

WA planting area estimates (hectares)*

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Field pea	State total
Kwinana	2,495,000	405,000	325,000	119,000	66,000	13,000	
Albany	693,000	337,000	265,000	95,000	16,000	6,000	
Esperance	491,000	255,000	273,000	3,000	16,000	30,000	
Geraldton	1,035,000	41,000	150,000	5,000	160,000	1,000	
Totals	4,714,000	1,038,000	1,013,000	222,000	258,000	50,000	7,295,000
2012	4,276,000	1,018,000	964,000	219,000	302,000	62,000	6,841,000

*This data is indicative only of grower intentions and will change as seeding progresses

Summary

The forecast crop area for Western Australia remains basically unchanged from the April report, with favourable seasonal conditions being experienced across most of the Port zones.

Rainfall this week has boosted confidence in the yield potential of all crops. Soil moisture conditions are currently good in the Geraldton and Esperance Port zones, average in most of the Albany and west Kwinana zones, but below average in the east Kwinana zone. Seeding is expected to continue without delay through to completion.

The majority of the wheat crop is expected to be sown to Mace, possibly around 60%, with Calingari being the next major variety.

Kwinana zone

In the west Kwinana Port zone, sowing of Canola and lupins is expected to be finished this week, after being sown dry with limited germination. Some barley has been sown, about 20% to date, and wheat sowing will now commence.

However, the limited rain has proved a knockdown opportunity, probably the first in a few years. Fallowed areas are wet enough to sow and get a germination.

This week's rainfall totals ranged from 35mm at Wongan Hills to 25mm around Northam. Sowing will now continue with increased pace.

The east Kwinana zone has average soil moisture in the area from Kellerberrin to Burracoppin. Further east, it becomes drier with little soil moisture out to Southern Cross. The week's rainfall has been light with 12mm at Kellerberrin and only 8mm at Southern Cross. Barley and canola areas have been sown with patchy germination depending on soil moisture. Wheat sowing is in full swing, however further rain is needed to ensure a full germination.

Albany Zone

Rainfall was variable in the Lakes region of the Albany Port zone, varying from 15mm in western districts to 10mm in the east. Southern districts received lighter falls, while further to the coast rainfall was lighter still.

Around 90% of the Canola and lupin area is sown, with only 20% of barley sown. Growers have held back barley sowing to suit the calendar. Rainfall has been too light to provide wet sowing opportunities with confidence of a strong germination.

Dry sown crops have germinated well on the rain to date. Soil moisture is adequate without being excessive. Seeding is expected to continue unabated until all crops have been planted.

The south coast districts are finishing seeding Canola areas this week, and moving on to feed barley varieties, and finishing with malt varieties starting next week.

In the Katanning to Wagin districts, the cropping work rate ranges from none to working 24 hour shifts. Canola is the main crop sown to date. West of Woodanilling, cropping hasn't started but this is normal for the area.

Rainfall was light at Katanning this week with 6mm, 14mm at Kojonup and 20mm at Nyabing. Good falls were recorded further north at Williams, Narrogin and Pingelly.

DAFWA soil water maps indicate above average levels in most of the Albany zone.

Esperance Zone

Overall, the Esperance Port Zone season is progressing very well. Cropping programs are well advanced with growers having to temper enthusiasm to not plant everything too early. It is estimated that 55% of the crop is in the ground. This includes canola, barley and some wheat. Even field peas are going in, driven mainly by the reduced blackspot risk.

The risk of weather damage to early matured wheat is the primary reason to hold back on wheat sowings. Early sown barley is deemed less risky as most varieties are suited to a longer season than wheat. This highlights the lack of varietal choices based on maturity of wheat. Some Yitpi is being planted for this reason.

This week's rain was light, being less than 12mm in all districts. April rain was about 25mm on average, with Hopetoun receiving about 50mm.

Geraldton Zone

Prior to this week, much of the Geraldton port zone was dry with virtually no deep soil moisture. Recent rains have changed all that with 35 to 60mm across the entire region.

The rate of seeding varies across the Geraldton zone with some at 75% completion and others barely started. The 20th of May is the usual target finish date to maximise yield potential. Approximately 5% of wheat sown in the zone has already emerged.

Given the recent rain, the expected area of Canola sown is now likely to be achieved. The final lupin area sown in this zone will now be similar to that sown in 2012, with some planned areas set aside for planting lupins now being sown to wheat.

Weather ahead - courtesy Dr David Stephens, AEGIC

The two conditions which are pivotal for promoting winter rainfall are continuing to build strength in the Indian Ocean. The warm water to the north of the Pilbara and Kimberley coast is steady while the water off the west coast is slowly cooling. Generally low air pressure to the north is aiding the possibility of cold fronts rising high enough to affect a larger part of the west coast.

Additional information can be sourced from:

- **DAFWA Statistical Seasonal forecast**
- **BoM- WA Seasonal Rainfall Outlook: probabilities to June 30 2013**
- **BoM month to date rainfall for WA**

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