

## 2018 Season Update

The majority of crops in the Western Australian grainbelt are in very good shape and excluding any potential significant heat or frost events could be on track for a record crop for the 2018 Season.

Wheat and barley have above average grain yield potential across all areas of the grainbelt except for the south coast and Esperance zones. The wheat in the eastern regions of the Geraldton and Kwinana port zones are as good as they have been for many years. These areas can produce a lot of grain in a good year and at present there are no poor spots.

The growing season for the majority of the state has been near perfect so far with crops ahead of where they would normally be with a late May break to the season. The only downside to this may be the susceptibility to heat stress if crops are exposed to sudden hot weather.

The other major risk to crops will be frost over the next six weeks. The frost risk to crops is generally considered to be less than it was in 2016; even though crops have moved along quickly this year, they are still behind in growth stage to date from where they were in 2016.

The current good prices for all grains and good growing conditions have encouraged growers to aim for maximum production and nitrogen fertiliser use has been higher than normal this year resulting in temporary shortages.

Canola production is predicted to be well down on 2017 due to less area planted and poor conditions at seeding still carrying through to date.

Lupin area is up from previous years although wind events at emergence are predicted to keep a lid on total grain yield production.

### 2018 GIWA WA Crop production estimates (tonnes)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Pulses	State total
Kwinana	5,700,000	1,800,000	400,000	150,000	90,000	5,000	8,145,000
Albany	1,100,000	1,000,000	350,000	150,000	40,000	0	2,640,000
Esperance	1,000,000	600,000	300,000	20,000	50,000	40,000	2,010,000
Geraldton	2,100,000	150,000	180,000	30,000	280,000	2,000	2,742,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9,900,000</b>	<b>3,550,000</b>	<b>1,230,000</b>	<b>350,000</b>	<b>460,000</b>	<b>47,000</b>	<b>15,537,000</b>

*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 Geraldton port zone has continued to have regular rainfall since the break of the season at the end of May and crops are looking very good throughout the whole region. Most of the zone has a full soil moisture profile to finish crops even without any further significant rainfall events. The big risk over the next month for the region will be heat stress as the crops are bulked up with a lot of vegetative growth and shallow root systems from the very soft growing conditions. If there is no major heat stress the whole zone could produce record levels of grain.

The cereals in the region are a standout as is the case over most of the state. Canola, and to a lesser extent, lupins do not have the grain yield potential as they have not been able to make up as much ground as cereals due to difficult conditions at emergence.

There are no weak areas in the zone. Cereal crops in areas that were drought affected last year look sensational and whilst crops in the western areas are a bit washed out there is time for them to recover and yield well once the profile dries out a little.

## Kwinana Zone

### The Midlands

Crop growth has been exceptional across the zone with crops ahead of where they would normally be from a late May break. Most crops are a week later than ideal with the greatest risk ahead being heat stress and in the southern and eastern areas of the region frost. For the western areas of the zone paddocks are very wet and difficult to get nitrogen top ups on, together with the tight nitrogen supply this could limit top end yield. Cereals are a standout in the region this year with crops well tillered and presenting little leaf disease. On the heavier country and paddocks that were fallowed last year, the crops have well above average grain yield potential.

Canola is only average for most of the region due to poor emergence, lateness of emergence and low plant density. Sclerotinia is starting to show up in the better looking canola paddocks and growers are spraying for this as well as aphids.

Lupins are generally only average for the same establishment reasons as canola has suffered.

### Kwinana West

The whole of the zone looks very good with all crops having above average grain yield potential at this stage of the season. The majority of crops in the region were sown dry and emerged following the opening rains at the end of May. Since emergence, the whole zone has had regular rainfall and warm temperatures with many growers commenting the wheat and barley crops sown dry that emerged following opening rains at the end of May are looking like they were planted mid-May.

The wheat and barley crops are well tillered and very healthy in the eastern portions of the zone. The western areas are starting to suffer from waterlogging and may miss optimum crop protection and fertiliser timings due to being unable to get on the paddocks, although for the western areas there will still be time to top up nitrogen and allow crops to hit top end yield once the soil profile dries out. Both wheat and barley crops have well above average grain yield potential.

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The canola has picked up over the last month and crops that were a looking uneven earlier on now have above average potential.

Frost still poses a risk for the cereal crops although the risk is less this year compared to the very damaging 2016 frost year as crops are behind in growth stage and will be flowering later than in 2016. Heat stress could also be a factor if there are hot days in September as crops have a lot of vegetative growth and relatively shallow root systems due to the very soft growing conditions.

### **Kwinana East**

Grain yield potential for wheat in the region is above average and well above average for the northern areas hit by drought last year. There are no weak areas in the eastern parts of the Kwinana zone. In years like this when crops are very even and have a reasonable soil moisture profile the region can produce huge tonnages of grain if there are no major heat or frost events during grain fill. The majority of cereal crops that were sown dry will flower right at the end of August or early September which historically is the optimum flowering window for the region.

The cereal crops are generally fairly compact in the eastern areas of the zone with well above average numbers of tillers and if the zone can receive a couple of rainfall events in the next month, in September it will be frost more than heat which could pull back grain yield potential.

### **Albany Zone**

#### **Western Albany**

The West Albany zone is now on track for at least average grain yields for cereals. The later start has kept a lid on the potential grain yield estimates for the zone up until now, although as the season has progressed the lack of waterlogging has resulted in crops being more even across paddocks than is normally the case. Leaf disease is starting to increase in cereal crops in the region. Due to the later start and wide use of seed dressings and in-furrow fungicide, leaf diseases are coming in later than normal.

The increased barley plantings for the region this year and the lack of waterlogging in the early stages of crop development could result in current barley tonnage estimates being at the lower end of what may go in the bin at harvest.

The canola tonnage is unlikely to reach the levels of previous years from a combination in reduced area planted and the later start enabling canola to reach top end grain yields.

#### **Southern Albany**

The Southern Albany zone has picked up in the last two weeks with crops now starting to fill the gaps and re-sown areas from the severe winds over the last few months providing some cover. The zone has recently had double figure rainfall events and grower sentiment is now more positive. The crops are still quite late and most will need a good soft spring to achieve close to average grain yield. Cereal and canola crops have noticeably picked up in the last ten days and whilst current grain yield estimates are fairly low at the moment, the region has the ability to still produce close to average grain yields with a soft finish. The very poor areas of crop growth are now confined to the eastern portions of the zone.

The barley area is up from previous years although due to the later start the potential tonnage produced for the region is predicted to be lower than last year from crops unlikely to hit top end grain yields.

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The canola area is significantly down on previous years and whilst the crops are starting to bulk up now the season finish will need to be very soft to achieve close to average grain yields.

### **Eastern Albany (Lakes Region)**

The majority of the region except for the eastern areas around Newdegate, parts of Hyden and down to Lake King and Ravensthorpe have picked up and crops generally look good. Crops have made up ground from the late May start due to the good growing conditions. Most of the region will need a good finish as sub-soil moisture levels are low.

Wheat grain yields look to be on track for average to above average for most the region. Frost can often have an impact on reducing the total tonnages produced for the region, although it is not considered to be a potential risk this year due to crops being on track to flower later than they have in recent years. There is an increased area of barley planted in the region this year and most crops look to have the potential to produce average to above average grain yield at this stage of the season.

The canola tonnage will be down this year from reduced plantings and variable emergence at seeding.

### **Esperance Zone**

The Esperance port zone is shaping up for just an average year, a change from previous years. Most cereal crops have only average grain yield potential at present. Crops closer to the coast have benefited from the lack of waterlogging and moderate rainfall whilst crops further away from the coast have lower potential from the lack of rain to date. There is a wide range in crop growth with some on good moisture having above average grain yield potential and others that missed out on decent rains until recently being behind for this time of the year.

Canola is likely to be below average in most areas away from the coast as most were significantly impacted by wind at emergence.

The Esperance port zone is likely to be well down on last years' record harvest although most growers are now confident close to average grain yields will be achieved if the season does not cut out early.

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## Season Outlook, August 2018

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

### DPIRD Climate Summary

Good rain in July and the first part of August has advanced much of the northern and central grainbelt to be close to or above median seasonal rainfall to date. South eastern parts of the grainbelt remain well below normal seasonal rain to date, with much of the south coast at decile two. Reference period for climate 'normals' spans the years 1975 to 2017.

Modelled potential crop yield shows the effect of seasonal rain so far in good potential yields over northern and western parts of the central grainbelt. Relatively lower yields are predicted across northern eastern, and southern parts (see Figure 1).

The seasonal rainfall outlook from DPIRD's statistical model for August to October 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 70 per cent of models indicating below average seasonal rainfall being more likely.

### Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook summary

- The August to October outlook, issued on 26 July 2018, shows most of mainland Australia is likely to be drier than average.
- Days and nights are likely to be warmer than average during August to October for most of Australia, with August days very likely to be warmer than average.
- These forecast warmer and drier conditions suggest that much of eastern and southern mainland Australia are less likely to see widespread respite in the coming season from current dry conditions.
- The El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) are currently neutral. However, the Bureau's ENSO Outlook is at El Niño WATCH.

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 May to July 2018](#)

[BoM: Landscape soil water balance](#)

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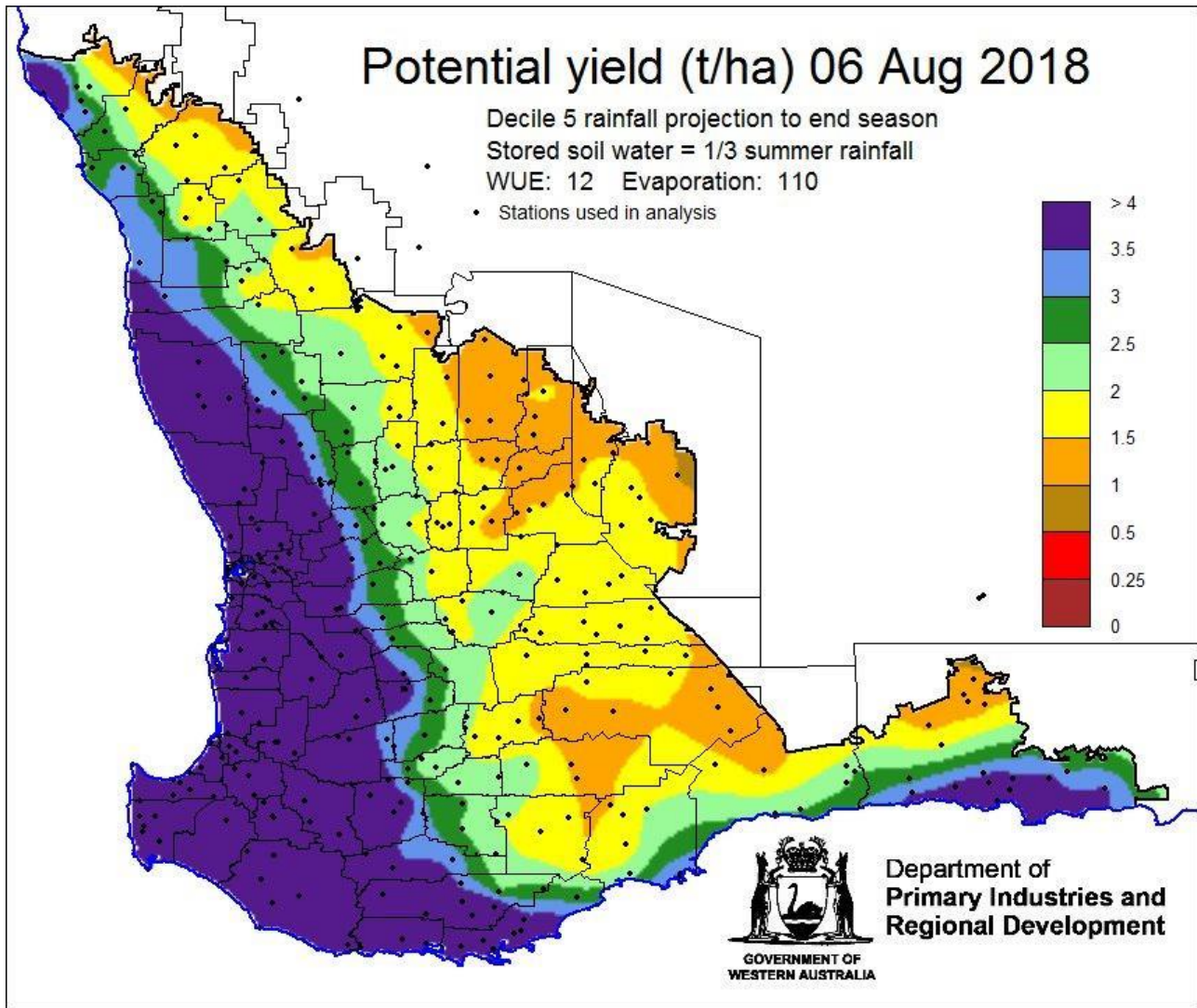


Figure 1. Modelled potential crop yield from DPIRD's Potential Yield model. This uses total rainfall from 1 April to 6 August 2018, and assuming average rainfall for the rest of the growing season. A water use efficiency value of 12 kg/mm/ha is applied.

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