 2017 if the season continues to be mild for the next few weeks. The potential to exceed the 2016 harvest is considered less as crops are later and whilst still looking good, will need cool temperatures and in some areas one more rain to achieve the total production from the region similar to 2016. The central and western areas of the zone have had almost exactly the same total rainfall for the calendar year as per 2017, the difference this season being perfect timing of rainfall events.

The early varieties of wheat are around mid grain fill and the later varieties in the early stages of grain fill. So far, wheat has not had any significant frost events and the maximum temperatures have not exceeded 30 degrees Celsius, also important to note the lack of hot winds to date. The crops on the heavy country in the east are starting to stress from lack of moisture whilst the remainder of the zone still has some moisture in reserve. Most wheat crops have been managed well this year for disease and fertilizer so while there may be some lower proteins from grain yield dilution if the finish is soft, grain protein should be higher in general than last year particularly off the fallow and sprayed out paddocks from 2017.

There is a noticeable increase in the barley area this year and a decrease in the canola area. This trend is similar across the state and will have an impact on total grain delivery figures across the grainbelt as the barley area will produce more total tonnes than a similar area of canola.

Most canola crops are two weeks later than where one would normally like them for this time of the year, whilst the cereals made up ground during the winter and are mostly only a week behind. The canola is at higher risk of obtaining below average grain yields than the cereals, although with mild conditions over the next two weeks the potential canola tonnage could lift.

Lupins are also behind in growth stage this year and most have only recently finished flowering.

The standout this year has been the performance of all crops on the deep ripped country. These crops will be significantly higher yielding than those on un-ripped sandplain country.

Kwinana Zone

The Midlands

Crops in the Midlands area are all in very good shape. The heavier country away from the coast is exceptional and since the August Crop Report to early September has received good rainfall. The washed out areas along the coast have started to pick up in recent weeks and will yield well without being outstanding.

There has been little frost in the region and the temperatures have been mild so far. The potential grain production is unlikely to exceed that of 2016, and whilst the crops are very good there are more weeds due to the lack of knockdowns used and the lateness of the season. Cereals are very clean from disease and generally have had adequate fertiliser.

The areas in the east of the zone could push tonnages up significantly if there is one more rain and conditions remain mild although if there is no more rain in the next three weeks wheat tonnages will drop off significantly.

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The wheat is generally one week later than normal with Scepter just starting to flower. The barley is out in ear and the canola is still mid to late flower. The frost risk this year is less, although crops are not in the clear just yet. If the hot weather holds off and there are no significant frost events in the next two weeks the zone will produce above average grain yields.

Kwinana West

The crops in the West Kwinana Zone have above average grain yield potential at this stage of the season. The western areas of the zone have suffered from waterlogging although as they have been drying out over the last week they have noticeably picked up. The areas to the east where there was less waterlogging have well above average grain yield potential for cereals. The canola could still struggle to reach average grain yields as it is quite a bit later than normal with most crops still at mid-flower.

The cereals are well tillered and have a lot of biomass. They are very clean for disease and generally appear to have adequate fertiliser. Even though the start to the season was a little later than normal the fairly good prices for wheat and barley coupled with very good growing conditions throughout the winter, have resulted in growers spending to push grain yield and this is really starting to show up now. There can still be significant frost events up until the first week in October or hot winds to take the top off the yields so it is not yet guaranteed, although most growers are set up as well as they could be for this time of the season.

There is noticeably more barley in the region as the crops have come out in ear and less canola moving into the eastern areas of the West Kwinana Zone. This substitution of barley for canola and to some extent wheat will tend to push total tonnages up for the zone as it will do for other regions of the state.

Kwinana East

The eastern areas of the Kwinana Zone have looked good since emergence and this is still the case. The western and southern areas have above average grain yield potential and the far-east and north are still in good shape although some areas are starting to show signs of moisture stress. The wheat is well tillered across the zone and areas that only received single digit rainfall in the last three weeks will need more rain to finish crops.

The lateness of the crops is of more concern for most growers than frost as each day passes. There is not the sub-soil moisture as there is in the north of the state and crops have been getting along nicely for most of the winter with regular rainfall. The wheat is more bulked up than normal and could crash if the warm weather comes in the next few weeks, yet on the other hand could yield above average if there is one more rain and mild temperatures.

This region of the state can produce a lot of wheat and to a lesser extent barley, due to the large areas involved and will largely determine the swing in total grain production for the state depending on weather conditions over the next few weeks.

Albany Zone

Western Albany

The West Albany zone is looking at above average grain yield for cereals following near perfect growing conditions since the break of the season at the end of May. There has been minimal waterlogging in the region which can often reduce individual paddock yields. The crops in general have been well managed as they have in the majority of the grain growing regions of the state with adequate fertiliser and disease control resulting in some crops with very high grain yield potential.

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This region of the state is a major barley growing region and over the last few years even though there has been an increase of barley in the rotation, growers in general have handled the increased disease pressure well and some very high grain yields will be achieved this year if frost damage is minimal.

The canola area is down for the region and the grain yield estimates are also down due to the lateness of crops from the late and difficult start from repeat wind events.

Southern Albany

This area of the state has continued to improve over the last month from the very poor start with unprecedented dry weather and repeat wind events. The areas west of Chester Pass Road, South Stirlings has improved dramatically, although the condition of crops and pastures drops off quickly moving east. Most of the areas west of this line will potentially reach average grain yields for barley and wheat. The barley paddocks sown on or prior to the initial break to the season at the end of May, have gone from good to very good in the last month in these western areas.

The average barley yields in the eastern areas for individual paddocks will be down as many of these were sown following failed canola crops.

The canola area is down by about half and grain yields will be down by up to one tonne per hectare in the eastern areas and close to average yields in the western areas.

Eastern Albany (Lakes Region)

The northern areas of the zone around Kulin and Kondinin are in good shape to reach above average grain yields for cereals, although as you move south in the region the potential drops off to below average for areas around Lake Grace to well below in the border regions of the Esperance and Southern Albany zones. The areas around Ravensthorpe west and north are going to produce well below average grain yields. Some of these areas have suffered from frost in recent days to further add to the very poor year for those growers.

This area of very low rainfall and now frost will have a significant effect on the total state grain production as whilst it is mostly a lower yielding region of the state, the area is now quite large and many growers will produce very little grain.

The wheat is just starting to reach head emergence and barley the start of grain fill. The lupins and canola crops are very late and not expected to yield well unless the region has a very soft finish.

Esperance Zone

The Esperance Port Zone will be down on its record of three million tonnes of total grain from 2017 by up to one third. Most areas of the zone look to be about average with areas on the coast washed out and areas in the north very dry with some crops being cut for hay. In contrast, some areas in the central region are looking well above average.

The whole zone was impacted from a late and difficult start with light rainfall events and repeat heavy wind events. In general, the cereals are performing adequately, whilst the canola is poor. Most growers took a risk adverse approach to the season coming off record tonnages produced in 2017. With the season starting poorly and patchy emergence with many crops, inputs have been held back and crops in general lack top end potential yield except for the central strip away from the coast.

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Season Outlook, September 2018

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

DPIRD Climate Summary

Good rain during July and August has advanced much of the northern and central grainbelt to be close to or above median seasonal rain to date. South-eastern parts of the grainbelt remain well below normal seasonal rain to date, with much of the south coast at decile 2.

Modelled potential crop yield shows the effect of seasonal rain so far in good potential yields over northern and western parts of the central grainbelt. Relatively lower yields are predicted across northern-eastern, and southern parts (see Figure 1). This model uses seasonal rainfall only and does not account for temperature or disease impacts.

The seasonal rainfall outlook from DPIRD's statistical model for September to November indicates below average rainfall is more likely. A strong majority of international climate models also have a preference towards drier than normal conditions in this period, with over 90% of models indicating below average seasonal rainfall being more likely.

Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook summary

- The spring (September to November) climate outlook, issued 30 August 2018, shows drier than average conditions are likely for southern Australia extending up through inland NSW and into central Australia. September and October are likely to be drier than average more broadly across most of the country.
- Spring days are likely to be warmer than average for Australia.
- With clear skies likely, the risk of frost and cold nights continue in the south, but overall, warmer than average minimum temperatures are likely in many locations.
- A drier and warmer than average spring would likely mean intensification of the existing drought conditions across parts of eastern Australia and an increase in bushfire potential.
- The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) are currently neutral. However, current observations and model outlooks indicate El Niño and a positive IOD could develop in spring.

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 June to August 2018](#)

[BoM: Landscape soil water balance](#)

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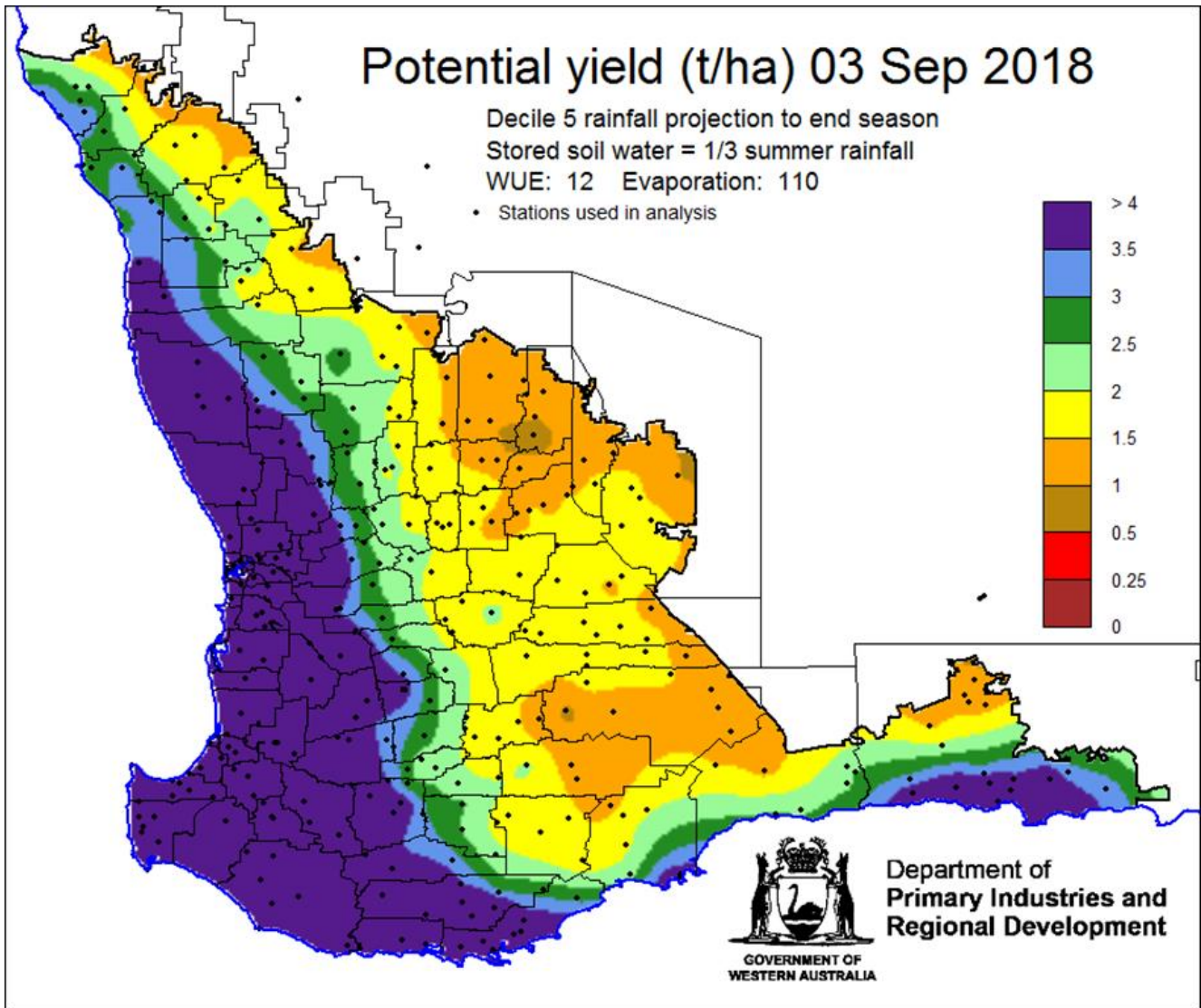


Figure 1. Modelled potential crop yield from DPIRD's Potential Yield model. This uses total rainfall from 1 April to 3 September 2018, and assuming average rainfall for the rest of the growing season. A water use efficiency value of 12 kg/mm/ha is applied.

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