

Summary - The 2017 Season as at September

Most grain growing regions of the state continued to receive rain and favourable growing conditions during August. However, due to the lateness of the season and variable crop growth from the patchy start, it is still too early to tell whether these more recent favourable conditions will have a significant impact on final tonnages.

To achieve current estimated tonnages the mild conditions of the season over the last few months will need to continue along a similar path and with more rain needed for most regions during September.

Overall, barley grain yield potential is looking better than wheat, as many of the early wheat crops “ran up” during the dry period in May/June and do not have the same density as barley.

Canola and lupin crops are being sprayed out for weed control where grain yield potential is too low to continue within the northern and eastern regions of the state.

Grain quality concerns are emerging with crops being late for this time of the year. Wheat and barley could be low in weight and protein as fertiliser has been modest and top up applications have been late.

Grain yield potential has improved in the Lakes region, and the Esperance zone is still on track for at least above average grain yields.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development reports that projections from climate models from September to November are indicating below median seasonal rainfall, though the probabilities are not strong. It appears most likely outcomes will be near-normal or drier rainfall, and models are not indicating the likelihood of a wetter than normal spring for southern Western Australia.

September 2017 GIWA WA Crop Production Estimates (tonnes)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Field pea	State total
Kwinana	2,500,000	970,000	300,000	248,000	146,000	18,000	4,182,000
Albany	1,200,000	890,000	390,000	180,000	58,000	4,000	2,722,000
Esperance	1,150,000	652,000	430,000	10,000	24,000	20,000	2,286,000
Geraldton	750,000	150,000	65,000	3,000	100,500	900	1,069,400
Totals	5,600,000	2,662,000	1,185,000	441,000	328,500	42,900	10,259,400
% Change to Aug 2017	1.7%	-1.3%	1%	0.5%	6%	0%	0.9%

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 rain in the north of the state was extensive during the last week of August. The rains gave crops that struggled all year a chance of returning more than just seed as was the case a few weeks ago. There are still areas where there will be either no crops or very low yielding crops, but this area is decreasing slightly. The rain was more concentrated north of Carnamah with a dry strip between Wongan Hills and Carnamah only receiving light falls.

The rainfall in August resulted in crop production estimates to remain around the same or slightly increased from last month. September will need to have favourable conditions for the crop production estimates to be realised.

The majority of lupin and canola crops in the north and eastern areas have been sprayed out to control weeds. Lupins in the western areas could potentially return 80 per cent of average yields but the total tonnage for the zone will be down significantly from last year.

Canola crops in the western areas of the zone that have not been sprayed out are now requiring spraying for aphids and diamond back moth.

Kwinana Zone

The Midlands

Crops in the western areas of the Midlands region are continuing to be on track for grain yields of around 80 per cent of average or close to average but central and eastern areas of the region still have very low grain yield potential. There are large areas of the major noodle growing locations that will harvest little more than grain for seed.

Canola and lupin crops around Dalwallinu are being sprayed out for weed control. Cereals east of Moora on the good sandplain are starting to struggle for moisture and the next few weeks will be critical in determining their final potential.

There have been a few frost events during August, but as most crops are later than in previous years, there is not expected to be any major impacts on grain yield from these events.

Disease levels are low in cereals but the higher potential yielding canola crops are being sprayed for sclerotinia in the western areas of the region.

Kwinana West

The western areas of the zone are still on track for average grain yields for most crops. Cereal crops in these higher potential yield areas have had top-up applications of nitrogen to ensure grain protein does not fall away. Sub-soil moisture is adequate to assist in finishing crops if these areas have average rainfall and mild temperatures during grain fill. Noodle crops in the western areas of the zone have been managed to meet specifications although tonnages will be down on last year. The central/eastern and northern areas of the zone are where most of the states' noodle wheat is grown, and it is these areas that have suffered the greatest impact from the dry season.

The crop yield potential for all crops drops off as you go east with estimated potential 70 to 80 per cent of average. There are pockets of higher potential yielding crops around Kellerberrin and Corrigin but crops become variable in their yield potential further east.

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Cereal diseases are low and at this stage barley generally has higher grain yield potential than wheat.

Canola is still flowering and there is some spraying for diamond back moth and aphids, particularly in the lower rainfall areas to protect what grain yield potential there is. Sclerotinia leaf lesions are showing up in canola but the incidence is low and most canola will not require spraying.

Oat crops for hay are close to being ready to cut and oats for grain in the western regions of the zone have picked up in the last month and look to be on track for average yields.

Kwinana East

In the Kwinana East zone, not much has changed for the lower rainfall regions over the last month. Recent rainfall events will not have much impact on grain yield as most crops are late with very low potential.

Some late radish spraying in cereals is being carried out to keep paddocks clean for next year.

Canola and lupin crops that are late and too patchy to be worth harvesting are being sprayed out to keep paddocks clean.

Production of all grains in this region will be significantly down on last year.

Albany Zone

Western Albany

The western areas of the Albany port zone are continuing to be on track for at least average grain yields for all crops. There have been good growing conditions during August with adequate rainfall to keep crops going well. Areas that normally suffer from waterlogging are less this year and this will help keep tonnages up even though the season is later than in recent years.

Disease levels in all crops are relatively low for the region and top-up nitrogen continues to be applied to keep protein levels up.

There are no major insect threats in this region at present.

Southern Albany

There has been minimal change in the southern areas of the Albany port zone from last month with good conditions during August for crop growth. Grain yield potential for all crops is still on track for at least average grain yields and if the season continues to be favourable over the next month, grain yield potential could be above average.

Crops are being managed for an average year with pests and diseases being controlled and top-up nitrogen being applied to those crops in need.

Waterlogging has not been a major problem in the region, as it often can be, and this will help in keeping whole paddock grain yields up.

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Eastern Albany (Lakes Region)

The region continues to be on track for average grain yields with some areas now predicting above average grain yield potential.

Good rainfalls in August and mild temperatures for most of the region have benefited all crops and the few frosts have been minor and are not expected to have significant effects on grain yield. Some of the areas from Pingaring to Varley that were struggling have picked up in the last month and some crops that were going to be sprayed out will be kept and continue through to harvest.

Most of the region has a good profile of soil moisture and is well placed to handle warm days and a drop off in rainfall during spring. There will be significant areas of the region where wheat will have the potential reach two tonnes per hectare.

There is some powdery mildew and yellow spot in wheat but levels are low and not expected to have an impact on grain yield. Barley is the pick of the crops and will generally out yield wheat at this stage of the season. There is some leaf rust in barley crops but it has come in late and is not expected to impact on yield. There has been a lot of re-tillering of wheat crops after they bolted earlier in the season making it difficult to predict grain yields at this point. The noodle area has dropped off as delivery sites were reduced in recent years and this year is still in a re-building phase where growers are mostly bulking up seed for their own plantings rather than intending on delivering the grain.

Canola is in full flower and even though a bit thin and patchy from the variable start, most have filled in and have reasonable grain yield potential. There is some boarder spraying for aphids going on and diamond back moth numbers are building up to levels that may require spraying.

Lupin grain yield potential has increased over the last month and most will now be worth harvesting.

Esperance Zone

The season is continuing to track well for most of the region with crops bulking up in August following regular rainfall and mild temperatures.

Most crops look good and have above average grain yield potential, but the season will need to continue to track as it has for the last few months to push grain yields higher. A large contribution to the estimated tonnages is from dryer areas of the region where they are experiencing a very good season to date. There have been some frost events recently in these areas and rainfall has dropped off so grain yield estimates for wheat, barley and canola have been reduced slightly from last month. Some cereal paddocks may end up with 30 to 50 per cent losses from frost depending on the time of flowering at the time of frost events.

Leaf disease has been a major problem for some growers in the area, depending on variety and density of the crop canopy. There has been significant areas of wheat sprayed at least once for powdery mildew and some crops sprayed multiple times. Spot type net blotch and leaf rust in barley has generally been kept under control with fungicides and as is the case with areas of the grainbelt further north, barley looks to have higher grain yield potential than wheat.

Canola grain yield potential is looking good and sclerotinia has not required spraying in most crops as was expected previously.

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Season Outlook

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Most areas in Western Australia recorded near-average or better rainfall for August. While welcome, seasonal rainfall to date remains generally below average across the agricultural areas. Much of the northern and central regions have received less than 40 per cent of normal rain since April. Early September has seen some frost events across central and eastern agricultural areas; see Figure 1, while warming daytime temperatures are appearing across the north and east. Projections from climate models for September to November are indicating below median seasonal rainfall, though the probabilities for that are not strong. Most likely outcomes appear to be near-normal or drier rainfall, but no models are indicating the likelihood of a wetter than normal spring for southern WA.

There is little agreement among the models for seasonal temperatures, as regional climate indicators such as El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) are neutral.

Potential wheat yield, based on observed and projected seasonal rainfall continues to show a similar pattern from last month. Yield potential remains low in the north-east and higher across southern parts and the South Coast. Estimates for individual locations can be obtained from the DPIRD Potential Yield Tool (see link below).

Overview:

- Current climate conditions in the Pacific and Indian Oceans are neutral, the Pacific having relaxed back from earlier warming trends. Model projections indicate a continuation of neutral conditions in these oceans for the rest of 2017.
- Seasonal climate outlooks for rainfall over WA from Australian and international climate models are still indicating below average rainfall being more likely for September to November, though the strength of the probabilities has eased from earlier in the growing season.
- Some frosts have been recorded in early September.

Bureau of Meteorology

Seasonal rainfall outlook for September to November 2017.

Summary:

- Spring (September to November) rainfall is likely to be below average for southwest Australia. Parts of southeast Queensland and east Gippsland have a slightly increased chance of a wetter than average spring. For most of the country, there are roughly equal chances of a wetter or drier spring.
- Both ENSO and the IOD are neutral, resulting in no strong or widespread outlook for wetter or drier conditions.
- Higher pressures are favoured south of Australia, meaning greater easterly flow across southern Australia. This would favour increased rainfall on the east coast, and drier conditions in the west.

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- Historical outlook accuracy for September to November is moderate for most of Australia, but low in northern and western parts of WA.

Additional information can be sourced from:

[DPIRD: Seasonal Climate Information](#)

[DPIRD: Potential Yield Tool](#)

[DPIRD Extreme Weather Events Tool](#)

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

[BoM: Decile rainfall for April to August 2017](#)

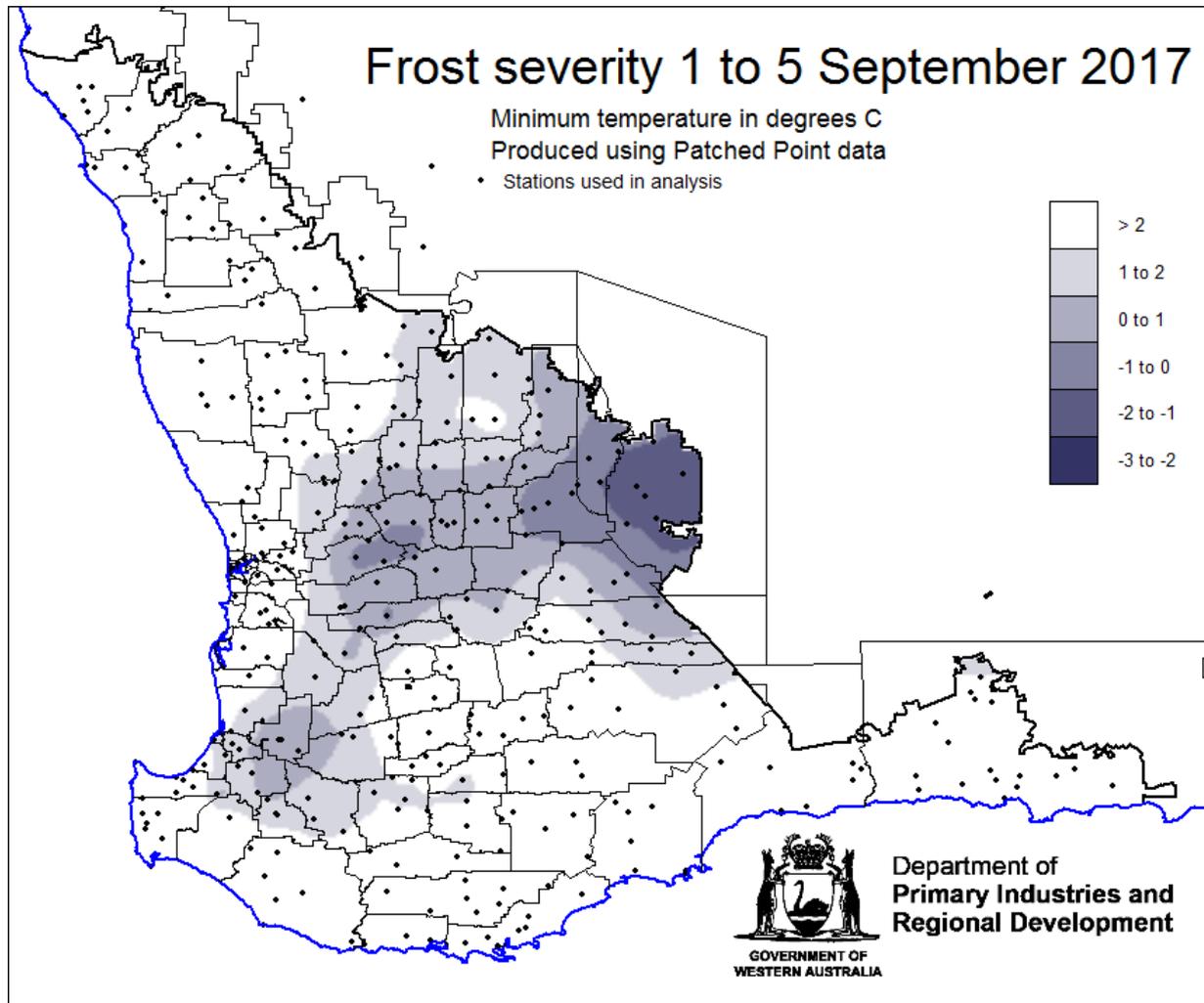


Figure 1. Minimum air temperature recorded at DPIRD and BoM weather stations for 1 to 5 September 2017. This does not show duration of low temperatures; see DPIRD's Extreme Events Tool.

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