

Summary

Grain production in WA for the coming harvest is currently forecast at a total of just over 14 million tonnes.

This is a decline of about 800,000 tonnes, or 6%, from the GIWA forecast made at the beginning of September. Most of this decline is due to the poor performance of crops in eastern parts of the Geraldton zone and the east Kwinana zone.

Rainfall across Western Australia's grain belt in September was above average with totals of over 50 mm in western districts, and between 20 and 30 mm common in inland districts. Temperatures were mild to warm, which combined with the rainfall, helped to revive crops after the hot and windy weather in August and early September.

There have been no reports of significant damage from frost in the southern half. This is the second season in a row where frosts will not have an adverse impact on yields of cereals and canola. While the risk remains to the middle of October, weather forecasts suggest there is a very low risk of any future significant frost events.

Crop growth is generally ahead of 'normal' due to the warm temperatures throughout winter. Consequently, harvest has commenced in the northern parts of the Geraldton zone and will commence shortly in the Kwinana zone, mostly in drier districts. More generally, harvest will commence about two weeks earlier than normal across the state from late October to mid-November in all other zones.

Yield potential is above average to well above average in the Albany zone, and in the west Kwinana and western Geraldton zones. Yields will be below average to poor in the east Kwinana and in the eastern parts of the Geraldton zone. The Esperance zone will deliver average yields.

Late weed control is a current concern for growers along with continued control of native budworm in lupins and canola. Generally, pests and diseases have not had a significant impact on crops in 2014.

WA planting area estimates (hectares)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Field pea	State total
Kwinana	2,463,000	432,000	437,000	108,000	82,000	5,000	
Albany	666,000	361,000	366,000	65,000	13,000	3,000	
Esperance	398,000	242,000	255,000	2,000	9,000	15,000	
Geraldton	965,000	28,000	189,000	5,000	176,000	1,000	
Totals	4,492,000	1,063,000	1,247,000	180,000	280,000	24,000	7,285,000

WA Production estimates (tonnes)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Field pea	State total
Kwinana	4,238,000	1,105,000	566,000	277,000	141,000	12,000	6,339,000
Albany	1,738,000	1,231,000	581,000	226,000	18,000	5,000	3,799,000
Esperance	857,000	588,000	416,000	4,000	18,000	21,000	1,904,000
Geraldton	1,491,000	48,000	203,000	6,000	223,000	1,700	1,972,700
Totals	8,324,000	2,972,000	1,766,000	513,000	400,000	39,700	14,014,700
% change August	-8.4%	-1.7%	-0.6%	-0.6%	-2.2%	0.0%	-5.6%

Early grain quality reports from the Geraldton port show high protein levels and screenings in wheat and low oil content in canola. This is not likely to be the trend for the bulk of the WA grain crop as soil moisture conditions are adequate to ensure good grain quality, apart from the east Kwinana zone, and at least average oil content in canola throughout the rest of the grain belt. Cereal protein percentages may be low in high yielding crops in west coastal districts and across the Albany zone with high yields diluting the protein potential.

Kwinana Zone

Similar to the last 2013 harvest, crops in the west coastal regions of the west Kwinana zone have very good yield potential but this declines to poor yield potential further east. Crops in the Dandaragan to Badgingarra area, and Bolgart to Calingiri area have above average potential. Crop yields in the Milling to Watheroo districts are expected to be average, while yields will be below average in crops from Wubin to Dalwallinu to Wongan Hills.

Further south good yield potential exists in crops from Toodyay along Great Eastern highway to Meckering and declines incrops further east to Kellerberrin.

Canola crops in the coastal districts has similar yield potential to 2013 and after successful sclerotinia control, yields may be better. Cereal crop yields will also be above average.

Soil moisture is good after average September rainfall in west and southern districts but low in the eastern districts of the zone. Grain quality is forecast to be average to good. Canola oil levels should be at least average with the mild to warm temperatures as the crops have matured.

Harvest has commenced in the Dalwallinu district, next week in the Miling and east Moora districts, while canola swathings is occurring in the coastal districts. This is much earlier than normal and reflects the warm temperatures throughout winter that advanced crop growth.

In the East Kwinana zone, conditions throughout winter have been dry after a strong start to the season in late April and May. Crops in the districts north and east of Doodlakine to Merredin are rated as mostly poor with low yield potential. The exceptions are crops in the Beacon to Bonnie Rock districts which shows slightly below average yield potential.

The crops in the Mukinbudin, Yilgarn and Westonia districts are very poor with some crops unharvestable.

South of Great Eastern highway, crops are better with average to above yield potential in the Corrigin to Bruce Rock to Narembeen districts.

Soil moisture is generally low after below average rainfall in September and this may impact on grain quality.

Harvest activities will ramp up in mid-October starting with barley and lupins in the northern districts.

Albany Zone

In the Lakes region, September rainfall has been above average and provided good soil moisture across the region. Drier conditions exist at north east Hyden and north of Kondinin to Narembeen. The complete absence of any frost, with mostly mild day temperatures, has enabled the promise of all crops delivering very high yields.

While the frost risk is now low, it hasn't entirely diminished. Any further rainfall events will be of limited benefit to yield potential with most crops well advanced and starting to mature.

There is an expectation that grain quality will be good in terms of grain size across the entire region but likely to have low protein levels. Most cereal crops are short of the required quantity of nitrogen to meet protein parameters of the higher value wheat and barley grades.

Previously weed free crops now have a significant weed burden after late germinations of ryegrass and radish. Budworm has required control in canola and lupins, but overall pests and diseases have had no impact this season.

Harvest of field peas and canola in the north east Albany zone will start in late October.

Crops in the southern Albany zone continue to be in very good condition with strong yield potential in almost all districts.

Recent rainfall events of around 15 mm have maintained good soil moisture providing more than adequate amount for grain fill. The South Stirlings district experienced a very dry August which is likely to lead to reduced yield potential in comparison to neighbouring districts in the zone.

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Wheat and barley is at grain fill stage with crops in the eastern districts more advanced than the western districts. Yield potential looks to be well above average. Canola has finished flowering in all crops and is setting pods. Yield potential appears to be above average.

Pests and diseases have had a minimal impact so far this season. To date some Budworm has been noticed in the north of the zone. Growers will be alert to Armyworm in barley in the coming weeks.

Harvest will be slightly earlier than normal and commence in early November on swathed canola.

Esperance Zone

Overall, yield potential remains similar in Esperance.

The Esperance zone received widespread rainfall in late September following some hot and windy weather. While the heat caused some damage in the mallee districts, the rainfall was sufficient to revive average yield potential in cereals and canola. Grain quality is likely to be adequate to good. Cereal protein should be adequate to meet the parameters of APW grade for wheat and Malt for barley. Soil moisture has been barely adequate all season with little deep moisture. This has restricted crop growth, along with growers ability to supply nitrogen and therefore the yield potential is likely to be about average at best.

As in other zones, pests and diseases have had a minimal impact on crop growth this season, other than budworm requiring control in canola and field peas.

Geraldton Zone

Coastal districts crops remain in very good condition in the Geraldton zone after average September rainfall. Districts east of the Great Northern highway and north of Geraldton also received average September rainfall, but in most cases this arrived too late to make any substantial difference to the poor yield potential of wheat and canola crops in these districts.

Harvest commenced very early in crops north of Geraldton. Wheat yields are reported to be around 1 t/ha with high protein levels. Harvest has commenced in districts south to Coorow in lupins and swathed canola with reports of just average yields.

Grain quality is likely to be good in all districts away from the north east of the zone on the back of recent rain. While not improving yield potential, soil moisture is adequate and is expected to provide good grain quality.

Weather ahead - courtesy David Stephens AEGIC

The weather pattern for WA is showing a tendency towards dry weather with generally high pressures predicted in the Great Australian Bight. For WA this, and the generally warm water temperatures to the west indicate dry weather over the foreseeable period, meaning the weather is likely to remain dry for harvest.

The average September rainfall was helped by the high pressure systems being placed more easterly near Victoria than usual.

An El Nino pattern for eastern Australia is continuing to show signs of forming but, to date, hasn't done so. Air pressure trends in the eastern Pacific are consistent with an El Nino but those north of Australia are not. However, the recent dry weather in southern NSW and Victoria in the last month is consistent with a developing El Nino.

A confirmed El Nino pattern is possible by Christmas.

Additional information can be sourced from:

- [**AEGIC: Yield and Seasonal Forecasting**](#)
- [**DAFWA: Statistical Seasonal forecast**](#)
- [**BoM: WA Seasonal Rainfall Outlook October to December 2014**](#)
- [**BoM: Month to date rainfall for WA**](#)
- [**16 day rainfall outlook \(WX maps\)**](#)
- [**BoM: Decile rainfall for September 2014**](#)

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