

CROP REPORT

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The 2022 Grain Season – Recent rain keeps very good start to season on track

The Western Australian grain crop is on track for another very good year following last year's record tonnage production for all crops. There is an historically large crop in the ground of around 9 million hectares, planted on the back of high grain prices leading up to and during seeding. The crop is in good shape for this time of the year with the recent rain arriving just in time for crops in the drier regions in the central and north of the state and topping up moisture profiles in the southern regions of the state. Rainfall in the northern grain growing regions, where it was needed most, has been light so far and more will be needed to maintain the current grain yield potential.

The soil moisture profiles in the central and northern regions have been running down over the last two months and the early sown crops were starting to show the signs of moisture stress. Whilst the grain crop across the state is well set up for another huge crop, most grain growing regions, particularly those in the central and north, are going to need good winter and spring rain to exceed the 20 million tonne mark of total grain production again this year.

Canola plantings in the state have exceeded barley for the second year in a row and are nudging the record 1.9 million hectares of barley planted in 2018, just prior to the China tariffs being introduced. The canola crop is generally more advanced compared with June last year and could easily produce more than 3 million tonnes of grain again this year if the rain keeps coming.

The wheat crop area is again up around the 5 million hectare mark and crops are in a similar condition to June 2021. Wheat crops in the large wheat growing areas of the eastern regions of the state do not quite have the same potential as compared to this time last year, although a lot of that potential was not realized due to the frosts in spring. Away from these lower rainfall central and northern areas, there are regions where the condition of the wheat crop is well ahead of where it was last year.

Growers have not backed off on crop inputs due to the higher costs as some may have expected. The increase in grain prices and a good start has warranted sticking to a strategy of maximum profit based on water limited grain yield potential. Good weed control upfront, even crop establishment and timely post-emergent nitrogen applications, combined with a large area planted, have set up the state for another potentially big harvest.

2022 Season GIWA June WA Crop Area Estimates (hectares)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Pulses	State total
Kwinana	2,750,000	570,000	780,000	170,000	130,000	8,000	4,408,000
Albany	450,000	600,000	430,000	120,000	30,000	8,000	1,638,000
Esperance	490,000	300,000	330,000	10,000	20,000	20,000	1,170,000
Geraldton	1,200,000	150,000	290,000	10,000	95,000	2,000	1,747,000
Totals	4,890,000	1,620,000	1,830,000	310,000	275,000	38,000	8,963,000

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Geraldton Zone

The Geraldton port zone ranges from very very good through to drought mode. The strip of country from Three Springs across to Perenjori down to Wubin and Carnamah is exceptionally dry with crops still not out of the ground, there is also a patch of country around Northampton that is dry as well. In between these areas there are amazing canola crops with some 30 to 40 per cent in flower. The coastal areas around Badgingarra and Eneabba have had consistent rain that has helped to get the crop up evenly on the non-wetting sands and has kept crops growing during the recent warm weather.

Early wheat that was planted in April has had its' first pass of nitrogen and crop protection treatments. There are wheat crops from early sown in April, through to still coming out of the ground, so there's a huge spread of maturities in the zone which will hopefully give a good buffer for any frost that may come up later in the season. Nearly every farm has a range of maturities from mid-tillering to early emergence.

The total crop area is up slightly in the zone with lupins being replaced with canola. Many growers put in an extra paddock or two of canola, displacing what was intended to be either fallow in the east or lupins in the west. Two thirds of the canola was out of the ground in early May and is well in front of where it was in 2021.

Diamondback moth caterpillars have moved in on early sown canola crops in the last two weeks from 2021 volunteer plants left uncontrolled prior to sowing cereal crops. This is an emerging problem, as it is with green peach aphid on the south coast where the infection source builds up on early germinating plants that are not sprayed out. There are also signs of budworm in cereals.

Kwinana Zone

Kwinana North Midlands

Seeding is pretty well finished now with the crops generally in better condition in most of the zone than last year. Most canola has had the first pass for weed control and a lot of nitrogen was going out in anticipation of this week's rains. The early cereals are looking good, probably too good for this time of the year, and need some cold weather to slow them down as they are leafed up and racing through their growth stages.

The areas to the east were becoming dry in the last few weeks and the rain received over the last few days was really needed. The western areas around Moora had become very wet and un-trafficable. The crop area in the region has sneaked up due to the good prices and early rain letting pastures get away early that took the pressure off sheep feed.

Mouse activity has had to be managed with a fair bit of baiting completed during seeding and some paddocks needing repeat baiting.

Kwinana South

The western areas of the Kwinana South zone have been behind the rest of the state up until now with crops generally going in later due to light patchy rain in April and May. There are plenty of early canola crops in the region planted at the end of March and early May, although most cereals were planted dry.

This drier area of the state is significant and runs west of the Meckering line south of Bolgart to southwest of Williams in the Albany port zone. Whilst being later than other areas of the state, the rain over the last few days will help to even things up. Crops have good grain yield potential as there are reasonable reserves of sub-soil moisture carried over from 2021.

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The early canola crops are starting to reach full ground cover and the rain this week is perfect timing for washing in urea and getting weed control.

In the eastern areas of the zone south of the Great Eastern Highway, all crops are in good shape and have above average grain yield potential. In the areas north of the Great Eastern Highway, the crops were starting to stress and if they continue to get showers of rain over the next few days, will be back on track for at least an average year.

Kwinana North East

The northern parts of the Kwinana North East zone have had a good start and crops, particularly in the western areas, are in better shape than this time last year. The wheat in the eastern region does not have the same potential as last year although there is a large area planted again and could produce a lot of tonnes if the season is at least average going forward. The crops are relatively early and most have some stored moisture underneath.

The canola plantings have increased from 2021 due to the early break and good prices at the time and it is this area and further south on the border of the Esperance and Albany port zones where a lot of the extra hectares in 2022 have been planted.

Albany Zone

Albany West

All crops in the region look really good, with the early crops better than good. There are canola crops starting to flower which is unusual in the region for this time of the year. The cereals look magnificent, although those on the gravel ridges were needing a drink up until a few days ago. The region will need a decent drop of rain from the frontal system moving through the state this week to keep crops ticking along.

There are some drier areas in the west of the region and up through Williams / Narrogin that are not as advanced as further east.

There has been a lot of top-dressing of nitrogen going on and some growers have been held up with delays in delivery of urea. The crops with more biomass were showing signs of nitrogen stress in the last week and will benefit from this rain.

A few of the intended wheat paddocks ended up going to barley, and lupins have been substituted out for canola in the eastern areas of the zone. The oat area has continued to decline, particularly in the dedicated hay growing areas to the north of the zone with many of these paddocks going into canola.

Albany South

It has been a cracking start down south, the only hiccup was a fair bit of pasture lost through Borden and Ongerup and even out to Jerramungup from the false breaks this year. In contrast, the early sown crops have hung on through those dry periods at the start of the year and are in very good shape.

Most of the canola is as good as it has been for probably 5 to 8 years as far as cabbaging. First flowers were just starting to appear last week and are expecting to be 10 per cent flower by middle of the month, which also means crops are now at a stage where they could handle a bit of waterlogging.

The line from Gairdner and Jerramungup to Jacup and Ravensthorpe is on the wet side, and a few growers have had to stop seeding due to trafficability issues.

A lot of March sown canola is approaching 5 per cent flowering and it is not clear if it will or won't be grazed this year because there's plenty of alternative feed.

Winter wheat is looking good and is well and truly pushing 500 tillers per square metre already and is looking great. These crops will get a haircut as they are grazed over the next few weeks.

Bug-wise, there is more lucerne flea and resistant red mite in patches, and it is patchy within paddocks. There is no sign of diamondback moth grubs as yet and hopefully the cold weather keeps them away.

Across the board in the area, it is looking above average and at this point very positive.

There is a lot of leaf testing of cereal crops to check nutrient status and early tests have shown up with adequate nitrogen. Top-ups, where logistically possible, will get delayed to soak up some natural nitrogen and hold back on the expensive stuff.

Albany East (Lakes Region)

The Lakes district is very positive again this year. The eastern areas around Lake King and Mt Madden have been quite wet, and crops through here are set-up well for a very good year. In contrast, the western regions have been very dry up until recently.

Canola is looking excellent and better than it was this time last year. Most canola crops are a good week earlier than last year, with a number of crops just starting to flower. There was an extended canola planting period and as some of these were more opportunistic. The later sown crops are well behind those sown in early April, which are quite thick and are looking good with a lot of nitrogen going out.

The cereals are going well and in the last week there has been net blotch starting to pop up on 3 leaf barley and even in Maximus® which is a bit of a concern.

The eastern areas, in particular, Lake King and Mt Madden, have received lot of rainfall to date and are set up well for this growing season with lots of soil moisture, including the region south of Lake Grace.

Areas may get too wet with the coming rain and there will be patches where growers won't be able to do anything for a few weeks because otherwise they will make too much of a mess. It won't be detrimental to the crop because most is out of the ground, however, unlike last year where areas needed re-seeding, this year is more about trafficability problems.

Esperance Zone

The Esperance Port Zone has had very good start to the growing season with early sown canola and barley crops nearly at full ground cover. Overall, the grain yield potential at present is similar to 2021, with some areas better than last year and some areas not as good. Crops in the west and far east of the zone are as good as the same time last year, whilst some areas east of Esperance have missed out on rain and are not as good. There is more waterlogging in south-western areas than last year. The better areas have close to a full moisture profile and will not need much more rain to become untrafficable. Crops in these areas are bulked up and will easily withstand some waterlogging if it comes in wet over the next few months. However, some of the early canola plantings are not as even as they were in 2021 due to very heavy rain over a few days in late April causing emergence to be reduced.

The area of crop that has been planted is similar to last year with less area left out than was planned due the relatively high grain prices.

A lot of nitrogen has been top-dressed and early fungicides are going on for leaf disease in barley and blackleg in canola. Growers in the area are not holding back on nitrogen either. There are still some hot spots of mice around, although numbers are significantly reduced from what they were a few months ago.

The faba beans, lupins and lentil crops look much better this year and are benefitting from a good germination due to the warm growing conditions.



Season Outlook, June 2022

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Rain in March and April offered early seeding opportunities across much of the WA grainbelt. May rain has been below average for much of the northern, central and eastern cropping areas, and combined with warmer daytime temperatures, has resulted in declining soil water storage.

Estimated root-zone soil water in early June was below average over much of the region, although parts of the south coast had above average soil water storage. See Figure 1.

In this context, predicted rain in the second week of June will be important in providing water for crops already sown, and to enable crop emergence. Total rain for June is expected to be below average over the cropping area. Climate models are indicating improving seasonal rainfall for southern WA from August onwards.

Climate conditions in the Pacific Ocean show the La Niña event is slowly decaying and still having an influence on Australian climate. As well, most models are predicting the development of a negative Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) event in winter. While this promotes rainfall over inland and eastern Australia it has a weak impact on southern WA. Oceans are warmer than normal around Australia, which can increase rain rates if weather systems can access it.

Most climate models retain neutral rainfall outlooks for June to August 2022 for the agricultural area of WA. Daytime temperatures are expected to remain above average.

Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook summary, issued 9 June 2022:

- July to September rainfall is likely to be above median for much of Australia, but below median for south-west Tasmania.
- July to September maximum temperatures are likely to be above median for northern, south-western and far south-eastern parts of Australia, but below median mostly elsewhere.
- Minimum temperatures for July to September are likely to be warmer than median for almost all of Australia.
- The likelihood of a negative Indian Ocean Dipole, the weakening La Niña, warmer than average waters around northern Australia, and other localised drivers are likely to be influencing this outlook.

Additional information is available from:

[DPIRD: Seasonal Climate Information](#)

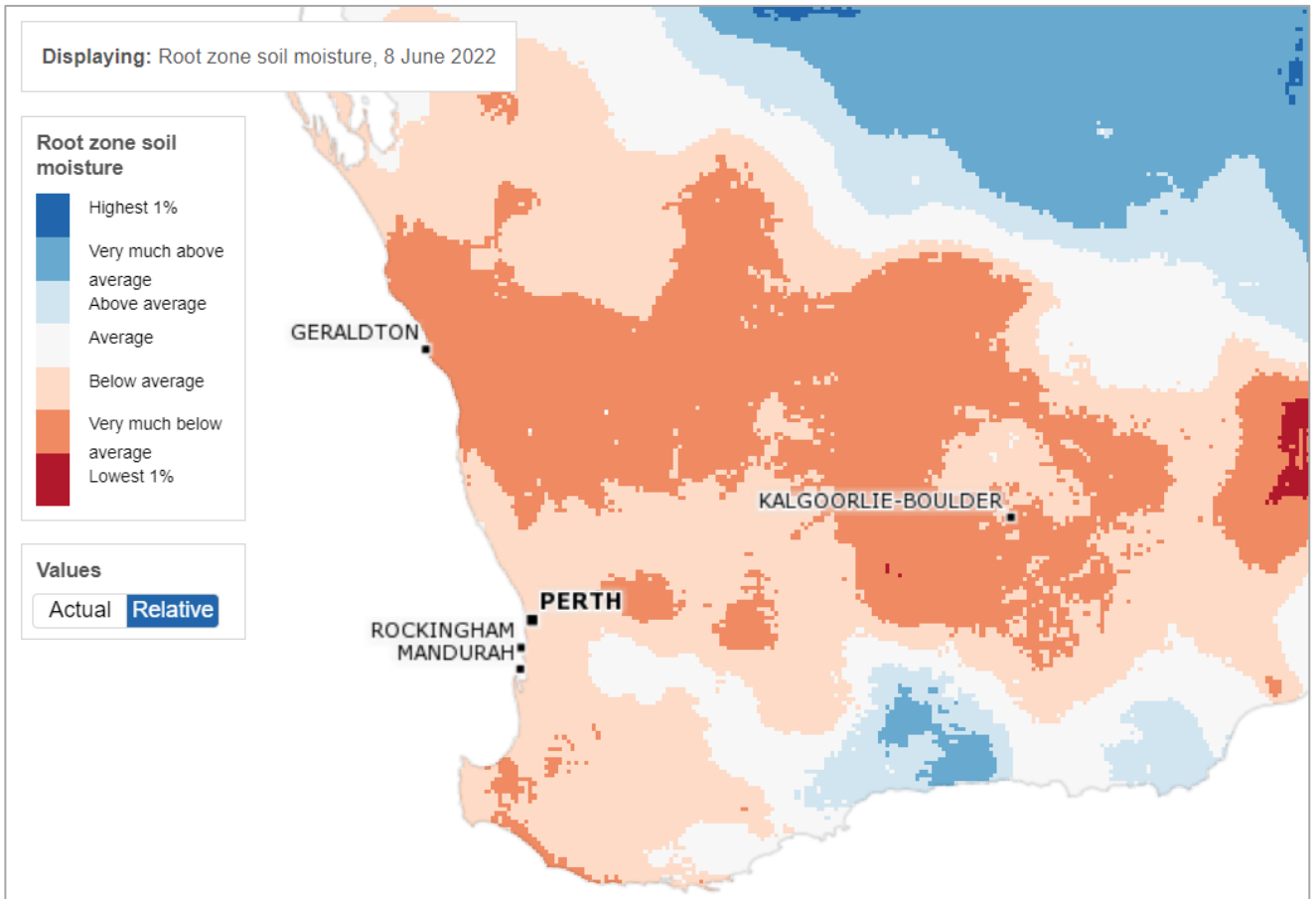
[DPIRD: Soil Water Tool](#)

[BoM: Seasonal Rainfall Outlook - weeks, months and seasons](#)

[BoM: Decile rainfall for March to May 2022](#)

[BoM: Seasonal Outlook video](#)

[BoM: Australian Water Outlook](#)



**Figure 1. Estimated root-zone soil water deciles at 8 June 2022.
From BoM landscape water balance model.**

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