

2018 Season Update

Good general rains have fallen in the Geraldton, West Kwinana and West Albany port zones. The east Kwinana port zone has also received reasonable falls of rain enabling most crops to emerge.

Rainfall has been light in the Lakes Region, with more rain needed in the south of Western Australia's grain belt over the next few weeks to get a full emergence of crops.

The rainfall in the South Albany and Esperance port zones has been very low to nil in the last month and these areas will need good general rains soon to have any chance of returning average grain yields based on the dry winter rainfall forecast.

The seasonal rainfall outlook from the Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development's (DPIRD) statistical model for June to August shows a preference towards below average rainfall. Half of international climate models have a neutral outlook for this period, meaning no preference towards either wetter or drier than normal conditions. About a third of models are indicating below average seasonal rainfall being more likely.

Most of the areas in the north and eastern wheat belt of Western Australia that delivered little or no grain last year have now had enough rain for crops to emerge.

The state barley area is forecast be a record high of 1.6m hectares driven by price, substitution from canola due to the lack of early rain and re-sowing of wind damaged paddocks.

Canola is forecast be down 300,000 hectares from 2017 due to the lack of early rains to ensure a long enough growing season to return a profit.

2018 WA Crop Area Estimates (hectares)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Pulses	State total
Kwinana	2,650,000	550,000	470,000	140,000	130,000	10,000	3,950,000
Albany	780,000	600,000	280,000	130,000	40,000	3,000	1,833,00
Esperance	510,000	350,000	210,000	10,000	10,000	20,000	1,110,000
Geraldton	920,000	110,000	130,000	10,000	180,000	1,000	1,351,00
Totals	4,860,000	1,610,000	1,090,00	290,000	360,000	34,000	8,244,000
% change from May 2018	0.2%	5.2%	-9.2%	0%	0%	0%	-0.2%

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.

GIWA gratefully acknowledges the support of DPIRD, CBH, CSIRO and contributions from independent agricultural consultants and agronomists in the production of this report.

Geraldton Zone

Germination of cereal crops across most of the zone have been good to excellent. The majority of the Geraldton port zone is in good shape with rain that has fallen to date. The eastern areas that missed out on crops last year have received several good falls of rain and have crops out of the ground.

The final canola area is down in the eastern areas of the region due to the lack of early rain, this area has been substituted by wheat. The canola area in the western portion of the zone is as planned or slightly up. The lupin area is up significantly from last year and back to similar hectares planted in previous years. The area of barley in the zone has been steadily rising over recent years and is estimated to increase again this year.

Kwinana Zone

The Midlands

The break to the season has been one of the best for many years and even though it was a few days later than usual, the warm temperatures following the rain have resulted in crops jumping out of the ground. The rainfall east of Dalwallinu has been lower although most of the region west of Dalwallinu has received 25-70mm of rain to date. Some of the western areas around Badgingarra and Dandaragan suffered some wash damage from the initial rainfall event during the last week in May. Whilst the wind associated with the rain caused some damage it was mostly confined to un-anchored stubbles.

The canola area is estimated to be down a few percentage points from last month as a result of substitution for cereals due to the lack of rain in early May. Canola establishment has been slow and patchy due to furrow fill from wind events prior to the rain. Portions of paddocks have required re-sowing although the area is small.

Lupin establishment has been average and cereal establishment has been good even where there has been some wind damage.

Regenerating and newly sown pastures have established well and most sheep will only require feeding for a few more weeks.

There has been a significant flush of weeds with the rain and growers who had country that was un-sown prior to the rain have held back planting until the weeds emerged to apply herbicide.

Kwinana West

The majority of the region has received good falls of rain over the last two weeks with the country greening up “overnight”. Wind blast associated with the rainfall events has resulted in some crops taking a while to emerge with small areas re-sown from being buried too deep to come through.

The estimated area of cereals, canola and lupins from the start of the season has gone in as planned.

A large proportion of the cereal area was sown dry with growers opting to continue sowing as the prediction of rain in the last week in May became more likely. Some paddocks were sitting in dry soil for up to six weeks with pre-emergent herbicides and are requiring a top up to control emerging weeds.

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With the forecast of more rain to come in the short term the region is set up for a good year if average rainfall is received from now on.

Kwinana East

The break to the season extended to those areas of the eastern and northern areas of the zone that missed out on rains last year. Rainfall has been lower in the far eastern areas although most areas have had enough to get crop out of the ground.

The area of cereal has gone in as planned. Canola area is down significantly from last year, with many paddocks substituted with wheat, or re-sown wheat on wheat as the start to the season became later.

At this early stage of the season, growers who received summer rain and have some stored soil moisture are set up for at least an average year.

Albany Zone

Western Albany

There have been good soaking rains in the last two weeks, with most of the region receiving 50-70mm of rainfall. Cereal emergence has been excellent, especially for later sown wheat paddocks planted into moisture. Barley emergence has been good and on track for at least average grain yields. Some of the intended barley area has been substituted for pasture as the break to the season became later.

Canola emergence is variable and slow to come through due to furrow fill from strong winds associated with recent weather fronts. Canola yield potential is estimated to be below average at this stage of the season due to the lateness of the opening rains and reduced plant density. The canola area is estimated to be down by about 5 per cent from previous estimates.

Southern Albany

High winds over the last month along with very little rain for most of the region in a line south from Cranbrook to Jerramungup and the western end of the Esperance port zone to Ravensthorpe, has resulted in severely damaged emerged or emerging canola crops and to a lesser extent damaged cereal crops from wind blast and furrow fill.

Decaying root mass in stubbles from rains over harvest last year has contributed to un-grazed lighter soils blowing. Grazed or burnt stubbles particularly on the lighter soils have severe gouging and drift over a wide area of the zone.

The “perfect storm” combination of decaying root systems from rain over harvest, the lack of summer rain for sheep feed, together with increased stock numbers resulting in less standing stubble, and unprecedented severe repeat wind events without any significant rainfall, has resulted in buried or wind-blasted emerging seedlings over most of the region.

There is still an estimated 25 per cent of the crop area to be sown which will go in as planned when it rains. Canola in the Southern Albany area will be down due to some paddocks being substituted for cereals as a result of the late break, low plant density from the wind events, and altered production plans for re-sowing to cereals.

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At this stage of the season, the increase in barley area for the region may not result in increased tonnages as many crops have reduced plant density and have not received a good soaking rain to date.

Eastern Albany (Lakes Region)

Most of the region is still waiting for a good general rain with falls to date mostly less than 12mm in total for May and June. Not a lot has changed in the region in the last month with most of the final cereal plantings completed except for pasture paddocks scheduled to go in when it rains.

There are still reasonable areas of country in the region where crop has not emerged and areas that have emerged requiring more rain over the next few weeks to have a chance of returning close to average grain yields.

The canola area in the Eastern Albany region is down by 5-10 per cent due to the lack of early rains and paddocks being substituted with cereal.

For most growers its “sit and wait” for more rain before any weed control or fertilizing is carried out.

Esperance Zone

Rainfall has been light and intermittent during May and June. Around 80 per cent of the cereal paddocks are up with emergence generally slow and variable due to the lack of rain and damage from wind events in the last few weeks. Furrow fill and wind blast has damaged crops although it is expected most will recover well enough when it rains without the need to re-sow. The majority of paddocks have suffered from some wind blow with the worst areas being re-sown to barley.

Some of the coastal areas are still being sown into moisture with cereals and it is expected these areas will emerge without a rain.

It is estimated that the canola area may be down by 15 per cent, being replaced by barley and to a lesser extent to wheat. Subject to rains over the next month the total area to pulse crops, and lentils in particular, is expected to increase.

It is too early to estimate likely production from the zone although at this stage of the season it is certain to be down on the record deliveries from last year.

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Season Outlook, June 2018

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

DPIRD Climate Summary

Despite widespread rain in the last week of May, total rain for the month was still well below average. This represented the start of the growing season over northern and western parts of the cropping region. Historically this is an average to late start. The early part of June has seen variable rain totals across cropping areas, with only light falls in the south-east. Modelled soil water shows improved levels of storage across northern, and central parts (see Figure 1). South-eastern parts and the South Coast have lower than normal soil water storage for this time of year.

The seasonal rainfall outlook from DPIRD's statistical model for June to August shows a preference towards below average rainfall. Half of international climate models have a neutral outlook for this period, meaning no preference towards either wetter or drier than normal conditions. About a third of models are indicating below average seasonal rainfall being more likely.

Bureau of Meteorology Seasonal Outlook Summary

- For the winter outlook, issued 31 May 2018, the southeast mainland of Australia is likely to be drier than average.
- June has high chances of being drier than average over southeastern Australia and is also likely to be drier across much of central and western Australia, except the southwest.
- Winter days and nights are likely to be warmer than average for most of Australia, except parts of the far north.
- Broadscale climate drivers, such as the El Niño–Southern Oscillation and the Indian Ocean Dipole, are forecast to remain neutral during winter and thus have less influence on Australia's climate.
- Below average pressure over the Tasman Sea is likely to weaken the westerlies that bring rain to southern Australia.

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 March to May 2018](#)

[BoM: Landscape soil water balance](#)

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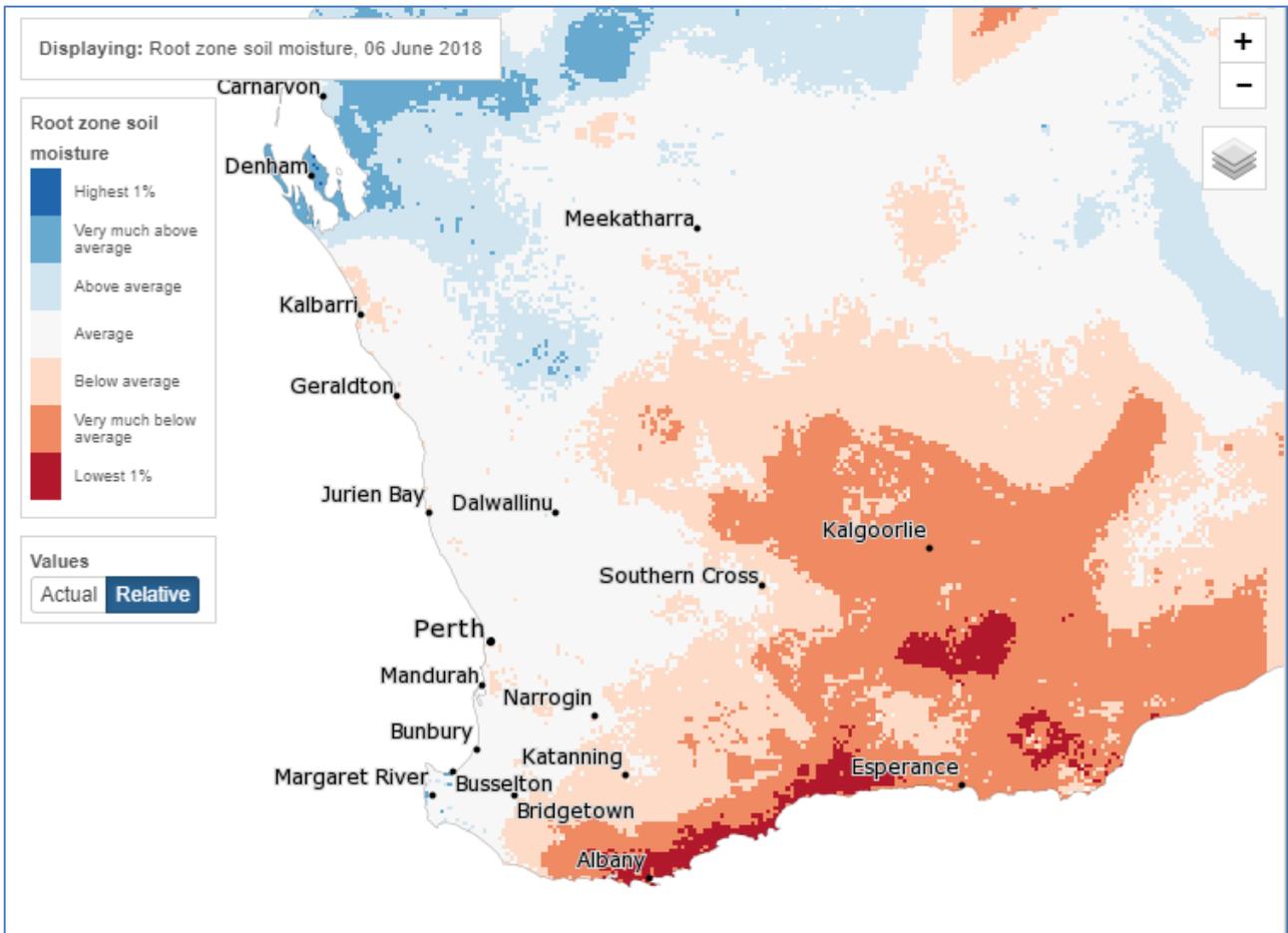


Figure 1. Modelled root zone soil water from the Bureau of Meteorology's Landscape Water Balance model. This uses rainfall to 6 June 2018 and shows relative soil water storage. Root zone combines upper and lower soil depths, down to 1m. See <http://www.bom.gov.au/water/landscape/>

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