

CROP REPORT

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The 2024 Grain Season – Rain delays dampening third largest harvest on record

Growers in Western Australia are closing in on a crop that will end up in the 18-19 million tonne range, which will make it the third largest grain crop on record. This will be remarkable considering the start of the season and below average rainfall for all regions, other than the northern agricultural zones.

Up until the widespread rains that fell this week, the grain was coming off at a record rate for this time of the year, due to good conditions, increased harvesting capacity, well-organised receival sites and seeing the impending rain coming from a long way out, growers were working longer hours.

Rain this week has stopped or slowed harvest in most areas of the state. Light rainfall has been annoying in the central regions and heavier rain in the eastern fringes and southwestern fringes will be more than annoying as grain quality will likely be impacted.

Grain yields have been higher than expected so far for all crops in most areas. While grain yields have been above average, the crops were obviously on the verge of crashing, as much of the wheat has high screenings and there's very low retention in the barley. Crops in some areas where there was no rain at all in September did actually crash and burnt off prematurely, which highlighted the precarious position crops were in during the grain fill period.

In years like this, high screenings and low retention are directly related to soil type, variety maturity, soil amelioration and of course spring rain, and this is being reflected in a large range in grain quality in grain delivered to date. While the majority of the grainbelt did have well below average rain, this varied across the regions and the tonnage required to supply market demand for the premium quality grades will still likely be met.

Canola crops seem to have been less affected by the very dry finish with most yielding more than expected and grain quality, including oil percentages is good. The canola crops lacked the usual biomass due to the later start and this has assisted them in being able to conserve subsoil moisture to fill pods.

Lupin and oat grain yields are also coming in higher than expected. The area of both ended up more than our earlier estimates suggested, and this has contributed to the tonnage estimates pushing up.

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

2024 Season GIWA November Western Australia Crop Production Estimates (tonnes)

Port Zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Pulses	State Total
Kwinana	4,970,000	1,860,000	940,000	335,000	210,000	12,000	8,327,000
Albany	1,500,000	1,800,000	800,000	230,000	90,000	20,000	4,440,000
Esperance	1,380,000	740,000	580,000	20,000	40,000	40,000	2,800,000
Geraldton	2,480,000	120,000	270,000	5,000	165,000	1,000	3,041,000
Totals	10,330,000	4,520,000	2,590,000	590,000	505,000	73,000	18,608,000

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.

Geraldton Zone

Snapshot

- Soil type and timing of crop agronomy has had the biggest impact on grain yields so far this year.
- Subsoil moisture reserves are already in place for next year's crop.

Harvest is about half finished for the region with grain yields ranging from the very good on the heavier soils to very poor on the lighter, lower water holding capacity soils. The better areas are better than thought prior to harvest commencing particularly where the varieties sown matched the short season, and fertiliser top ups and crop protection treatments hit tight timing windows.

The shortened growing season resulting from the late start accentuated the importance of timing. Where growers were able to get nitrogen on when the crops needed it, and the weeds were controlled early, the grain yields have been very good. Although where timing was a little out, grain yields have suffered. Matching the maturity of wheat varieties has also had a big impact on final grain yields. Due to the late start, the quicker varieties have outperformed the longer season varieties particularly where flowering happened to coincide with hot temperatures.

Aerial application of nitrogen fertiliser has once again proven to be something to avoid if possible, given the uneven distribution patterns seen in these crops.

Canola yields on the heavy country have been very good, hitting up to 3t/ha in the western areas although falling away dramatically to 1t/ha or less on the normally reliable sandplain further east. Lupin crops looked to lack pods in the spring, but most have ended up better than first thought. The small area of barley grown in the region has also yielded well but generally with very low retention levels.

Growers are making use of the residual subsoil moisture to run the deep rippers behind the headers in preparation for next year.

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Kwinana Zone

Kwinana North Midlands

Snapshot

- Grain yields are better than expected.
- High screenings in wheat and low retention in barley is going to limit the deliveries into the premium grades.

Most crops are yielding better than expected with canola previously expected to yield in the 1.4-1.8t/ha range now going closer to 1.6-2.2t/ha. Canola oil has been in the 44-46% range with some of the better accumulating varieties achieving 46-48%. Barley yields have been between 3.5t/ha around Wongan Hills and up to more than 5.0t/ha west of Moora. Even though yields have been good, retention has been poor with less than 15% of deliveries hitting malt due to low retention.

There are some very poor areas mixed in with the good. The region around Miling/Pithara is particularly bad with many crops of barley and wheat completely cooked from heat shock in September.

The wheat harvested so far is yielding well, although screenings are in the 10-20% range in some paddocks and some varieties. Most however are in the 4-10% range. This variability is making it a juggling act for growers to get deliveries in the higher quality segregations.

Kwinana South

Snapshot

- Very good grain yields for all crops.
- Less issues with grain size than other regions of the state.

Grain yields of canola and barley to date are close to recent record averages. Not a lot of wheat has been harvested yet, but given how the canola and barley have performed, wheat will likely follow the same trend.

Most of the Kwinana South region received some spring rain and this has made all the difference in final grain yields. Crops were set up for high yields and could have ended up with the same fate as those to the north in the Midlands area that burnt off, had they not received the rain in early September. The region did not experience the higher maximum temperatures seen further north, and this helped as well.

Kwinana North East

Snapshot

- Grain yields are better than expected with plenty of high protein wheat.
- One rain away from substantially higher yields.

Grain yields across the region have followed a similar trend to the rest of the state with most crops yielding better than expected.

Wheat in the areas that received less growing season rain around Kalannie, Bencubbin and Mukinbudin is yielding closer to 1.5t/ha, while areas away from here are in the 2-3t/ha range.

Wheat yields are very soil type dependent in the region particularly where the rainfall was at the lower end of averages, with the heavier soils struggling more than the lighter soils. Areas that received rain at

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the end of August or the start of September have fared much better than those that didn't. In many cases the difference between 2t/ha and 3t/ha was one rain of 15mm in the spring.

The lower rainfall north and eastern fringes of the zone are very good, and most growers will harvest above recent average tonnages.

Albany Zone

Albany West

Snapshot

- Harvest is just getting going. Early indications are that very good grain yields will continue for all crops.

Harvest is just getting underway in the region with only about one third of the canola in the bin. Yields have been very good at around 2.0-2.5t/ha and oil percentages are also good, being in the high 40's. Most of the canola is yielding at least 300-500kg/ha more than expected. There is only a small area of barley harvested to date, and it is also yielding more than growers expected. Grain yields have been around 5t/ha with RGT Planet generally yielding more than Maximus CL, although better retention rates in the Maximus has seen it hitting malt more often than Planet. The recent rain has been light, and while it may increase the incidence of germ end stain in barley, wheat quality should be unaffected.

The general comment by growers is that "everything is underinsured" if these sorts of yields continue to come in.

Albany South

Snapshot

- Wide range in grain yields is expected to continue as harvest gets into full swing.

The majority of canola crops have been harvested with grain yields south of the Ranges exceptionally good and most are yielding 500kg/ha more than expected. These crops did not suffer from the region's usual waterlogging this year and have managed to produce plenty of grain for their lower-than-normal biomass. North of the Ranges, the poor start held back early crop growth. Even so, the crops are yielding more than expected. There has been a wide range in grain yields of between 1.1-3.0t/ha, which is directly related to their emergence date and soil type.

The small areas of barley harvested to date are yielding between 3.0-4.0t/ha and much of it has germ end stain already. Virtually no wheat has been harvested and growers are not expecting to come across too many nice surprises, as it copped the brunt of the dry hot conditions during grain fill.

Albany East (Lakes Region)

Snapshot

- A good year considering the below average rainfall.

Harvest is going well in the region with grain yields a little higher than expected so far, which is a nice surprise. The majority of the canola is now off with yields up around 1.6t/ha for the hybrid TT's in the eastern areas and 2.0t/ha for the Roundup Ready varieties. The central and western areas around Lake Grace are mostly in the 1.3-1.5t/ha range. Oil percentages have been in the mid- to high 40's. Barley has

been yielding well across all zones with the western areas achieving yields of 4.5t/ha, down to 3.0-3.5t/ha in the east. Barley is mostly going feed due to low retention and in some cases due to exceeding protein.

Little wheat has been harvested to be able to gauge the outcome, although with virtually no frost or waterlogging, yields are expected to be close to longer term averages.

Oat hay yields in the eastern areas were in the 7-8t/ha range.

Esperance Zone

Snapshot

- Grain yields and quality are quite variable, and it's just an average year for the region.

Growers in the western portions of the zone where crops got away early in the season were able to get started with harvest at the end of October and a small number have already finished. The rain ten days ago has slowed things down and growers have had to now resort to drying grain to keep the harvester hours up in the paddocks. The rain that fell in the region in the last few days will slow harvest progress down even more, but falls have generally been light and should not influence grain quality as it has further north in the state.

Grain yields have so far been higher than expected. The rain in August has had more impact than initially thought in assisting the crops to fill, even given the very dry September. Grain yields are still quite variable though, which reflects the gaps in growing season rain across the region.

Canola yields in the west, the Mallee and the central regions have been much better than expected considering their lack of biomass, with most in the 1.5t/ha range and up over 2.0t/ha depending on location. There is still canola right on the coast to be harvested, but most reports are in the high 2.0t/ha and around the 3.0t/ha range where there was little water logging. The drier areas to the east are mostly in the 1.0t/ha range.

The barley crops harvested to date in the better areas have been in the 2.0t/ha to 4.0t/ha range, which is quite a bit more than was expected. There is still a large proportion of the wheat crop to be harvested and what has come in so far has had screenings issues with Calibre being particularly affected. Generally, the Scepter has lower screenings although much of it is still sitting around 5-7%. Wheat harvested in the Mallee where less nitrogen was used, even on the heavier soil types, appears to have better grain quality.



Season Outlook, November 2024

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Climate summary

Seasonal Climate November 2024

Rainfall

October rain saw a return to the seasonal pattern of 2024, with above average rain for the northern agricultural area and lower rainfall for the south coast (see Figure 1).

Seasonal rainfall (April to October) remains lower than normal for parts of the southern, central and south-east cropping areas (see Figure 2). November has seen rain over much of the agricultural area, with varying disruption to harvest. Northern areas have seen significant falls.

Forecast

There are neutral climate conditions in the Pacific Ocean, and these are expected to remain over summer. The tropical Indian Ocean is much warmer over its eastern region, leading to a negative Indian Ocean Dipole. This, coupled with active phases of the tropics over northern Australia, has likely contributed to November rainfall.

The Bureau of Meteorology's seasonal outlook for December to February 2025 indicates neutral chances of rain for much of the cropping area. Many international climate models have a neutral to perhaps wetter outlook for this period, however this does not necessarily mean a lot of rain, as the period is traditionally quite dry for the south.

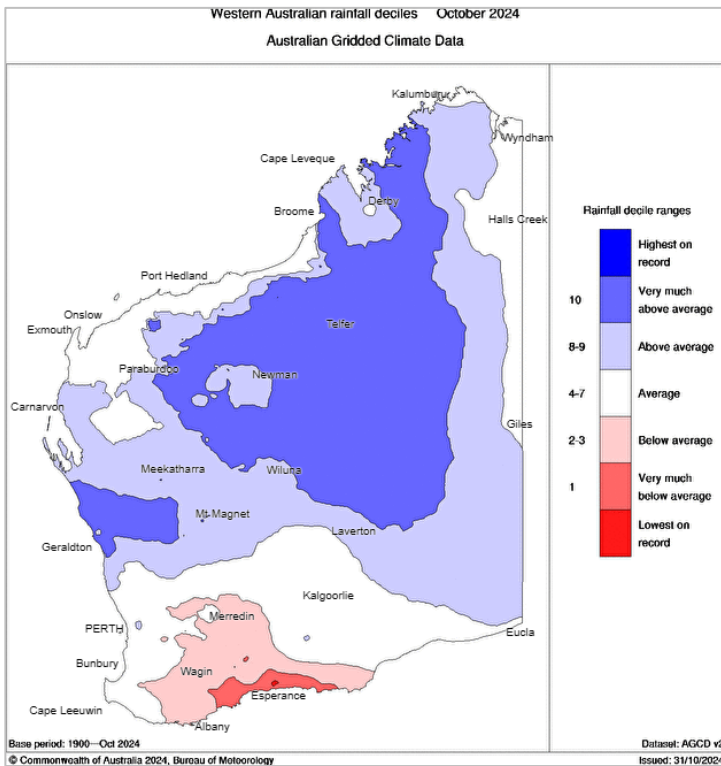


Figure 1: Rainfall deciles for October 2024. Source: Bureau of Meteorology (2024)

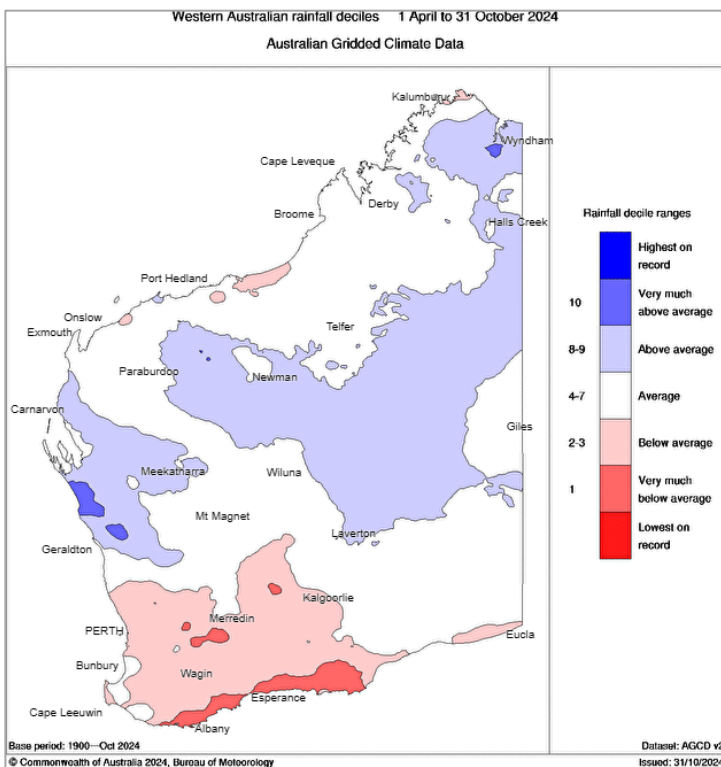


Figure 2: Rainfall deciles for April to October 2024. Source: Bureau of Meteorology (2024)

Temperature

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

Seasonal temperatures throughout winter and spring to date have been very much above normal. Daytime temperatures during October have been well above average (Figure 3). Seasonal forecasts indicate warmer conditions will persist through summer.

The risk of unusually high daytime temperatures is above normal over December to February 2025.

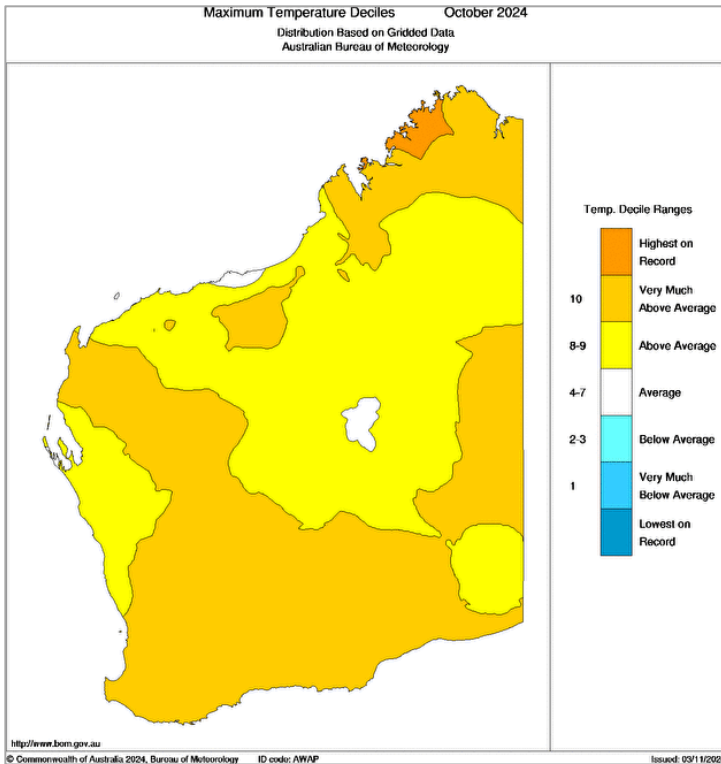


Figure 3: Daytime temperature deciles for October 2024. Source: Bureau of Meteorology 2024.

Additional information is available from:

[DPIRD: Weather stations](#)

[DPIRD: Soil Water Tool](#)

[DPIRD Rainfall to Date Tool](#)

[BoM: Decile rainfall for April to October 2024](#)

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

[BoM: Seasonal Rainfall Outlook](#)

[BoM: Australian Water Outlook](#)

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