

2018 Season Update - July 2018

On balance, both promising and challenging seasonal conditions to date have the greater part of the Western Australian grainbelt in good shape, with crops making up ground over the last month following reasonable falls of rain and warm growing conditions. The exception to this are areas in the Great Southern down to the south coast and through to the Esperance port zone, and some areas north of Merredin, where the majority of rainfall events have been below 10mm, with poor conditions compounded by significant wind damage.

The northern agricultural areas that were impacted by dry conditions in 2017 have cereal crops with above average grain yield potential. The canola and lupin crops in the northern region on the lighter soils which were damaged by strong winds at the start of the season have lower grain yield potential.

The central grain growing regions of the state have had one of the best starts to the season for many years and crops have above average potential if the season continues in a similar vein.

There has been less rainfall in the southern areas of the state, and crops that have emerged well will need good follow up rains and a soft finish to reach average grain yields. Crops that were impacted by the strong winds have low plant density, were slow to emerge and will need a good finish to reach average grain yield potential.

Wheat crops in the regions that received a good start will be a standout this year, and even average growing conditions from now on will see very good yields.

The barley area across the state is the largest in history although potential tonnage will be impacted by a poor start to the season in the major barley growing regions in the south of the state.

The canola area is significantly lower this year and most crops are later, with many having low plant density which will limit final grain yield.

2018 July 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	1,833,000
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	1,351,000
Totals	4,860,000	1,610,000	1,090,000	290,000	360,000	34,000	8,244,000
% change from June 18	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Most of the Geraldton port zone has had between 100mm and 140mm of rain to date since the break in the season at the end of May. This together with pre-season rain has provided areas of the zone with an adequate soil moisture profile to finish crops without having to rely on significant rainfall events from now until the end of the season.

Whilst soil moisture is good, crops are a little behind in growth stage for this time of the year. Cereal crop grain yield potential is above average for most of the region although warm temperatures in spring can still bring current yield expectations down.

Wheat potential looks very good at the moment with crops well tillered and in the northern areas, starting to run up. There is an increase in the barley area in the region again this year and these crops look very good.

Lupin and canola crops were slow to get out of the ground and are behind for this time of the year. Grain yield potential is variable depending on location and soil type. Overall the expectation is that lupin and canola grain production will only be average at this stage of the season.

Crops on the deep ripped sand plain look really good and the well managed fallows from 2017 have above average yield potential.

Kwinana Zone

The Midlands

The whole of the Midlands region is looking good and has benefited from the even break to the season and warm growing conditions.

Wheat crops are looking the best of all the crops and growth rate to date has put many crops in front of where they would normally be with a late May break. Barley crops also look good however as per most of the state this year, grass weeds have been a bit of a problem. There has also been some spot type net blotch starting to show up in crops where a fungicide was not used at seeding.

Lupins are a mixed bag in the area with some crops being damaged by wind resulting in low plant density. The same has occurred for canola, with crops slow to get out of the ground and wind damage limiting the potential grain yield.

Some growers are still hand feeding livestock however some pasture growth is starting to get away now with pasture legume percentage better than for many years.

Kwinana West

All crops in the Kwinana West zone have above average yield potential at present. Crop growth stages are ahead from where they would normally be at this stage of the season. Most crops have been sprayed for weeds, and growers are topping up with nitrogen fertiliser to maintain crop health. Some leaf diseases are starting to show up although there are no major issues at the moment.

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Kwinana East

Most of the zone except some of the areas north of Merredin around Bonnie Rock have average or above average grain yield potential at this stage of the season. Crops emerged evenly and have continued to grow without any setbacks. The majority of growers in the low rainfall areas from 2017, have crops up with good grain yield potential this year.

This region of the state has the potential to produce a lot of grain if the season continues as it has to date. There is not the same sub-soil moisture in the region compared with last year to finish crops so final grain yield potential will depend on average falls of rain from now until the end of the season.

Albany Zone

Western Albany

The whole zone is looking at an above average yield potential at present. Crops have emerged well and have benefited from the lack of waterlogging and regular rainfall.

Pasture growth is behind, as it is for most of the southern areas of the state, with growers still handfeeding livestock. Grain reserves in the southern areas of the state are low and many oat and barley crops will go into silos on farm rather than be delivered to port.

Southern Albany

The majority of the Southern Albany zone across to Esperance has suffered badly from repeat wind events and a lack of rainfall to settle the country down and allow crops to emerge evenly. Many paddocks have been re-sown or parts of paddocks re-sown and these crops will struggle to reach average grain yield potential.

Most paddocks have low plant density and were slow to emerge. The season is going to have to be a soft finish for crops to achieve average yield potential. While average yields could still be achieved, low plant density and uncertainty of returning a profit is limiting fertiliser applications that are needed to make up the final grain yield.

Canola production in the region is going to be well down on last year due to wind damaged paddocks being re-sown to barley, and those not re-sown having low plant density and being well behind in their growth stage.

Eastern Albany (Lakes Region)

Most of the zone is looking similar to 2017 although if spring rainfall is low, there is not the sub soil moisture to assist in finishing crops at the end of the season. Cereal crop emergence is good and if it continues to rain, most cereals will have average or above average grain yield potential.

Canola plant density is lower than ideal, as per most of the state, due to difficult conditions at emergence and realistic grain yield potential is below average unless there is a very good finish to the season.

Pasture growth is still slow and many growers are still hand feeding livestock.

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Esperance Zone

The majority of crops in the Esperance port zone are a mixed bag. Crops generally have low plant density or staggered emergence and are at differing growth stages within paddocks. Most of the rainfall events have been below 10mm, and combined with the wind and warm temperatures the region has experienced since the end of May, rainfall events have not been as effective as they normally would.

The cereals can still make average grain yields if the season has a good finish, although this is becoming less likely as the season progresses.

Canola grain yield potential is lower than average at this stage of the season due to crops being well behind in growth rates and density.

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Season Outlook, July 2018

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD)

DPIRD Climate Summary

June rainfall was near average or below for most of the grainbelt and south-west. Seasonal rainfall (April to June) was in the lowest decile for much of the south-east of the region. Good rain in early July has advanced much of the northern grainbelt to be close to median rain to date. South-eastern parts of the grainbelt remain well below seasonal median rain to date.

Modelled potential crop yield shows relatively low yields across northern-eastern, and southern parts (see Figure 1). The effect of seasonal rain so far is evident in good potential yields over northern and western parts of the central grainbelt.

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

Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook summary

- The July to September outlook, issued 28 June 2018, shows northern and eastern mainland Australia are likely to be drier than average. The outlook is neutral for most of southern WA, meaning no preference towards either wetter or drier conditions.
- Most of the country is likely to see warmer than usual days during July to September; nights are likely to be warmer than average, except for the tropical north.
- The Bureau's climate model indicates that higher than average pressure is likely to the south of Australia, resulting in weaker westerlies and fewer cold fronts extending into southeast 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 April to June 2018](#)

[BoM: Landscape soil water balance](#)

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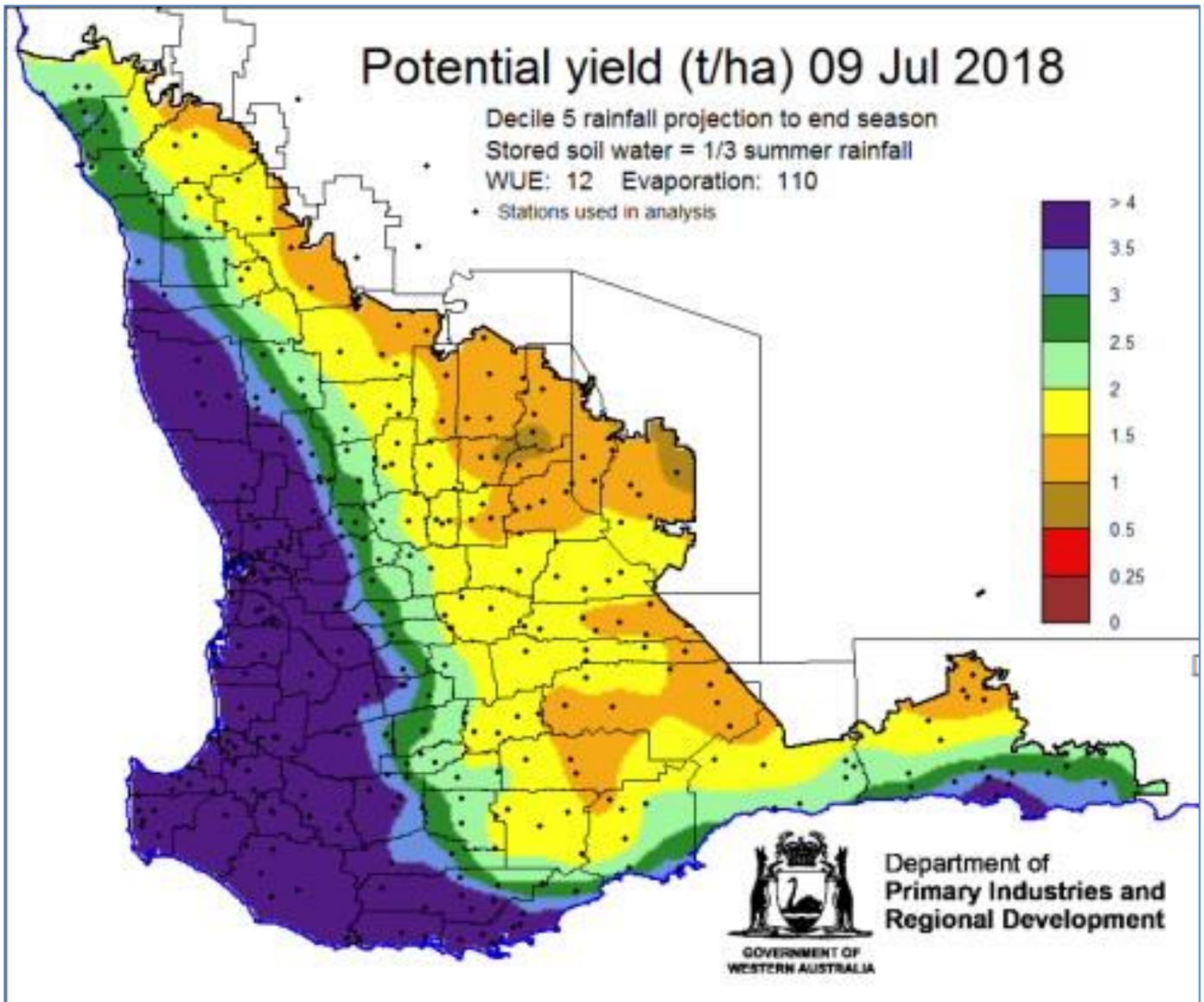


Figure 1. Modelled potential crop yield from DPIRD's Potential Yield model. This uses total rainfall from 1 April to 9 July 2018, with a fallow water balance, and assuming average rainfall for the rest of the growing season.

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