

CROP REPORT

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The 2022 Grain Season – Back on track for 20 million tonnes of grain

Beautifully timed rainfall in the second half of July and more recently in early August, have improved the chances of another very good harvest in Western Australia. The previously dry areas of the state, particularly in the northern grainbelt, are on track for at least average grain yields and the areas that were less impacted from the “dry July”, are looking at above average grain yields. The southern areas have gone from “very good” to “a bit wet”, which was the only dampener on the change in weather patterns over the last three weeks.

All grain crops are further advanced in growth stage than normal due to the very warm winter. This has both an upside and a downside. The upside is a greater percentage of the crop will be filling grain prior to the inevitable heat in the spring, reducing the chance of heat shock. The downside is the crop will be exposed to a greater period of frost risk, and this is a growers’ greatest fear. The cereal crops will be vulnerable to frost from now onward in the central and northern regions as many are already running up.

Many crops shed potential yield due to the below average rainfall in June and early July and do not have the bulk of 2021. Fertiliser usage has come back a little this year due to the cost and the dry winter. Coming off the back of very good grain yields in 2021 where nutrient reserves were exhausted and the season kicked on unexpectedly, crops are now looking “underdone”. Whilst the top end potential is not there, the very large area of crop in the ground, and mostly in pretty good shape, means at least 20 million tonnes could again be on the cards.

The recent rainfall has brought with it an increase of leaf disease in cereals with powdery mildew in wheat and net blotch’s in barley requiring extra spring fungicide applications in most areas. Sclerotinia in canola and lupins is also requiring control. Insects are now building in numbers in the north and central regions and are also requiring control.

The additional data we now have to hand now that we are a little further into the season, confirms what many suspected, which is that there is a huge area of canola in the ground, somewhere just shy of 2 million hectares, mostly at the expense of lupins and oats.

2022 Season GIWA August Western Australia Crop Production Estimates (tonnes)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Pulses	State total
Kwinana	5,400,000	1,900,000	1,200,000	280,000	140,000	10,000	8,930,000
Albany	1,200,000	2,000,000	800,000	240,000	60,000	16,000	4,316,000
Esperance	1,350,000	970,000	700,000	20,000	60,000	36,000	3,136,000
Geraldton	2,350,000	250,000	460,000	5,000	160,000	2,000	3,227,000
Totals	10,300,000	5,120,000	3,160,000	545,000	420,000	64,000	19,609,000

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.

GIWA gratefully acknowledges the support of DPIRD, CBH, DAS and contributions from independent agricultural consultants and agronomists in the production of this report.

Geraldton Zone

Crop conditions have improved in the last three weeks with most areas now receiving rainfall that will give growers at least average grain yields, with upside if more rain falls in the next few weeks. Total grain production is unlikely to match last year as the crops do not have a much biomass, with cereals shedding tillers and canola being very stressed in late June and early July. The very dry patches in the southern portions of the zone have improved dramatically with most wheat crops having the potential of between 1.5 to 1.8T/ha, a vast improvement on a month ago. Nitrogen use efficiency should be excellent as there has been few leaching rains. This should offset the impact of reduced fertiliser use.

The canola crops in the region have recovered well, and yields are likely to be up there with long term averages. Most canola crops have received two sclerotinia sprays, with the disease really taking hold in the warm conditions. The warm conditions and very early plantings have facilitated the rapid build-up in diamondback moth and green peach aphid activity which will require controlling.

The lupins are fairly compact and have podded exceptionally well. Many have been sprayed for sclerotinia and most will need bug sprays in the next few weeks.

Kwinana Zone

Kwinana North Midlands

The North Midlands area is in pretty good shape now that those dry areas in the central and northern portions have had some decent falls of rain in the last month. The wheat in particular looks better than last year due to less waterlogging and is more advanced than the same time last year. Most growers had backed off on fertiliser use this year, more due to the dry start to winter and dry forecast than price, and this will hold back top end potential and particularly protein.

There has been plenty of leaf disease around and most crops have required spraying for something. Now that the crops have “banked some moisture” for the spring as crops are close to ear peep, frost will be the main potential limiting factor for the next six weeks.

Kwinana South

Rain in the back half of July and early August has transformed the western portions of the zone from just okay to very good. The western areas were well down on average rainfall and whilst crops were not suffering to the same extent as those further north, the timing was perfect as it has enabled crops to bulk up and most now have above average potential due to their advanced growth stages. Further east, the crops are as good as last year, and more advanced.

Kwinana North East

The lower rainfall region of the Kwinana port zone had a very good start and now with top-up rainfall, the crops are generally looking very good. The crop biomass is probably not there as it was last year, although this may be a good thing as less top means less exposure to heat shock in the spring. At present, the grain yield potential is lower than last year, although if the crops escape significant frost, growers could deliver more grain than in 2021.

This area of the state has contributed the most to the increase in canola plantings this year due to the early break and good canola prices at seeding time. The challenge for the region is to convert this extra area to extra grain as the looming increase in bug activity further north is a pointer to what is to come for the region.

Albany Zone

Albany West

Crops have gone from “perfect” to “a bit wet” in the last two weeks, with the waterlogged areas now showing up where previously the paddocks were very even from fence to fence. Total grain production potential is still higher than 2021 at present, as the crops are in exceptional shape and the wet areas are smaller and less severe than last year.

It has been a hectic three months with the rapid crop growth rates during winter, with most in-crop fertiliser and crop protection treatments finished. There will be some late in-crop activities to come once the country is trafficable again for disease, bugs and nitrogen top-ups, although for now it is a case of sitting back and watching the crops grow as most budgets have been spent.

Mice are starting to cause damage to early canola crops in the eastern areas of the zone. Other than that, there are no major issues with the crops.

Albany South

The southern areas of the zone are now very wet and un-trafficable. Crop growth has been exceptional and current grain yield potential is equal to or higher than last year as the wet areas are not “as wet” or as extensive. It is expected the crops will recover quickly due to their advanced growth stages when the rain does back off.

Crop development is well ahead of normal, although there is still a fair way to go, and if the season looks likely to kick-on once conditions dry out, growers may top-up with nitrogen to push the potential.

Albany East (Lakes Region)

Whilst all crops in the Lakes district look very good, rather than on track for 3 tonne barley and wheat averages like last year, crops are looking more like 2.5 tonnes, which is still well above average. Interestingly, many of the cereals on good legume stubbles or legume pastures seem to have held their potential, which points more to crops being underdone for fertiliser rather than the “dry July” shedding potential. Canola shed some yield potential in early July and has not fully recovered with crops mostly having 1.5 tonnes rather than 2 tonne potential, but this is still above average.

Lupin crops are looking very good and some eastern hay crops are very early, having already pushed into ear due to the warm growing conditions.

There have not been many frosts to date and since it is such an historically frosty area, there is concern that the region will not escape “scott free” as it did last year whilst regions further north were hard hit. Most paddocks have become quite wet in the last week and the country is now “properly wet” which has put the brakes on any field activities for the time being. Most growers have wound up crop protection and fertiliser applications and this extra moisture will be more help than hinderance when the temperatures warm up.

Esperance Zone

Last year, crops across the zone looked very even, whereas this year they are not looking as good. There are more areas of dry and more areas of wet this year and as in other parts of the grainbelt, the dry start to the winter put a bit of a brake on potential which is going to be difficult to make up for now. The recent rain has improved the dry regions around “the Gums” and made the wet areas wetter.

It has been a good year for leaf diseases and most crops have had at least one or more applications to control powdery mildew in wheat, sclerotinia in canola and up to three sprays for net blotch in barley.

Most of the nitrogen applications are wound up and it is now down to the finish to determine the outcome. Threats on the horizon are frost and mice, in that order. Frost could swing final grain production this year more than the finish, whilst mice are a bit of an unknown. Worrying numbers are still present in a lot of areas and growers are baiting to reduce numbers to limit their exponential increase as it warms up.

Significant mice activity has been reported in most grain growing regions with growers competing for planes to spread baits and late fungicide applications. The magnitude of the potential for mice to impact on grain production is unknown. Most growers are taking no chances and are trying to reduce numbers before breeding gets underway in the spring.



Season Outlook, August 2022

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Climate Summary

Rain in the second part of July brought monthly totals to be near average or wetter for cropping areas ranging from the north to the south coast. Parts of the western and eastern areas had below normal rain. Despite that, soil water storage in most parts is now near average or better, especially along the west coast, *see Figure 1*.

Climate conditions in the Pacific Ocean show the La Niña event has ended, although there is a chance of another La Niña developing late in the year. A negative Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) event is now established. 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 or perhaps wetter rainfall outlooks for August to October 2022 for the agricultural area of WA, although the BoM model (updated 4th August) has a drier outlook for the southwest. *See Figure 2*. Daytime temperatures are expected to remain above average.

Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook summary, issued 4 August 2022:

- August to October rainfall is likely to be above median for most of Australia, but below median for western Tasmania and an area of south-western WA.
- August to October maximum temperatures are likely to be above median for the tropics, parts of the west and far south east, but below median for parts of the east and southern interior encompassing most of South Australia.
- Minimum temperatures for August to October are likely to be above median nationwide.
- The negative Indian Ocean Dipole event, warmer than average waters around northern Australia, and a neutral to cool phase of the El Niño–Southern Oscillation are likely to be influencing this outlook.

Additional information is available from:

[DPIRD: Seasonal Climate Information](#)

[DPIRD: Soil Water Tool](#)

[BoM: Decile rainfall for April to July 2022](#)

[BoM: Rainfall outlook for the next week](#)

[BoM: Seasonal Rainfall Outlook](#)

[BoM: Australian Water Outlook](#)

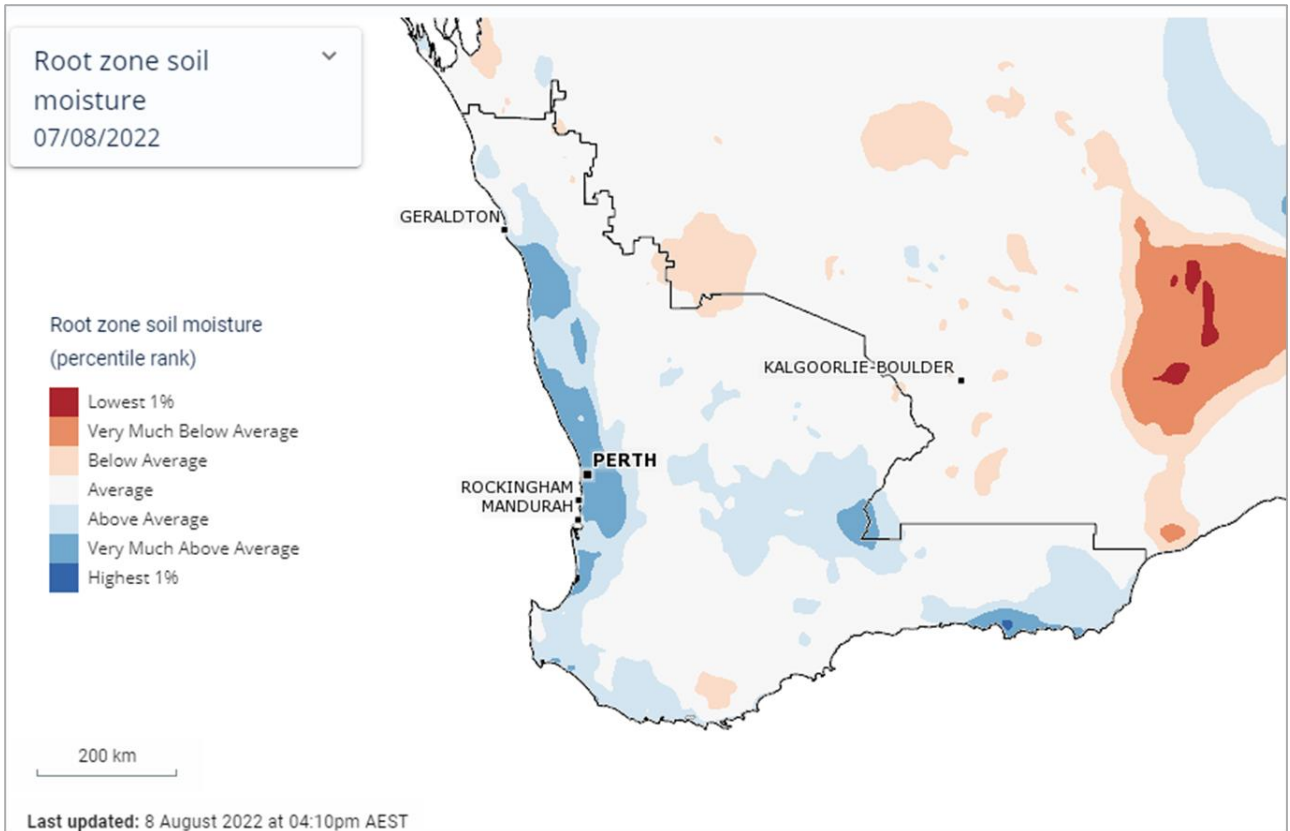


Figure 1. Estimated root-zone soil water deciles at 8 August 2022. From BoM Australian Water Outlook.

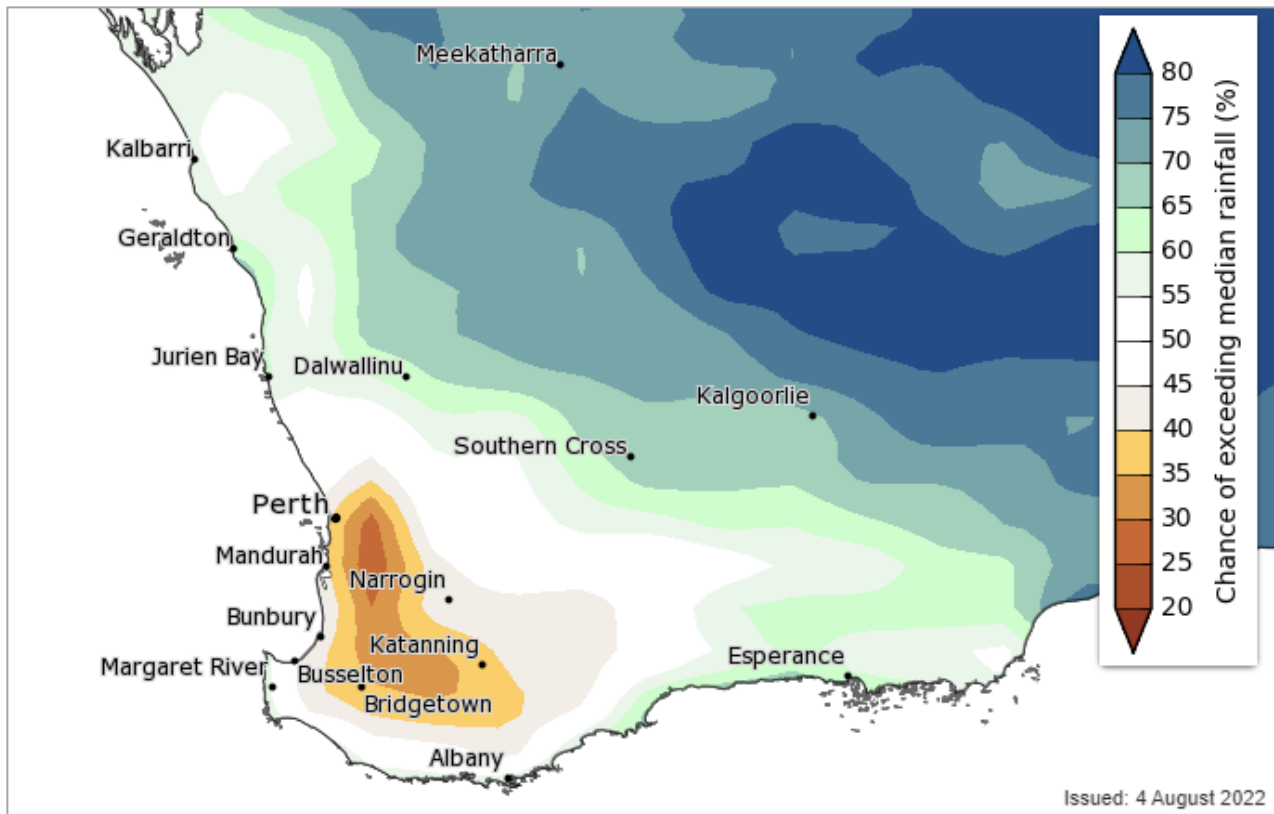


Figure 2. Chances of exceeding median rainfall for August to October 2022. From BoM, issued 4 August 2022.

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