

## **FEBRUARY 2012 AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS REPORT**

### **February 2012 AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS**

**(see Dept. Primary Industries agricultural conditions map)**

Area in **Drought**: 0.0% (no change)  
Area in **Marginal**: 0% (down from 1.5%)  
Area in **Satisfactory**: 100% (up from 98.5%)

### **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)**

Central West LHPA            Part of District moved from Marginal to Satisfactory  
(Whole District now Satisfactory)

### **RETROSPECTIVE (alterations to previous declarations)**

Nil

### **RAINFALL FOR January 2012 (see Bureau of Meteorology rainfall maps)**

NSW received good rainfall across all areas during January. The northern half of NSW generally recorded falls over 100mm. Small areas around the north coast received amounts up to 800mm. These heavy rainfalls have led to flooding in parts of the north coast, central north and north-west. The southern half of NSW received falls up to 25 mm.

The three monthly deciles show that all of NSW has received average to highest on record average rainfall. The southern areas of the State have generally received average to above average rainfall, while the northern half has received above average to very much above average rainfall. The coast has mainly received average to above average rainfall. Areas in the central north and north west of the State, extending downwards to Coonabarabran, have received their highest rain on record.

Six month rainfall deciles indicate that generally most of the State has had at least average rainfall. The central north of the State had very much above average to highest on record rainfall.

Twelve month rainfall deciles show average to very much above average rainfall across NSW.

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

### **Summer crops**

Mid January estimates put the summer crop sowing at 660,725 ha (excluding rice) compared to last season when an estimated 582,935 ha was harvested. Some late sown summer crop, has not been able to be planted due to wet paddock conditions and some crop area was lost due to flooding in north western NSW through November and December, bringing down the forecast summer crop area of 686,689 ha for December.

Grain Sorghum – estimated at 171,480 ha, down 9,750 ha on the December prediction of 197,750 ha. The Liverpool Plains (60,000 ha), Moree (50,000 ha) and Narrabri and Walgett (10,000 ha each) are the major production areas. Crop development, ranges from crops maturing in the west around Coonamble and Walgett, with growers looking to desiccate them for harvest, to recently sown crops around Moree and Gunnedah. Crops around Moree, Gunnedah and Narrabri will have lowered yield potential because of the flooding. Crops away from flooded areas have benefitted from a mild growing season and will have good yield potential.

Maize – plantings are estimated to be 24,410 ha, slightly higher than the December forecast of 23,970 ha. About 48% of the crop is in the north, the major production areas being Gunnedah (3,000 ha), Moree West (5,000 ha) and Moree East (2,000 ha).

Mungbean – estimates of 23,165 ha are 55% higher than the December forecast of 14,920 ha. The crop is split between a spring sowing of about 9,000 ha, with the rest sown at the more traditional later season mid summer time.

Soybean – estimated at 25,470 ha, similar to the December forecast of 25,345 ha. The North Coast continues to be the largest production region with 46% of the State's plantings.

Sunflowers – estimated plantings of 17,200 ha are up 22% on the December forecast of 14,070 ha. Harvest of the early sown crop should commence in early February.

Cotton – the cotton crop is now estimated to be around 399,000 ha, comprising 265,000 ha irrigated and 134,000 ha dryland on skip row configurations. It is estimated around 2,500 ha of irrigated and 9,000 ha of dryland crop have been lost to flooding in the Gwydir valley. The crop in the north is currently slightly behind in development for this time of the season due to cooler and variable temperatures and frequent rain.

Rice – estimated at 95,000 ha, after around 5,000 ha was abandoned, mostly due to duck damage. Low night temperatures in mid January when the crop was at the sensitive young microspore stage is causing some concern and could result in lower grain yields. Night temperatures from 9-14 January generally averaged 11-12°C but fell to as low as 6.6°C in the Murray valley.

Low level mice activity is still being reported in winter crop stubbles, in southern NSW. Growers in irrigation areas, as crops begin to ripen will now need to pay additional attention and regularly monitor for any crop damage.

Weed control by dryland growers has been a major focus through January as the wet December germinated and allowed weeds to flourish on crop stubbles. Apart from some areas in the north of the state, most growers have been able to access paddocks and apply herbicides to control the weeds. Where control has not been possible or ignored, valuable stored soil moisture and nitrogen are being used up. If fallows are not brought under control by spraying or at least grazing by stock, some form of pre sowing management will need to be undertaken such as cultivation or burning to remove this build up of weed residue prior to sowing.

Pasture conditions across the state are good with the January rains continuing the growth of perennial pastures. Through January many dryland growers with good lucerne pasture have taken the opportunity to cut hay and silage. Hay production on many of the northern river systems have been affected, with flooding being reported on many lucerne fodder crops, resulting in direct loss of cut hay or the opportunity to cut hay as paddocks are un-trafficable for extended periods.

### **Flooding**

Heavy rain on the north coast and northern slopes in last week of January and into the first week of February has caused major flooding in the northern river systems, with the inland Gwydir and Namoi River system badly affected. The worst flooding has occurred at Moree, Narrabri and Burren Junction. However flooding of low lying areas has occurred right along the river systems.

Apart from the immediate issue for those towns affected, we will see secondary flooding in districts down stream as the water moves away. The situation will be made worse by the flood water coming out of Queensland and joining up with the water in other tributaries.

The full impact on summer crop production from this weather event will not be known for some time, as the water recedes and goes through the river system. Any further rain in early February will make the situation worse and increase potential crop losses in the region.

Report so far indicate:

- Complete loss of some summer crops along the rivers in low lying areas, this includes sorghum, sunflowers, cotton, maize and hay crops. Some of these areas were written off after the last flood period in November and December, but further areas are now affected.
- Waterlogged crops through out the region. This will have the biggest impact on production, due to reduced yield and quality. Cotton may be the worst affected as it was at the fruiting stage and the stress may cause it to

abort the fruit, reducing yield. If the waterlogging continues we will see some crop death in all crop types.

- Drop in grain quality is already being reported with mung-beans currently the worst affected as early sown crops were ready for harvest and grain now has started to sprout.
- Soy beans on the north coast are also in trouble with flooding and waterlogging, some crops are expected to be written off.
- Loss of regional and on farm infra structure, has occurred limiting the access of harvest equipment and trucks to move away produce.
- Restricted paddock access (wet and untrafficable) will mean crops, will not be able to be harvested in a timely manner.

In areas not affected by the flooding or crop waterlogging across the state, this rain continues to be of benefit for the summer crop, improving yields.

### **RAINFALL & TEMPERATURE OUTLOOK – February 2012 to April 2012 (see Bureau of Meteorology rainfall and temperature outlook and El Nino Southern Oscillation [ENSO] wrap-up)**

The chances of receiving above median rainfall during the February 2012-April 2012 are 45-50% across most of NSW. The far west of the State can expect a 35-40% chance of above average rainfall.

The odds of higher than normal minimum temperatures over NSW ranges between 50-65%.

La Niña conditions are expected to maintain an influence upon Australian climate over the coming months. The Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) is below the December peak, but clearly exceeding La Niña thresholds. Climate models surveyed by the Bureau indicate a gradual decline in the strength of the La Niña over the coming months, with most models suggesting a return to neutral conditions during the southern autumn

## WATER SUPPLIES

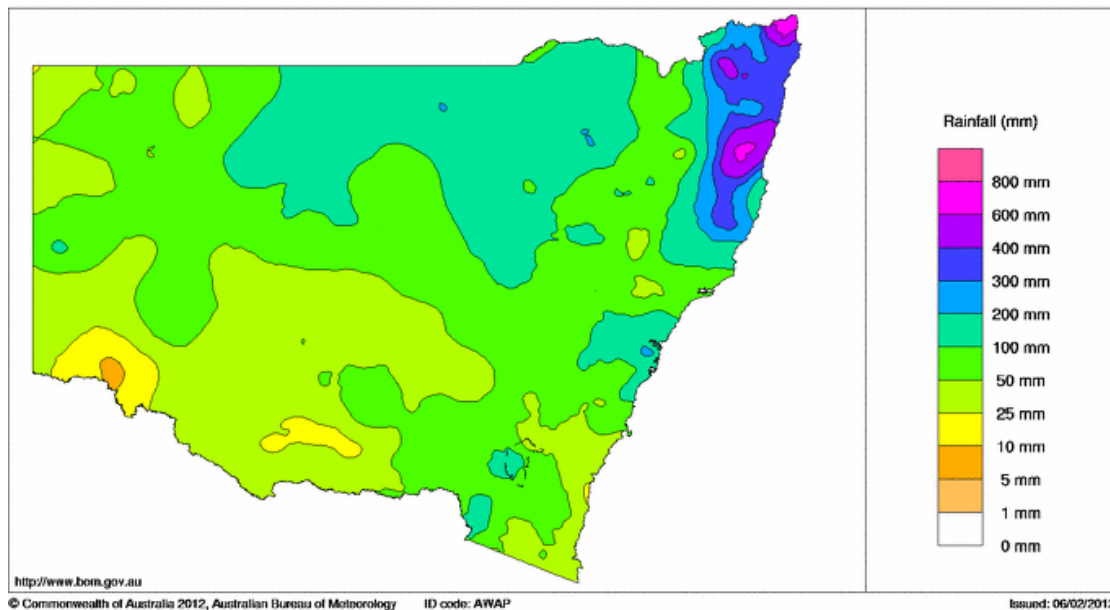
**Note:** The State Water Storages report is no longer produced. An updated table will now be included showing the situation for each of the major storages.

## STATE WATER STORAGES

River Valley	10 January 2012	8 February 2012	Change
<b>Storage Dam, Nearest Town</b>	<b>Level %</b>	<b>Level %</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Border Rivers</b>			
Pindari Dam, Inverell	100	100	0
<b>Lower Darling</b>			
Menindee Lakes, Broken Hill	unk	unk	unk
<b>Gwydir Valley</b>			
Copeton Dam, Inverell	unk	98	unk
<b>Namoi Valley</b>			
Keepit Dam, Gunnedah	98	99	1
Split Rock Dam, Manilla	79	unk	unk
Chaffey Dam, Tamworth	100	101	1
<b>Macquarie Valley</b>			
Burrendong Dam, Wellington	85	80	(5)
Windamere Dam, Mudgee	48	unk	unk
Oberon Dam, Oberon	63	63	0
<b>Lachlan Valley</b>			
Wyangala Dam, Cowra	83	77	(5)
Carcoar Dam, Carcoar	87	85	(2)
<b>Murrumbidgee Valley</b>			
Burrinjuck Dam, Yass	87	76	(11)
Blowering Dam, Tumut	87	81	(6)
<b>Murray Valley</b>			
Dartmouth, Mitta Mitta (Vic)	76	76	0
Hume Dam, Albury	78	68	(10)
<b>Hunter Valley</b>			
Glenbawn Dam, Scone	100	102	0
Glennies Ck Dam, Singleton	unk	100	unk
Lostock Dam, Singleton	unk	101	unk
<b>Coastal Area</b>			
Toonumbar Dam, Kyogle	100	101	1
Broggo Dam, Bega	101	unk	0

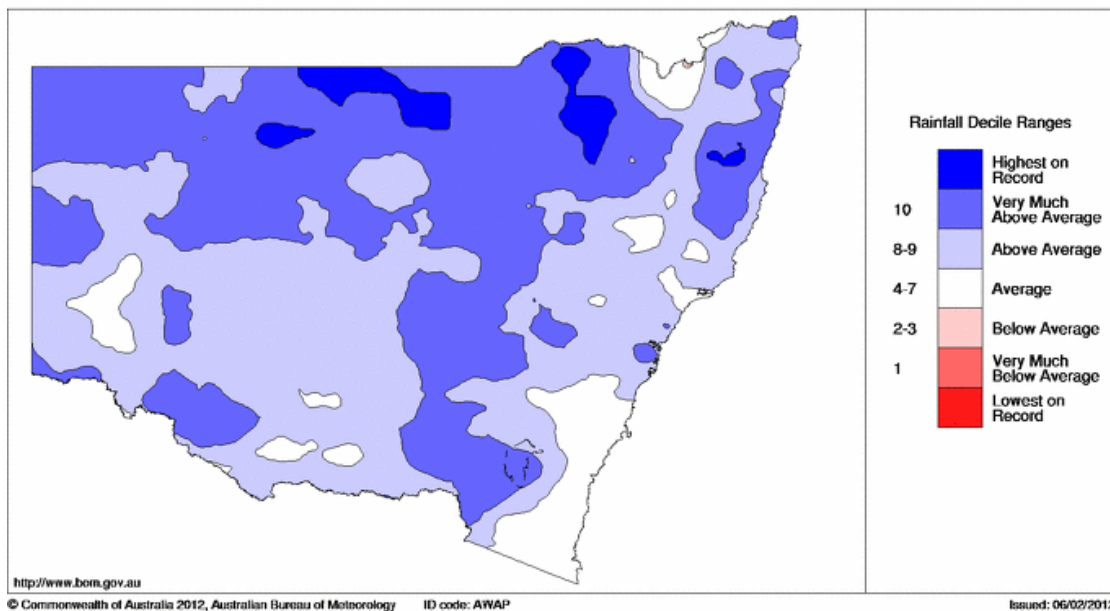
### Information sources: NSW rainfall (actual) January 2011

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



### NSW rainfall (3 month decile) November to January 2011

New South Wales Rainfall Deciles 1 November 2011 to 31 January 2012  
Distribution Based on Gridded Data  
Product of the National Climate Centre



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**28 February 2012**

Prepared by: Annie Johnson, Acting Agricultural Protection Support Officer, General Emergency Preparedness & Response, 10 February 2012.

**NSW rainfall maps**

**[http://www.bom.gov.au/cgi-bin/silo/rain\\_maps.cgi?map=contours&variable=totals&area=nsw&period=1month&region=nsw&time=latest](http://www.bom.gov.au/cgi-bin/silo/rain_maps.cgi?map=contours&variable=totals&area=nsw&period=1month&region=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](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](http://waterinfo.nsw.gov.au/water.shtml?ppbm=STORAGE_SITE&da&3&dakm_url)**