

MARCH 2012 AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS REPORT

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(see Dept. Primary Industries agricultural conditions map)

Area in **Drought**: 0.0% (no change)
Area in **Marginal**: 0% (no change)
Area in **Satisfactory**: 100% (no change)

NEW DECLARATIONS (moved into drought)

Nil

REVOCATIONS (moved out of drought)

Nil

ALTERATIONS (moved between marginal and satisfactory)

DECLINED (satisfactory to marginal)

Nil

IMPROVED (marginal to satisfactory)

Nil

RETROSPECTIVE (alterations to previous declarations)

Nil

RAINFALL FOR FEBRUARY 2012 (see Bureau of Meteorology rainfall maps)

NSW received good rainfall across all areas during February. The eastern half of NSW generally recorded falls over 100mm. The western half of NSW generally recorded falls up to 100mm. These heavy rainfalls have led to flooding in parts of the central north, north west, far west and south west.

The three monthly deciles show that all of NSW has received average to very much above average rainfall.

Six month rainfall deciles indicate that all of the State has had average to very much above average rainfall, with parts of the northern tablelands having had the highest on record rainfall

Twelve month rainfall deciles show average to very much above average rainfall across NSW, again with a small part of the northern tablelands having had the highest on record rainfall.

CROPS AND PASTURES (provided by Peter Matthews, Dept. Primary Industries, 7 March 2012)

NSW Seasonal Conditions February 2012

The main events impacting on the NSW summer crop has been above average rainfall across both the north of the State - late January-early February and in central and southern NSW in late February and early March.

The current pattern of above average rainfall through January, February and early March is going to cause issues for growers across the whole State. After the latest weather event we will see further down grading of the States January forecast 660 725 ha (excluding rice) summer crop from direct crop losses, waterlogging stressed crops and a reduction in the quality of fibre or grain produced from the crop.

The full impact of the current flooding event will not be known for a several weeks as the water moves through the various catchments in central and southern NSW.

Current reports indicate:-

- complete crop losses in the Murrumbidgee, Murray and Lachlan irrigation valley's on lower lying areas, this may extend into the Macquarie valley as the water moves down the catchment.
- waterlogging stress in both irrigated and dryland summer crops will see some crop death if this continues for a prolonged period. Apart from this we will see a decline in crops yields from crops being stressed. More specifically stressed cotton will start to drop bolls and see some boll rot. Maize and sorghum crop will have reduced grain fill.
- shot and sprung grain in both sorghum and mungbean crops is being reported through the State.
- delayed harvest of crops in the coming weeks as paddocks will be untrafficable, potentially leading to yield losses and deterioration of fibre or grain quality.
- accessibility to farms and fibre and grain delivery systems as the flood damage to regional infrastructure restricts heavy vehicle access.

For large areas of the cropping belt we are seeing the issue of restricted paddock access due to waterlogging and growers not being able to spray and manage summer fallows in preparation for this year's winter crop. This will have an impact on this season's crop by using valuable stored soil water and nitrogen reserves and may mean paddocks will need to be cultivated to reduce the weed biomass to allow sowing to take place.

The bigger threat to this years winter crop is if the above average rainfall pattern continues through March and into April and early May, this will mean paddocks will not have the chance to dry out and some areas of the State will struggle to sow a winter crop as paddocks remain untrafficable.

In areas that have not been directly affected by flood waters the continuing good rain has meant it has been one of the best summers for pasture growth across the State, with excellent growth on the slopes and tableland regions setting up feed reserves going into the colder autumn and winter months.

RAINFALL & TEMPERATURE OUTLOOK – March 2012 to May 2012 (see Bureau of Meteorology rainfall and temperature outlook and El Niño Southern Oscillation [ENSO] wrap-up)

The chances of receiving above median rainfall during the March to May period are between 60 and 70% over most of NSW.

The chances that the average minimum temperature for autumn will exceed the long-term median minimum temperature are above 60% across the eastern mainland of Australia.

The decline of the 2011–12 La Niña has gained momentum over the last few weeks. In addition, climate models surveyed by the Bureau show a continued weakening of the event, with a neutral ENSO state expected during autumn. While La Niña is clearly on the wane, waters around Australia remain warmer than normal, maintaining the potential for increased rainfall over the continent.

Over the past fortnight, most oceanic indicators of ENSO have continued their steady shift towards neutral conditions. Sea surface temperatures have warmed across the tropical Pacific Ocean, with the latest weekly values dipping into the neutral range. Atmospheric indicators of ENSO are mixed, though the latest 30-day value of the Southern Oscillation Index (+0.7) is also within neutral territory. In contrast, trade winds and cloudiness over the equatorial Pacific Ocean remain consistent with La Niña.

During La Niña events, the number of tropical cyclones in the Australian region is typically above normal over the November to April tropical cyclone season, with February and March the peak. The influence of La Niña on Australian rainfall and temperature typically peaks during winter to mid-summer, and then weakens over the following autumn. The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) has limited influence on Australian rainfall from December through to April.

WATER SUPPLIES

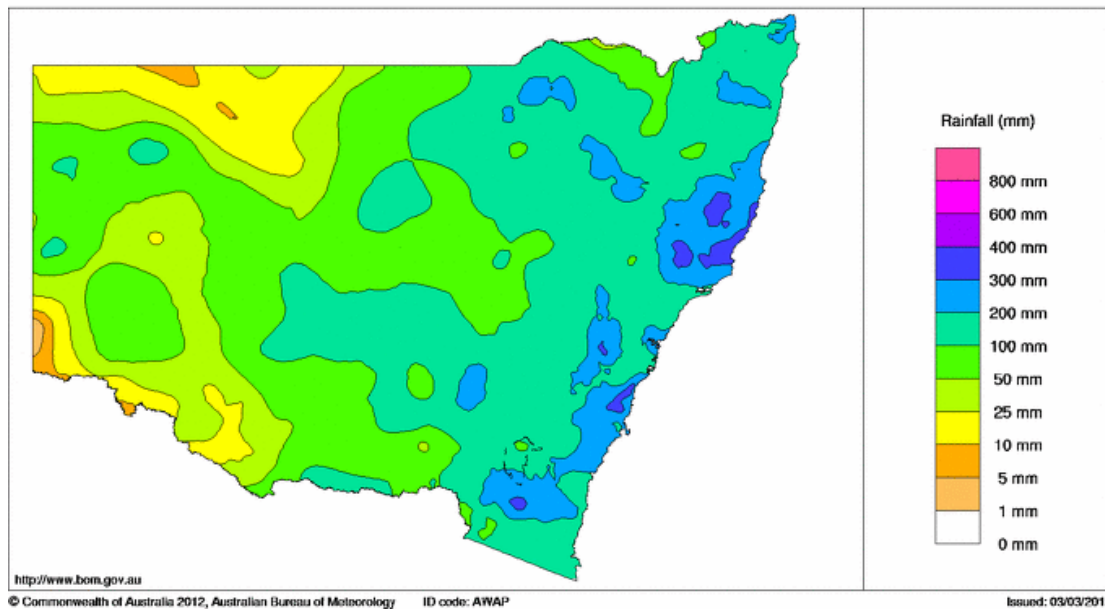
Note: The State Water Storages report is no longer produced. An updated table will now be included showing the situation for each of the major storages.

STATE WATER STORAGES

River Valley	8 February 2012	12 March 2012	Change
<i>Storage Dam, Nearest Town</i>	<i>Level %</i>	<i>Level %</i>	<i>%</i>
Border Rivers			
Pindari Dam, Inverell	100	100	0
Lower Darling			
Menindee Lakes, Broken Hill	unk	unk	unk
Gwydir Valley			
Copeton Dam, Inverell	98	98	0
Namoi Valley			
Keepit Dam, Gunnedah	99	99	0
Split Rock Dam, Manilla	unk	82	unk
Chaffey Dam, Tamworth	101	101	0
Macquarie Valley			
Burrendong Dam, Wellington	80	128	48
Windamere Dam, Mudgee	unk	56	unk
Oberon Dam, Oberon	63	85	22
Lachlan Valley			
Wyangala Dam, Cowra	77	101	24
Carcoar Dam, Carcoar	85	100	15
Murrumbidgee Valley			
Burrinjuck Dam, Yass	76	103	27
Blowering Dam, Tumut	81	95	14
Murray Valley			
Dartmouth, Mitta Mitta (Vic)	76	81	5
Hume Dam, Albury	68	85	17
Hunter Valley			
Glenbawn Dam, Scone	102	100	(2)
Glennies Ck Dam, Singleton	100	100	0
Lostock Dam, Singleton	101	101	0
Coastal Area			
Toonumbar Dam, Kyogle	101	101	0
Broggo Dam, Bega	unk	unk	unk

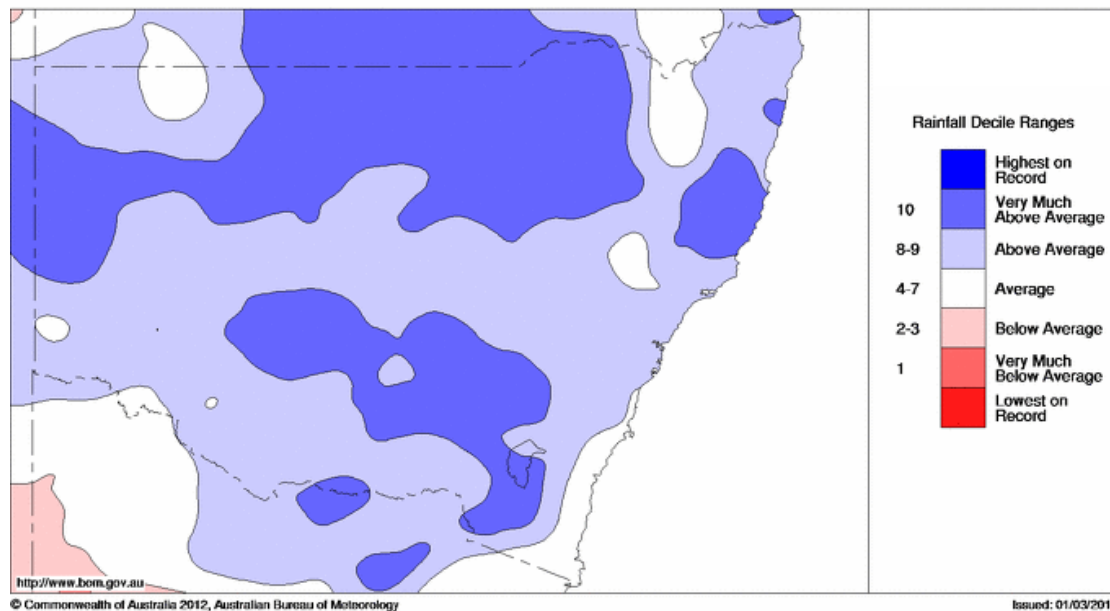
**Information sources:
NSW rainfall (actual) February 2012**

New South Wales Rainfall Totals (mm) February 2012
Product of the National Climate Centre



NSW rainfall (3 month decile) December to February 2012

New South Wales Rainfall Deciles 1 December 2011 to 29 February 2012
Distribution Based on Gridded Data
Product of the National Climate Centre



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A/DIRECTOR, BIOSECURITY OPERATIONS
13 March 2012**

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NSW rainfall maps

http://www.bom.gov.au/cgi-bin/silo/rain_maps.cgi?map=contours&variable=totals&area=nsw&period=1month®ion=nsw&time=latest

Rainfall outlook

<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/rain.seaus.shtml>

Temperature outlook

http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/temps_ahead.shtml

ENSO Wrap-Up

<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/>

Drought Statement

<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/drought/drought.shtml>

State Water Storage Report

http://waterinfo.nsw.gov.au/water.shtml?ppbm=STORAGE_SITE&da&3&dakm_url