

CROP REPORT

PO Box 1081, BENTLEY DC, WA 6983

P +61 8 6262 2128

E info@giwa.org.au

@GrainIndustryWA

www.giwa.org.au



11 November 2022

The 2022 Grain Season – Delayed start to harvest fueling another likely record tonnage for WA

The later than normal start to harvest in Western Australia has been due mainly to the very cool mild conditions in spring, continuing right up until now. Whilst this is frustrating for some growers wanting to get their crop off, it has fueled the extra tonnes that will likely see this harvest exceed 2021's record production. The mild finish to the season and rain in late August and early September, have combined to finish off a near perfect season across all grain growing regions of the state.

Rainfall in the central and southern half of the state over the last two weeks has further slowed the start of harvest and is now beginning to cause trouble with lodging, head loss and expected downgrades in quality if the rain persists. Severe storms across the central grain growing regions in the last few days have further added to the delay in getting started for many growers. Grain loss from hail across the central and southern regions in the last two weeks is starting to add up and, whilst significant for individual growers, is not expected to impact the total tonnage of grain produced in Western Australia from being another record production year.

Very little crop has been harvested to date across Western Australia for this time of the year, although what has been harvested has exceeded expectations by several hundred kilograms per hectare in nearly all cases for canola and wheat. If this continues as harvest marches south, total grain production for WA will exceed the record 24 million tonnes produced in 2021 by a fair margin.

Canola is an absolute standout across the state mostly due to the good early start and slow finish, although with likely production set to nudge 4 million tonnes, canola has matured to a serious crop from a small start 30 years ago. The sophistication in growing the crop has accelerated in recent years where the improvements in agronomy practices have narrowed the gap between the yields growers are getting and the high variety potential.

Lupin crops are exceptional across the state, and the small areas of barley and wheat harvested to date are also exceptional, particularly in the low rainfall regions where for many it will be the best year for some time.

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

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Pulses	State total
Kwinana	6,800,000	2,300,000	1,750,000	290,000	160,000	10,000	11,310,000
Albany	1,300,000	2,400,000	1,000,000	250,000	60,000	20,000	5,030,000
Esperance	1,600,000	1,200,000	730,000	20,000	60,000	40,000	3,650,000
Geraldton	2,900,000	250,000	500,000	5,000	320,000	2,000	3,977,000
Totals	12,600,000	6,150,000	3,980,000	565,000	600,000	72,000	23,967,000

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

Growers are well into canola harvest with crops yielding 200 to 400kg/ha more than last year and plenty of paddock averages greater than 2.2t/ha. Interestingly, canola oil percentages have been mostly in the high 40's, whereas oil percentages in the rest of the state have been quite variable. Lupins are also exceptional with yields well above average. Both canola and lupin grain yields are coming in better than 2021.

Little wheat has come off to date, although what has, is yielding very well. Average wheat yields across the region are expected to be similar to 2021. Whilst the later crops look better than 2021, the early sown wheat crops suffered irreversible top end potential from the tough start. In the low rainfall eastern regions and areas where the wheat went in early, the grain protein shoots up as soon as the yield dips below 2t/ha with some loads going H2.

Noticeably, even though the region had a very mild grain fill period, the spaded country is yielding well above the un-spaded country with similar soil types, reinforcing that soil amelioration provides benefits in milder finishes too.

Kwinana Zone

Kwinana North Midlands

Growers are harvesting canola across all areas of the zone, and the better areas are going 2 to 3t/ha with oils back a bit from last year and mostly in the range of 43 to 45 per cent. Hail in some spots has totalled the canola, but cereals are mostly unaffected. Harvesting has been slow going with cool temperatures overnight and damp mornings. Overall canola grain yields look to be better than the 2021 Season.

Some small areas of barley have been taken off in the eastern regions. Little wheat has been harvested to date, although dark areas are starting to show up in the low-lying areas likely due to frost. There looks to be some discoloration in wheat from the aftermath of uncontrolled powdery mildew which will likely result in fungal stained grain.

Lots of mice are being noticed under barley swaths that are still too wet to pick up with the header.

Kwinana South

Small areas of canola have been harvested to date with rain in the last few days holding up most growers. The canola harvested is in the 2 to 3t/ha range in the west and a bit less going east in the region. The late start is not apparent for the western areas as the crops look as good as they have ever been and will come close to the very high yields of 2021 for all crops.

Hail has completely taken out canola in strips, although the total area impacted is small. There has been less damage to the cereals as most were still a little green.

Kwinana North East

The region is well on track to have one of the best harvests in a while. The areas of canola that have been harvested are in the 1.5t/ha range with some going more than 2.0t/ha, which is a fair bit more than most would have hoped for. Unfortunately, for those that have been hit by the hail in the last few days, insurance estimates will probably be way too low.

Cereals are very good, and the lack of frost and heat stress is going to result in a lot of grain for the whole of the low rainfall regions.

Albany Zone

Albany West

Most growers are just starting on their canola with grain yields being very good as was expected. The small areas harvested are indicating well above average grain yields to come for most growers. The cereals look good, and the region is in for another very good harvest.

Albany South

Rain in the order of 100 to 150mm in the last two weeks has resulted in serious trafficability issues, crops standing in water and quite a bit of lodging, which is going to slow down harvest further.

Canola yields are in the 1.0 to 3.0t/ha range and are generally up by around 1.0t/ha on 2021 yields. However, with most being around the 2.0t/ha range, yields are not quite as good as were expected. The hybrid varieties are a standout in the region over the open pollinated varieties. Oil is down a bit on previous years. Hail has taken out strips of canola in paddocks, and for the most part head loss in cereals is minimal but big areas have lodged.

Late armyworm in barley and budworm in the canola caused some damage near the end and diamondback moth has damaged the early planted winter canola.

The persistent rain is now impacting potential tonnage production for the region with some crops swimming in waterlogged paddocks, others lodging from the crown, and others broken at the stems from hail damage.

Albany East (Lakes Region)

The region for 2022 has had a dream run and this has continued over the last month with very mild temperatures assisting in slow grain fill and topping up the potential set up earlier in the year.

Rain over the last two weeks, whilst slowing down the start of harvest, has not caused too much damage to canola or barley crops in the region and may have even benefited some of the later wheat crops that were still in the later stages of grain fill.

The recent hailstorms that caused havoc to the north luckily petered out before they could do any significant damage.

Very little harvesting has occurred to date, although the signs are positive as canola paddocks harvested are going between 1.8 to 2.2t/ha with very good oil percentages of between 46 to 50 per cent. If this keeps up, canola tonnage will be up on 2021. Cereals are expected to be similar to 2021 which was a record year for the region.

The crops looked a bit “average” up until the end of the third week in August. There was then some top-up rain and warmer temperatures and they picked up noticeably, probably due to a kick in mineralised nitrogen. This was noticed in other grain growing regions of the state and shows what the soil can contribute if the conditions are favourable, and the length of the growing season allows it.

Esperance Zone

Rain over the last few weeks is starting to become an annoyance as some growers in the northern regions of the zone have had up to 120mm recently, which is significant compared to the 190mm or so received up to that point in the growing season. Some growers are now stopped due to risk of getting bogged in paddocks.

It appears to be the start of an “old fashioned” harvest for the region with intermittent rain, moist onshore air-flow and rapid swings in temperature, reminding more experienced growers how it used to be.

Most growers are still on canola with little barley and wheat harvested yet. Canola harvesting is about half completed, although some in the wetter areas are just getting started. Canola yields are good, with crops in the northern drier regions going 1.2t/ha where they had looked to be 1.0t/ha crops. Further south, many paddocks are averaging 2.0t/ha and some up around 2.5t/ha. Oil percentages have not been great, mostly in the low 40's range. Growers are finding areas of frosted canola, which has taken the top of grain yields in places. It remains to be seen what impact frost has had on wheat.

Cereals are starting to fall over and, in some cases, depending on the variety, this has already been quite bad. Some of the early maturing wheat varieties are also already starting to sprout and it is likely both the wheat and barley will be stained if the rain continues.

Snails are running rampant which will cause problems next year, as will ryegrass poking through the crops with seed set uncontrolled. The wet conditions will of course mean plenty of summer spraying for weeds as the good levels of subsoil moisture will want to be preserved for next year.



Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

Season Outlook, November 2022

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Climate Summary

October rain was drier than normal for northern cropping areas, but wetter than normal for eastern and southern regions. In particular, the South Coast has been wet and cool. Seasonal rain (April to October) was near-average for northern regions and wetter than normal for eastern and southern cropping regions. The South Coast was much wetter than normal. Estimated soil water storage for the top 1 metre is notably above average for eastern and southern regions.

Early November has seen severe thunderstorms with heavy rain and hail across central and southern cropping regions. The remainder of the month should see drier conditions, except for the South Coast.

Temperatures have been below normal for August to October, with this pattern continuing for the early part of November. Climate conditions should become more suitable for harvest in December.

Most climate models show neutral rainfall outlooks for December 2022 to February 2023 for the agricultural area of WA. See Figure 1 for the BoM rainfall outlook, noting the contrast with eastern Australia.

Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook summary, issued 3 November 2022:

November to January rainfall is likely to be above median for most of eastern Australia, with the highest probabilities occurring in November. Below median rainfall is likely for large parts of Western Australia.

November to January maximum temperatures are likely to be warmer than median for the north-east of Western Australia, the north and west of the Northern Territory, around the Gulf of Carpentaria, and in Tasmania. Below median temperatures are likely for the southern half of Australia.

November to January minimum temperatures are likely to be warmer than median for the north and much of south-eastern Australia. Below median temperatures are likely along the Kimberley coast, the Pilbara and south-eastern Western Australia, and over north-east New South Wales.

Several climate drivers are contributing to this wet outlook, including La Niña, a negative Indian Ocean Dipole event, positive Southern Annular Mode, and warmer waters around Australia.

Additional information is available from:

[DPIRD: Seasonal Climate Information](#)

[DPIRD: Soil Water Tool](#)

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

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

[BoM: Seasonal Rainfall Outlook](#)

[BoM: Australian Water Outlook](#)

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



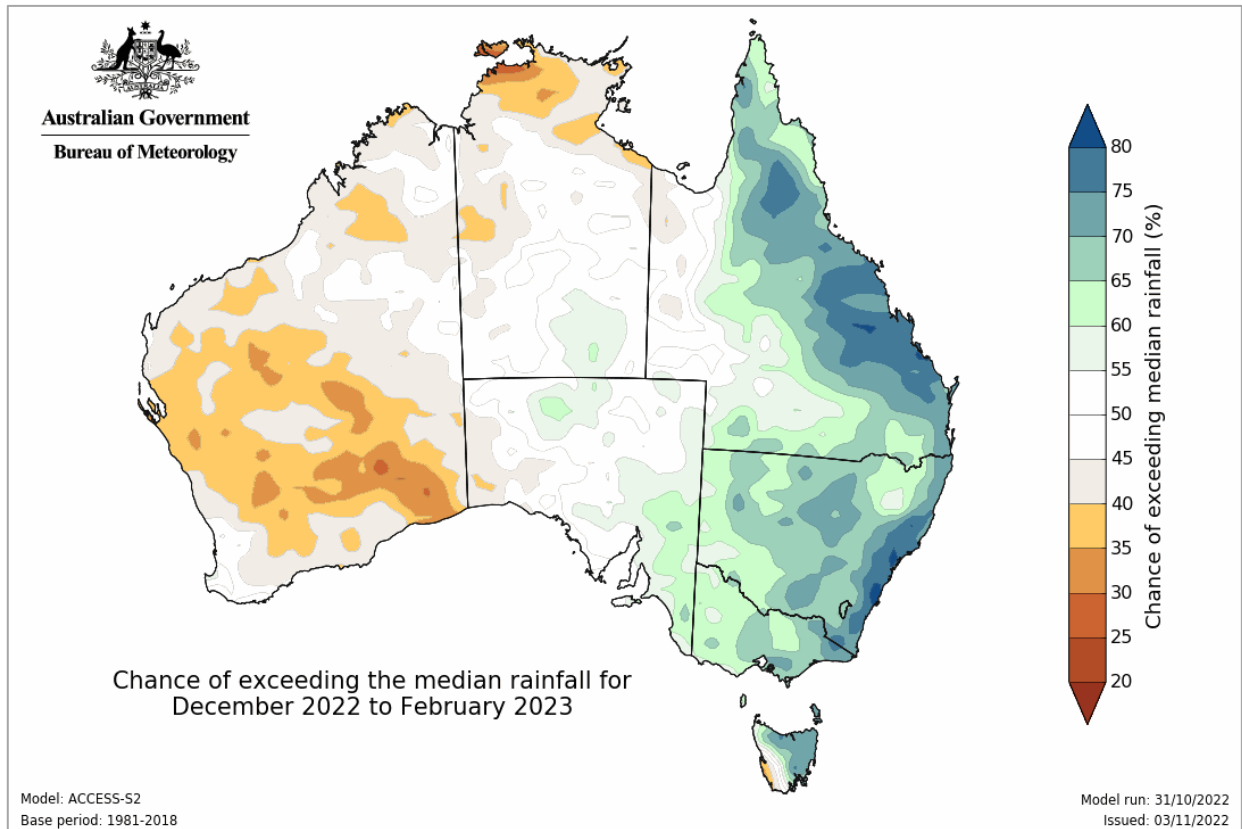


Figure 1. Rainfall outlook for December 2022 to February 2023. From Bureau of Meteorology.

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