GIWA
Grain Industry Association of Western Australia

Crop Report

7th July 2016

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Summary

The 2016 season

The seasonal conditions for 2016 continue to set Western Australia up for a record breaking total production over the majority of districts in the WA grainbelt. The general consensus is that with the current soil moisture levels across the grainbelt, and average rainfall for the rest of the season, a record crop can be expected.

This is mostly due to the good opening rains received across the entire grainbelt during April and May with the exception of the northern districts in the Geraldton zone, which received significant rainfall events in late May and early June.

Soils moisture levels across all port zones are high. In the Lakes region, soils are close to being waterlogged, while in the lower Albany zone and along the south coast to Esperance, waterlogging is causing delays to weed and disease management along with reduced crop growth. To balance this, crops on well-drained soil types have very high yield potential. Fortunately, the below average rainfall received in the Kwinana and Albany zones in June was beneficial to prospects for crops.

Crop growth in all port zones is advanced, and well ahead of 'normal' growth for mid-winter. Plant health is generally excellent with growers alert to the yield potential currently seen in the paddock and therefore quick to implement any crop protection measures to help protect yield potential. Disease and pests remain the most immediate threat to yields, with the prospect of August and September frosts the next concern for growers. Sclerotinia is the current big threat to canola yields in the Geraldton, Kwinana West and Albany port zones.

2016 WA Crop area estimates (hectares)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Field pea	State total
Kwinana	2,371,000	477,000	447,000	150,000	124,000	9,000	3,578,000
Albany	714,000	450,000	315,000	97,000	39,000	6,000	1,621,000
Esperance	490,000	288,000	278,000	6,000	9,000	15,000	1,086,000
Geraldton	873,000	39,000	136,000	8,000	185,000	1,000	1,242,000
Totals	**4,448,000**	**1,254,000**	**1,176,000**	**261,000**	**357,000**	**31,000**	**7,527,000**
Since June	***0.1%***	***0.2%***	***0.7%***	***0.4%***	***3.2%***	***0.0%***	***0.4%***

2016 WA Crop production estimates (tonnes)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Field pea	State total
Kwinana	5,469,000	1,255,000	643,000	434,000	193,000	14,000	8,008,000
Albany	1,736,000	1,182,000	412,000	265,000	61,000	9,000	3,665,000
Esperance	1,336,000	887,000	450,000	17,000	20,000	24,000	2,734,000
Geraldton	2,143,000	94,000	198,000	12,000	397,000	1,000	2,845,000
Totals	**10,684,000**	**3,418,000**	**1,703,000**	**728,000**	**671,000**	**48,000**	**17,252,000**
Since 2015	***16.1%***	***11.2%***	***10.4%***	***41.9%***	***48.5%***	***37.1%***	***16.4%***

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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Kwinana Zone

The Midlands

The current seasonal situation across the entire Midlands region is outstanding. Growers in eastern districts are chasing yield potential with additional nitrogen applications. Canola yields will be high, with yields in the range of 1.5 to 2.5 t/ha expected in all districts.

Wheat crops remain disease and weed free in the main. Yellow spot is apparent especially where nitrogen is lacking and the plants are less healthy. Growth stage of wheat ranges from 4 leaf to 1st node.

In the Meckering to Piawaning to Moora districts, most canola crops are at five to 50% flowering. Sclerotinia is present with direct infection occurring ahead of the usual petal drop infection cycle which is only just beginning, and about two to three weeks earlier than anticipated. Interestingly, where there was control of sclerotinia in previous years, crops are showing less infection than those crops in paddocks with no control history. Capeweed is promoting infection in canola crops which have been planted after a pasture phase. Overall, the region has less sclerotinia inoculum background than the west coastal districts and consequently the disease pressure is currently less. It appears that autumn stubble burning is also a helpful factor in reducing the risk that sclerotinia poses.

Radish control in barley has been completed along with first application of fungicides. Spot type net blotch is apparent but generally under control as is powdery mildew in the Bass barley variety. Growth stages range from 5 leaf to 2nd node.

Oat crops are looking magnificent. Nitrogen leaching on sandplain soils is a normal occurrence but will have more impact this season. This is being addressed with additional strategic nitrogen applications.

Rainfall for the rest of the season needs only to be average to slightly below average to achieve the current high yield potential.

Kwinana east

Above average yield potential is apparent in crops throughout the north eastern wheatbelt. Although soil moisture levels are generally adequate, more rain is welcome in July. Crops are about a month in advance of ‘normal’ growth for this time of the year, and clean of disease and weeds.

Wheat, sown in May, is at the 4 to 5 leaf stage, and booting for mid-April sown crops. Powdery mildew can be found in many wheat crops, principally arising from uncontrolled volunteer wheat stands from the previous seasons.

Canola is mostly at 100% flowering with no sclerotinia to be seen.

The cold temperatures in late June have slowed growth and the recent heavy frost has reduced flowering in canola. With most of the growing season still ahead, this is of little concern for now.

Crops have received 20 to 25 units of nitrogen, and will receive a further 10 to 15 units to match the current above average yield potential.

The threat of foliar diseases, including leaf and stripe rust, is high and needs monitoring particularly where the level of uncontrolled volunteer wheat in neighbouring paddocks is high.

Kwinana west

Overall crops are magnificent in all districts, with minor waterlogging issues in the more western districts. Yields in the low to medium rainfall districts will be 50% higher than average. More nitrogen is needed to achieve this potential with growers generally adopting strategies aimed at capturing around 80% of this yield potential.

Crops are generally disease and weed free. Crops are growing without stress and this is helping to minimise any establishment issues and/or impact of disease. However, a lot of fungicides have been applied as insurance sprays, whether or not they are warranted. Some powdery mildew is appearing in wheat crops. Fungicide supplies are expected to be tight. Growers may need to hunt around for supplies and may not get their preferred product or their preferred price.

There are some aphids appearing in crops and with excellent pasture growth, the aphid threat for spring is high.

Wheat crops are at the 1 to 2 node stage back to 4 to 5 leaf. Crops are clean and healthy, and showing high yield potential. Average rainfall for the rest of the season is all that is needed to see record yields. Above average rainfall in the higher rainfall districts could reduce yield potential due to nitrogen leaching and/or waterlogging.

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Canola crops are in excellent condition with 2 t/ha potential in the lower rainfall districts and 2.5 t/ha in medium rainfall districts.

Barley crops are clean of disease with no weeds to speak of. Yields are expected to be 50% higher than average. Some crops are at the flag leaf stage in the central wheatbelt after a mid-April sowing.

Albany Zone

Lakes region

The crop conditions in the Lakes region overall are good to very good. During June, small rainfall events of 2mm to 5mm meant soil water was topped up but not to the point of waterlogging. All districts have close to full soil moisture profiles, and getting around is a problem for some farms in the southern districts like Pingrup and out to Lake King and Mount Madden.

The main threat with such advanced crops, as always, is frost. August frosts may have more effect than usual due to this advanced development.

Average rainfall in July and August is all that is needed to maintain the current high yield potential. The rainfall intensity will need to lift, as the water being drawn by rapidly growing crops increases.

Tissue testing is being used to check for nitrogen status in the plant and the results show satisfactory levels for now. Cereals may need an extra 25 units of nitrogen to achieve yields of 3 t/ha or more.

There is a risk that growers will overspend on crop health with small amounts being spent on insecticides and fungicides for dubious benefits, and leaving less money for nitrogen application.

Crops are generally clean of weed and diseases other than when barley has been planted in successive seasons where there are signs of spot type net blotch.

Canola is at the bolting stage with 50% flowering in crops common across the region.

Southern Albany Zone

Crops in the south of the Albany zone have huge potential this season in all districts on well drained paddocks.

Very high rainfall totals have been recorded in most districts ranging up to 600 mm for the year so far.

A dry July would be very welcome.

On low lying paddocks, waterlogging is widespread and causing yield losses. However, on balance the region's production potential is still high.

Wheat and barley crops are at the emergent to 4 leaf stage. Spot type net blotch needs controlling in barley. Many crops are looking nitrogen deficient with the heavy rainfall totals leaching nitrogen quickly. Due to some issues, aerial applications of pesticides and nitrogen have been in high demand. This is leading to issues around timelines of applications and efficacy where plants are stressed from waterlogging. Weeds need controlling, and aphids are causing problems particularly where a seed insecticide dressing wasn't used to balance the aphid pressure. Parasitic insects are in abundance and any aphid control measures need to minimise any undue impact.

Canola crops are bolting to the first flower stage. Direct infection by sclerotinia can be easily found in all crops. Upwards of one in five plants are infected and this is long before any petal drop infection can occur. It appears worse where the history has included Hybrid canola. Nitrogen applications have been high to combat the repeated leaching of nitrogen and more will be needed as the crops develop.

Esperance Zone

Crops in the Esperance region are in excellent condition throughout. Current potential will rival the previous record production years of 2013 at least and maybe 2015.

Waterlogging is causing concerns for crops from Hopetoun to Esperance and north to Gibson, with particular problems from West River to Munglinup. However, above average yields should still result in these districts with the better drained soil types balancing any losses to waterlogging on the heavier soils.

For crops in all other districts, Cascades to Salmon Gums and east to Condingup and Beaumont, conditions are ideal with full moisture profiles. The weed burden is low to nil in the majority of crops.

Wheat is at 1st node stage for early sown crops and at the 5 to 6 leaf stage for later ones. The balance of wheat crops for each time of sowing is about 50/50. Some powdery mildew and leaf rust can be found.

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Barley crops are growing well although some spot type net blotch is emerging as a problem that needs addressing. Canopy closure means a fungicide spray is needed now to dampen the disease pressure.

Canola is bolting to early flowering and crops are in great condition. Several applications of nitrogen have been applied to all crops. The question remaining is how much more is needed to fulfil the enormous potential of these canola crops.

Where waterlogging is stressing canola crops, aphid colonisation is appearing as an issue with Green Peach Aphid and some turnip aphids.

Field pea crops are in good condition but with slow growth in the cold June weather after being planted last in the planting program. Early sown faba beans are looking excellent with strong growth and yield potential.

With wet soils and advanced crop growth, below average rainfall for the coming month will be welcomed. Just average rainfall for August and September will be enough for an excellent cropping season.

Geraldton Zone

June thankfully produced above average rainfall in the northern districts above the Geraldton/Mullewa road. From looking like a drought year in early May, the season is now tracking to be at least average.

Further south, in the districts from Badgingarra to Warradarge to Coorow to Dalwallinu, the season is looking to provide excellent crop production results, with record yields of canola in particular on the cards.

Mace wheat sown in early April at Three Springs is at flag leaf emergence raising the slightly unusual risk of frost damage. Usually frosts have passed by this time of wheat development.

Canola is at full flower in all districts with early pod development in the late March to early April sown crops. Canola has had two to three nitrogen applications with yield potential of more than two t/ha. Growers are using tissue testing and soil testing to fine tune their nitrogen applications. Nitrogen supplies are good, and prices are holding at current levels, making nitrogen economical to apply to achieve high yields, although there are delays in delivery due to the high demand.

Some diamondback moth larvae can be found but control is not required until the temperature rises in August. Sclerotinia in canola is rampant and widespread, especially in districts with a long history of tight canola rotations. Apothecia can be found in virtually all canola paddocks and direct infection of plants can be seen before flowering. Infection normally occurs during petal drop. This is an indication of the excellent growing conditions being experienced. Canola crops in the Northampton, Chapman Valley Walkaway and Greenough districts have all been sprayed for sclerotinia ahead of the July rains.

Lupin crops in the west coastal districts are looking especially good. Many growers have taken advantage of the current lupin prices to lock away a good proportion of the current production potential. The area planted to lupins is 30% higher than 2015 with yield potential perhaps 40% higher.

Additional information can be sourced from:

- **DAFWA: Seasonal Climate Information**
- **DAFWA: Potential Yield Calculator**
- **BoM: WA Seasonal Rainfall Outlook, next 3 months**
- **BoM: Month to date rainfall for WA**
- **BoM: Decile rainfall for April to June 2016**
- **WX Maps:16 day rainfall outlook**

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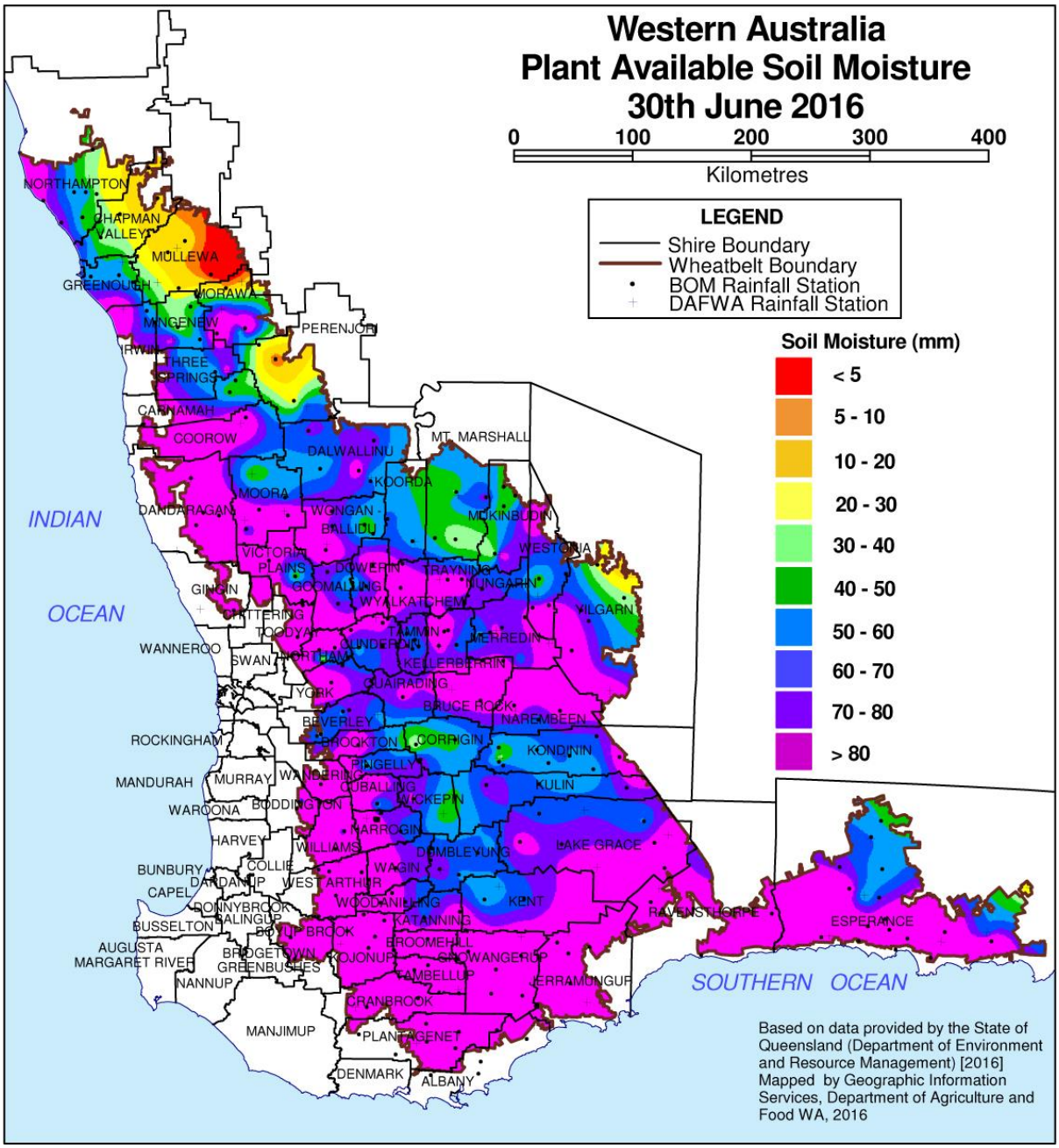
Season Outlook

The Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre (AEGIC) is discontinuing its climate services. GIWA wishes to gratefully acknowledge the expertise and contribution made in the past by Dr David Stephens and Phillip George in their roles in the Climate Forecasting and Modelling unit of AEGIC.

The map below has been provided courtesy of the Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia.



Department of Agriculture and Food

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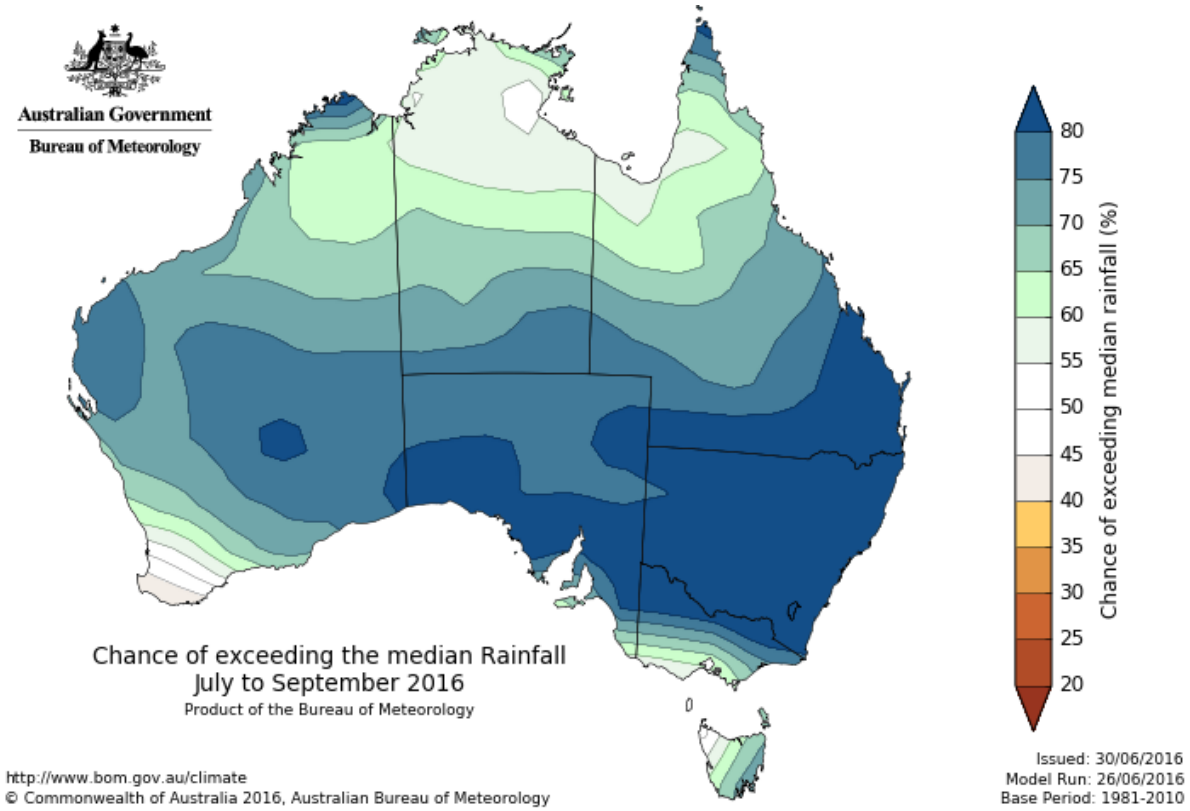
Bureau of Meteorology

Rainfall outlook

BoM 3 month outlook July to September 2016

- Most locations are likely to see above average rainfall this July to September.
- Warmer days are likely in the tropical north and Tasmania, while cooler days are likely elsewhere.
- Warmer nights are likely in the tropical north, eastern Victoria and Tasmania. Elsewhere across the southern mainland, cooler nights are more likely.
- July to September rainfall is likely to be above average across most of Australia. However, southwest WA and western Tasmania have roughly equal chances of a wetter or drier three months.
- July is likely to be wetter for most of Australia, except southwest WA.
- The current outlook reflects the combination of a developing negative Indian Ocean Dipole, a continued cooling of tropical Pacific Ocean sea surface temperatures, and very warm sea surface temperatures surrounding northern and eastern Australia.
- Historical outlook accuracy for July to September is moderate over most of Australia, but low in parts of the tropical north, near the WA border and central SA.



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