



# grainsreport

22 MAY 2009

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Grain sorghum production is forecast at 678,661 tonnes from an estimated 156,005 ha. In the previous season an estimated 841,755 tonnes was harvested from 181,465 ha.
- Harvest of the estimated 277,212 ha (excluding rice) summer crop is about 95% complete.
- Winter crop estimates of 4.94 M ha comprise 4.30 M ha of winter cereals and 0.64 M ha of pulses and oilseeds.
- About 86% of the estimated 242,000 ha of canola has been sown, with much of the remaining area in doubt, unless good rain falls in the central and southern regions within the next week.
- An estimated 39% of the 3.03 M ha wheat crop has been sown. Dry sowing is becoming more common in the centre and south in the absence of a good seasonal break.
- Early sown grazing cereals, sown in February/March are providing some useful feed in favoured slopes and tablelands districts.

## SEASONAL CONDITIONS

Seasonal conditions have improved significantly in most northern areas following generally widespread rains (20-60mm) around 20 May. Growers in the north will now be able to capitalise on the good seedbed and full subsoil moisture profiles to complete winter crop plantings.

In the centre and south conditions continue to deteriorate without a general seasonal break. These areas are in urgent need of good rainfall to consolidate crops that have been sown, and enable the remaining crop to be sown. Some areas have not received decent rain since early April when 30-60 mm was received in the eastern Riverina. Other areas in the south west are yet to receive any worthwhile rain to enable plantings to commence.

Temperatures during April and May were above average, rapidly drying out seedbed moisture.

Regions that received better rainfalls around 25 April were the Central Tablelands (10-15 mm) areas of Orange, the Central West Slopes (10-17 mm) areas of Cowra and Eugowra and the South West Slopes (20-100 mm) areas of Adelong, Holbrook, Temora, Young and Wagga Wagga. Further south in the Riverina rainfall varied from 10-30 mm in the Narrandera, Ardlethan, Corowa and Culcairn districts. Southern Tablelands areas around Tumut and Yass, where 90 mm rainfall was recorded in April, have a good start to the season with grazing crops well established.

Some early sown crops in the Coonamble and Nyngan district required resowing after being damaged by locusts. Rain to date has provided minimal inflows to farm dams and the major water storages remain at critically low levels.

Poor seasonal conditions and reduced production from both grazing cereals and pastures is placing additional stress on livestock, especially in central and southern areas where handfeeding is widespread.

Currently in specific regions the outlook is:

**North** – A general rain of 50-75 mm around 6 April provided an ideal start to the season and enabled faba beans to be sown. Early cereals were also planted. Prior to the rain around 20 May (15 – 50 mm) planting had ceased in most areas as seedbeds had dried out and moisture was too far down the profile to moisture seek. Some areas around Tamworth and the Liverpool Plains still require further rain to enable planting to proceed. Winter crop prospects have increased slightly to 1.34 M ha. An estimated 1.39 M ha was planted in 2008.

**Centre** – Conditions have deteriorated over the past month with no significant rainfall recorded in most districts since early April when favoured areas received up to 30 mm. Many other districts recorded no rainfall. Some areas received 8-15 mm on 20 May that will allow planting to recommence for a few days. Unless significant rainfall occurs in the next few weeks some growers will not plant this season. Intentions are



for sowings of 1.87 M ha, which is slightly below the estimated 1.97 M ha sown in 2008.

**South** – Some districts in the South West Slopes have received the best start to a season since 2000 when favoured areas around Cowra and Young received up to 65 mm in early-mid April. However conditions have deteriorated since with no follow-up rainfall. Some western areas around Hillston, Griffith, Hay and Dareton received 15-35 mm on 25 April that allowed planting to commence. Crop that has been sown is now moisture stressed.

Dry sowing commenced in mid-May and is increasing without a true seasonal break.

The limited irrigation water will be used sparingly on cereal crops. Once again the small rice crop has meant only a small area coming out of rice into cereal with a good profile of moisture.

Prospects are for the planting of 1.67 M ha of winter crop, similar to the past two seasons. Improved seasonal conditions will be needed to achieve these estimates.

## WINTER CROPS

*NSW area '000 hectares*

	2009 forecast	2008 harvest estimate
Wheat	3034	2998
Barley	713	624
Oats	400	191
Triticale	147	129
Canola	242	198
Chickpea	235	211
Faba bean	50	30
Field pea	51	37
Lupin	63	56

**Wheat** – Current estimates of 3.03 M ha are similar to the estimated area of 3.04 M ha planted in 2007. An estimated 1,195,185 ha has been planted (39% of potential plantings). Widespread rains in the north around 20 May will enable all potential areas to be sown. Current estimates have 20% of the north sown.

Widespread rains areas are needed in the centre and south to allow planting to recommence. Current estimates have around 40% of the potential area sown for both regions. Growers in these areas are reverting to dry-sowing in anticipation of a seasonal break.

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Tableland sowings of 9,950 ha are similar to the estimated 10,100 ha planted in 2007.

**Barley** – Sowing predictions of 713,150 ha are similar to earlier forecasts. An estimated 623,920 ha was harvested in 2008. About 29% of the predicted area is sown. In the north around 43% is sown, 29% in the centre and 21% in the south.

**Oats** – Predicted sowings of oats are 399,800 ha, up 4% on earlier forecasts of 382,600 ha. An estimated 350,075 ha was sown in 2008 with around 73% (225,650 ha) harvested for grain. Early sown tablelands crops have produced around 3.5 - 4.0 t/ha of dry matter.

**Triticale** – Planting estimates are for 146,550 ha, a slight decrease on the April forecast of 148,850 ha. An estimated 144,720 ha was planted last year. About 67% of potential areas are sown reflecting the increasing importance of grazing varieties. The major production areas remain in the eastern Riverina and South West Slopes around Albury, Cootamundra, Temora and Young where planting conditions have been more favourable.

**Canola** – The area estimated to be sown to canola is 242,000 ha, up 10,650 ha on the April forecast. About 86% of the crop has been sown, with up to 30% of the area sown dry or into marginal moisture. At the same time last season an estimated 63% of potential plantings were sown. Good rainfall is urgently needed in the centre and south for further plantings to proceed and to consolidate the establishment of emerged and dry sown crops.

## PULSES

2009 winter pulse estimates are for 398,095 ha, down slightly (4%) on the April estimates of 415,600 ha. Dry weather across the centre and south during April/May and the lack of a true autumn break has impacted on plantings of lupins. Chickpeas comprise just over 59% of the total pulse area estimates. The area sown to field peas will depend on seasonal conditions in the centre and south over the next 3-4 weeks. Markets for all pulses are very buoyant.

**Chickpea** – Estimates are for 234,920 ha, a rise of 10% on last year's harvested area of around 210,805 ha. An estimated 22% of the crop is currently sown. About 82% of the crop is in the north where planting intentions are now assured, with 15% in the centre, predominantly in the Warren district (20,000 ha). Major production areas in the north are around Moree, Walgett Narrabri and Coonamble.

**Faba bean** – An estimated 49,875 ha is likely to be sown, a 3% decline on the April forecast of 51,190 ha. Planting conditions were ideal in most

of the north in mid-late April where 94% of the crop will be grown. Major production areas are Moree, Narrabri, Walgett and Coonamble. Further plantings are unlikely in the centre and south where an estimated 58% of the 2,475 ha has been sown. Northern crops have germinated and established well.

**Field pea** – An estimated 50,600 ha is expected to be sown this season. About 37,770 ha were harvested last year. Around 29% of the crop is anticipated to be sown in the centre and 68% in the south. The major production areas in the south are still experiencing very dry conditions. Currently less than 14% of the crop has been sown.

**Lupin** – Area is predicted to be 62,700 ha, down 13% on the April forecast. Currently about 88% of the predicted area is sown. The Albus type constitutes around 59% of sowings. An estimated 8,000 ha of Albus will be grown in the Coonamble district.

## SUMMER CROPS

*NSW production '000 tonnes*

	2008/09 harvest estimate	2007/08 harvest estimate
Grain Sorghum	679	842
Maize	107	139
Mungbean	12	7
Soybean	49	14
Sunflower	19	35

**Grain Sorghum** - Grain production is forecast at 678,661 tonnes from the estimated 156,005 ha harvested. Yields are expected to average 4.35 t/ha although a wide variation exists depending on sowing time and the amount of in crop rainfall. Last year an estimated 841,755 tonnes was harvested from 181,465 ha. Some crop is still to be harvested around Tamworth and on the Liverpool Plains where high moisture contents and late tillers have delayed harvest.

**Maize** - Harvest of the estimated 14,920 ha is expected to produce 106,903 tonnes for an average yield of 7.16 t/ha. Hot summer conditions reduced overall yield potential. Some growers have achieved irrigated average yields around 10 t/ha in the Riverina. In the 2007/2008 season around 15,214 ha were harvested for production of about 138,885 tonnes.

**Mungbean** - Harvest of the estimated 3,500 ha is expected to produce 12,240 tonnes for an average yield of 1.31 t/ha.

**Soybean** - Production is estimated at 48,859 tonnes from 18,437 ha for an average yield of 2.65 t/ha. Last season 13,679 tonnes was harvested from 6,765 ha. Wet weather for the first three weeks of April resulted in some weather damage of the earliest coastal crops where two thirds of the crop is grown.

**Sunflowers** - The crop of 11,550 ha is expected to produce 18,725 tonnes for an above average yield of 1.62 t/ha. The early crop (35% of plantings) is estimated to average 1.52 t/ha and the late crop around 1.68 t/ha. Last year an estimated 34,714 tonnes were produced from 20,236 ha.

**Cotton** - Picking is more than 90% complete. Some of the crop still to be picked is that delayed by phenoxy herbicide drift damage earlier in the season. The NSW crop of 72,800 ha will be above average at around 8.5 bales/ha for the irrigated crop and 4.5 bales/ha for the 6,500 ha dryland crop. The Australian crop is estimated at between 1.4 and 1.5 M bales. Rain around 10-12 April, downgraded about 5% of the crop on colour, however micronaire has been good. At this stage the industry is projecting a national crop of 1.5-2.0 M bales for 2010 assuming average rainfall.

**Rice** - The NSW Riverina rice harvest is almost complete and is expected to produce around 65,000 tonnes from 7,700 ha for an average yield of 8.4 t/ha, which is below earlier expectations. The record heatwave in late January/early February damaged crops, particularly the long rain type and those sown early. A further 600 ha was grown on the NSW North Coast. Last year only 19,000 tonnes was harvested from 2,100 ha, being the smallest crop since 1928. The outlook for 2009/2010 is currently poor and highly dependent on good winter rains in major storage catchments.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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