GIWA
Grain Industry Association of Western Australia

Crop Report

4th September, 2015

PO Box 1081 • BENTLEY DC, WA 6983 • Ph: 08 6262 2128 • info@giwa.org.au • www.giwa.org.au

Summary

Timely rainfall events in August has markedly improved the yield potential for all grain crops in Western Australia.

Overall gain production is now expected to be above 15 million tonnes, with at least 9 million tonnes of wheat. Crop development varies from the northern to the southern regions but overall, yield potential has improved in all regions.

Soil moisture is at good to high levels in most regions, at least average rainfall in September and an absence of widespread frosts is needed to achieve the current forecast or increase it further.

Whilst there a plethora of pest and disease issues across the grainbelt control programs are keeping on top of these problems.

In the Geraldton zone, the districts north and east of Geraldton have crops at early to advanced grain fill with wheat at Binnu now on the 'turn' to maturity. Yield potential for crops in the districts from Binnu across to Pindar are high. In contrast, yield potential for crops in the districts south to Mingenew and Carnamah are just average after a dry May and June and the lack of significant summer rain. Crops in the Midlands region have average potential with crops on the sandier soils suffering during the dry June. Inland districts out to Dalwallinu are in good to excellent condition and yields should be well above average.

The west Kwinana zone has improved markedly from early July and has at least average yield potential. Canola yields in particular have improved along with lupins. Crops in the east Kwinana zone has had average yield potential throughout the season with extensive summer rain providing a buffer against the dry May and June. With rainfall this month, yield potential could improve slightly.

Crops in the Albany zone are generally in good condition throughout. In the Lakes regions, crops have improved in condition with most cereal crops at ear emergence stage with above average potential. The western and southern regions have experienced a dry winter, with some districts recording some of the lowest winter rainfall totals in many years. However this has led to a lack of waterlogging and generally good growth for crops. The region overall is expecting a slightly above average result.

The Esperance zone is on track for a record grain harvest. For the first time in many years, crops across the entire zone are in excellent condition with good soil moisture on the back of almost perfect winter rainfall.

To achieve the currently forecast grain total, weather for September needs to remain cool to warm with at least average rainfall. The threat of frost in southern and central districts remains a significant risk.

WA Production estimates (tonnes)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Field pea	State total
Kwinana	4,031,000	1,064,000	526,000	374,000	162,000	7,000	6,164,000
Albany	1,693,000	1,242,000	453,000	270,000	61,000	7,000	3,726,000
Esperance	1,440,000	893,000	414,000	17,000	18,000	22,000	2,804,000
Geraldton	1,918,000	57,000	174,000	19,000	272,000	1,000	2,441,000
Totals	**9,082,000**	**3,256,000**	**1,567,000**	**680,000**	**513,000**	**37,000**	**15,135,000**
% change from August forecast	**+3%**	**+11%**	**+8%**	**+16%**	**+6%**	**+3%**	**+6%**

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Kwinana Zone

The Midlands

Rainfall totals for the west coastal districts in August were below average but enough to maintain good soil moisture and average yield potential.

The season rainfall total remains below average and crop growth is less advanced than in the inland districts. The lack of summer rain across the Midlands region and the dry conditions to late June have contributed to the lower crop height, and reduced yield potential.

Inland to Dalwallinu, crop potential remains well above average. Crop development is advanced with wheat at flowering to early grain fill and canola finished flowering.

Powdery mildew has been controlled in cereals and aphids and sclerotinia have required control in canola.

A cool and damp spring is needed to produce average yields and good quality grain across the region.

Kwinana east

In the east Kwinana zone, yield potential is average across the region.

Later sown crops are at flag leaf emergence with and earlier sown wheat at grain fill. Crops in the Bencubbin and Nungarin districts are in really good condition. North of Beacon across to Mukinbudin, crops are also looking good.

Many crops have a lack of tillers from the dry June and have lower yield potential than is apparent at first glance.

Grain set looks to be good, but panicle height is small.

Aphids are being controlled in canola.

There is some stem and stripe rust apparent in wheat but this is being closely monitored at this stage rather than needing control. This may change if there is significant rain in September.

Kwinana west

The west Kwinana zone will produce average to slightly above average yields. Soil moisture is at high levels after heavy rainfall events in July and the first half of August, totalling 80 to 120 mm.

After a dry start to winter, with little summer rain, variation in crop potential between paddocks is the widest for many years.

Wheat and barley yields will be above average, while canola yields will be above average after improving markedly in the last month.

Aphid numbers in canola are high and needing control. Aphid fungus is providing good control in some cases and avoiding the need for an aphicide. Around Cunderdin 25% of canola flower stems have aphids and need control. Overall, about 50% of canola crops are being sprayed for aphids.

About 70% of wheat and barley crops have had two fungicide sprays. While individual diseases aren't always significant, the total damage potential from 3 or 4 diseases means spraying has been worthwhile.

Barley crops are mostly clean after one timely spray. Some late N is being applied when soils are wet to support late tiller development.

Sclerotinia is apparent in canola crops west of the Bolgart, Toodyay to Narrogin line and has required a fungicide spray. East of these districts about 70% of canola has been sprayed. The general rule has been where yield potential is above 1.5 tonnes/hectare it is economical to spray.

Albany Zone

South west

Overall the south west region of the Albany zone is set for an above average season. July and August saw near near perfect temperatures and rainfall for crop development.

Early sown crops will be above average while later sown crops will likely be just around average.

Cereals have potential to reach 3.5 t/ha and canola to 1.7 t/ha.

There is very little waterlogging in all paddocks. Last year waterlogging contributed to about a 10% crop loss in low lying paddocks.

Late nitrogen is being applied to canola to prolong flowering.

Rust and Powdery Mildew is being controlled in Barley, with Spot Type Net Blotch also a concern.

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Wheat and barley crops will require one more fungicide spray to maintain yield potential. A lot of Mace wheat has Powdery Mildew while Calingiri wheat is mostly clean.

Barley is at ear emergence while wheat is mostly at flag emergence.

Sclerotinia is very aggressive in canola and will claim 5% of yield where no control has been applied. It's costing $50/ha per spray to control and some crops will need 2 sprays.

This issue will likely see a decline in canola sown area for 2016.

Sheep feed is short but pasture growth is keeping up with consumption and stock are in very good condition.

Lakes region

All crops are in good condition as they didn't suffer the drought stress of northern crops in June. The 50 to 60 mm of rain in August was an ideal top up.

All soils have a good profile of moisture. Best soils have very good yield potential but weaker soil types are average.

Wheat is at early flowering to flag emergence. Later sown wheat may be the best yielding crops this year with the high levels of stored soil moisture available.

There is some stem and stripe rust in wheat and growers are monitoring its development at this stage. Yitpi wheat has been sprayed as it is very susceptible and deemed as high risk.

Powdery mildew can be found readily but, unlike the northern regions is not causing problems.

Aphids in canola need control. Green peach aphid can be found and may need control when the weather warms up.

The 2015 season had a slow start but crops looks good now. Across the region, crop yields will be at least average and probably better.

Esperance Zone

The season continues to be well above average in the Esperance zone. August rainfall was above average in all districts. Soil moisture is high and is supporting strong yield potential in all crops. In low lying paddocks and shallow soil types, some waterlogging is now occurring though this should not have a significant impact overall.

There has been widespread fungicide use to control Powdery Mildew and Septoria in wheat.

Sclerotinia and aphids are apparent in canola. However, to date only localised control has been necessary. Canopy development is well advanced and effective control of sclerotinia would be problematic at this stage.

Wheat crops are at the flowering to early grain fill stage, with barley crops at the early grain fill stage. Canola crops have mostly finished flowering. Late nitrogen applications were made to prolong flowering and enhance yield potential.

Field peas are healthy without any undue levels of blackspot, however, localised waterlogging may impact the total harvest tonnage.

The Esperance zone is on track for a record grain harvest.

Geraldton Zone

Rainfall events of 60 to 70 mm in early August have provided good soil moisture in better soil classes but the sandier soils are drying out. The region has only received three significant rainfall events for the season.

With no rain for the last 10 days of August and none for the first week of September, crops on the weaker soil types in the Geraldton zone are declining in yield potential. The early stress in June saw cereals drop tillers and set low yield potential.

Crops on the sandier soils will be just average to below average, while yield potential on the heavier soils will be mostly above average.

Compensatory growth in canola and lupins may see yields higher than wheat in some cases, particularly on the sandier soils.

Districts with summer rain and the ability to capture and use the rain are in far better condition than those with a dry summer. From Binnu to Chapman Valley to Yuna and Mullewa, all crops have excellent yield potential.

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Crops in the Mingenew, and Three Springs to Carnamah districts, remain below average, continuing the pattern established at the start of the season.

Wheat is at early grain fill to soft dough stage north of Geraldton with crops already on the ‘turn’.

South of Geraldton, grain development is commencing in wheat crops sown in May, with later crops at ear emergence.

Powdery Mildew was widespread in wheat in August with crop development now advanced to make further control unnecessary.

Fungicide control of anthracnose and sclerotinia in Albus lupins has been beneficial with the crop growing away from remaining disease. Clean seed source, ie the basic fundamentals is the key to controlling these diseases in lupins.

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Season Outlook

Dr David Stephens
Australian Grains Export Innovation Centre

- While rainfall will be light for the next fortnight, the south westerly wind pattern will persist for the foreseeable future. This will allow fronts to reach the south west of WA. It is unclear if significant rain may result.
- This pattern also suggests the frost risk for the southern region is low, and may prevent warm north easterly winds from reaching much of the division.
- Soil moisture supports above average yield potential across much of WA.

Average rainfall and warm days for Western Australia- Courtesy BoM

Rainfall

- There is an increased chance of a wetter-than-average season over much of southern and central WA, the southern NT, SA and extending into parts of western NSW Victoria and Queensland. In far north Queensland, spring is likely to be drier than average. Most of eastern Australia has a roughly equal chance of a wetter or drier season.
- The current outlook reflects the record warm sea surface temperatures in the Indian Ocean, and a strengthening El Niño in the Pacific.
- Historical outlook accuracy for spring is moderate to high over most of Australia.

Temperatures

- Spring days are likely to be warmer than average along the east coast and in far southwest WA. Small parts of WA and much of Victoria are likely to have cooler than normal spring days. Overnight temperatures are likely to be warmer than normal across much of the country except in the southeast where the chances are roughly equal.
- Significantly warmer-than-average sea surface temperatures in the Indian Ocean and nearer the Australian coastline are likely influencing the warmer overnight temperatures expected for much of the country.

Additional information can be sourced from the following sites:

- **AEGIC: Yield and Seasonal Forecasting**
- **AEGIC: ENSO Summary webpage**
- **DAFWA: Statistical Seasonal forecast**
- **BoM: WA Seasonal Rainfall Outlook, next 3 months**
- **BoM: Month to date rainfall for WA**
- **16 day rainfall outlook (WX maps)**
- **BoM: Decile rainfall for June to August 2015**

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