

APRIL 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 MARCH 2012 (see Bureau of Meteorology rainfall maps)

NSW received good rainfall across all areas during March. The south eastern part of NSW generally recorded falls over 200mm. The north eastern, north western and south western parts of NSW generally recorded falls over 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 highest on record rainfall.

Six month rainfall deciles indicate that all of the State has had 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, 10 April 2012)

NSW Seasonal Conditions March 2012

The major flooding that occurred across southern NSW in late February and early March and the continuing recovery of much of the northern areas from the

flood back in February has been driving the condition of the current summer crop and prospects for this year's winter crop.

In southern NSW both the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan rivers flooded, affecting summer crops right along the system, and inundating large areas across the major flood plains in these valleys. Significant areas are still partially covered by water through the flood plains in areas west of Bribbaree, Wyalong and Forbes.

Whilst this rain event has caused damage to some summer crops, in areas that were not directly affected by flood waters it has improved yield potential of later sown crops.

Shorter season or earlier sown crops like sorghum and mungbean have been affected most in the north with the wet weather occurring as harvested started, resulting in downgrading from weathering and pre harvest grain sprouting.

The cooler conditions through March has slowed crop development and dry down with harvest of the later summer crops now expected to continue through April and in some areas extend into May.

The current prospects for the States summer crop are:

- Grain Sorghum – Grain production is forecast at 681,631 tonnes from the estimated 163,310 ha to be harvested. Yields are expected to average 4.17 t/ha. Harvest is 80-90% complete in the north-west but flooding and rain has reduced yield potential in areas between Moree and Walgett with lower quality grades and some shot and sprung grain being harvested. Harvest is 40% complete on the Liverpool Plains.
- Maize – The estimated 23,090 ha maize crop is expected to yield around 8.15 t/ha for production of 166,170 tonnes. Yield potential in the north has been reduced by waterlogging and flooding, especially around Moree. Yield of the irrigated crop in the Riverina is predicted to be around 10.44 t/ha, with the crop benefiting from a mild second half of summer. Some crops were flooded in mid March and hence will have a delayed harvest.
- Mungbean – Harvest of the 13,250 ha crop is expected to produce 14,830 tonnes for an average yield of 0.89 t/ha, which is lower than average. The spring sown crop was impacted by severe waterlogging and flooding, resulting in poor yields and weather damaged low quality grain.
- Soybean – Production of 52,360 tonnes from 22,690 ha is predicted to yield an average of 2.31 t/ha, which is up on last year. Crops on the North Coast have recovered from the late January flood event but yield potential is down on previous seasons. The Riverina crop has been impacted by waterlogging and flooding, with yields predicted to be slightly below average. Grain quality has also been affected.
- Sunflowers – The crop of 18,530 ha is expected to produce 27,541 tonnes for an average yield of 1.49 t/ha. The early planted crop (56% of total) is estimated to yield 1.29 t/ha as a result of waterlogging and

flood damage. The later planted crop is forecast to yield much better at 1.74 t/ha. The majority of the late planted crop is on the Liverpool Plains.

- Cotton – Picking of the 399,350 ha crop has just commenced in the Border Rivers region. The overall crop is later maturing than normal with the main pick not set to start till mid April in northern river valleys and in the Riverina within the next couple of weeks. Yield potential has been impacted in the north by cool temperatures and cloud cover, whilst in the Riverina, heavy rain and flooding in mid March has taken the top off high yield expectations and delayed crop maturity. Across the state yields are likely to be about average.
- Rice – The rice harvest commenced around 20 March in the Murray valley, where early harvested crop yields have been variable due primarily to low minimum temperatures in late December/early January. The start of harvest has been delayed in the Murrumbidgee valley due to extensive flooding in mid March, which has resulted in around 1,500 ha affected. Lodging and shot and sprung grain is common on these crops, with only small areas totally lost. Total production is predicted at around 900,000 tonnes with the harvest in full swing and 25% complete by the end of the first week in April.

For the coming winter crop, the good summer rains have recharged soil profiles, again setting the State up for a big winter cropping year. Current estimates place this year's crop slightly down on the area forecast this time last year. Some of this reduction in area is on the basis of growers not expecting to be able to traffic the currently either flooded or saturated paddocks in time for sowing.

Fallow management has been challenging, with some paddocks unable to be sprayed for weeds in a timely manner, resulting in some loss of soil nitrogen. An increase in the amount of nitrogen either pre drilled or applied at sowing is expected this year.

Planting of grazing cereals has occurred on the tablelands and upper slopes areas which benefited from early rains in February and early March. Surface moisture is now disappearing in some areas of the state, delaying further sowing of more dual purpose crops of oats, barley, triticale and wheat. An increase in fodder and dual purpose crops will occur this year as growers look to cash in on the good livestock prices and offset some of the downside with current forecast low cereal grain prices.

Pasture conditions across the State still remain above average, with the wetter conditions maintaining pasture growth through March. The built up of pasture bulk over the last 2 months will provide growers a buffer going into the colder winter months when pasture growth rates decline and stock feed traditionally becomes limiting.

Good rainfall over summer has resulted in all major storage dams at near full capacity. Irrigation allocations across the state's major irrigation areas are at 100%.

RAINFALL & TEMPERATURE OUTLOOK – April 2012 to June 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 April to June period are above 60% over most of NSW.

The chances that the average maximum temperature for autumn will exceed the long-term median maximum temperatures range from 30% in the north eastern part of NSW up to 75% in the south western part of NSW.

The chances that the average minimum temperature for autumn will exceed the long-term median minimum temperatures range from 25% in the south western part of NSW up to 90% in the north eastern part of NSW.

Following the demise of the 2011–12 La Niña, the state of ENSO across the tropical Pacific remains neutral (neither El Niño nor La Niña). Climate models surveyed by the Bureau of Meteorology suggest that, although the Pacific Ocean will continue to warm over the coming months, a neutral ENSO state will persist into the southern hemisphere winter. Historically, about 70% of the time neutral or El Niño conditions have developed in the year following a 2-year La Niña event.

The main signs of ENSO, including trade winds, the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI), cloudiness near the Date Line and ocean temperatures, have all returned to near-normal levels. The SOI is at its lowest level since early 2010, while the equatorial Pacific has warmed by about 0.2 to 0.4 °C during the past fortnight.

The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) has limited influence on Australian rainfall from December through to April. Neutral IOD conditions are forecast for the southern hemisphere winter.

Rainfall across most of Australia has been above average in the last six months, partly due to the 2011-12 La Niña event (which has now ended). This has ensured there are currently no significant short-term rainfall deficiencies across the country.

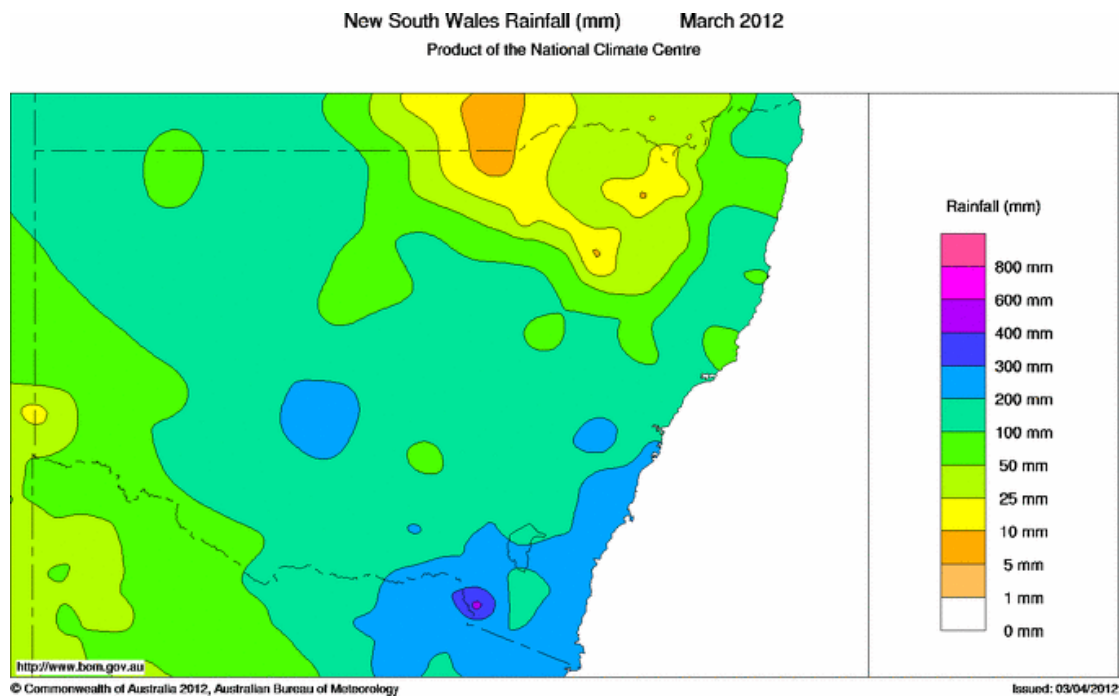
WATER SUPPLIES

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.

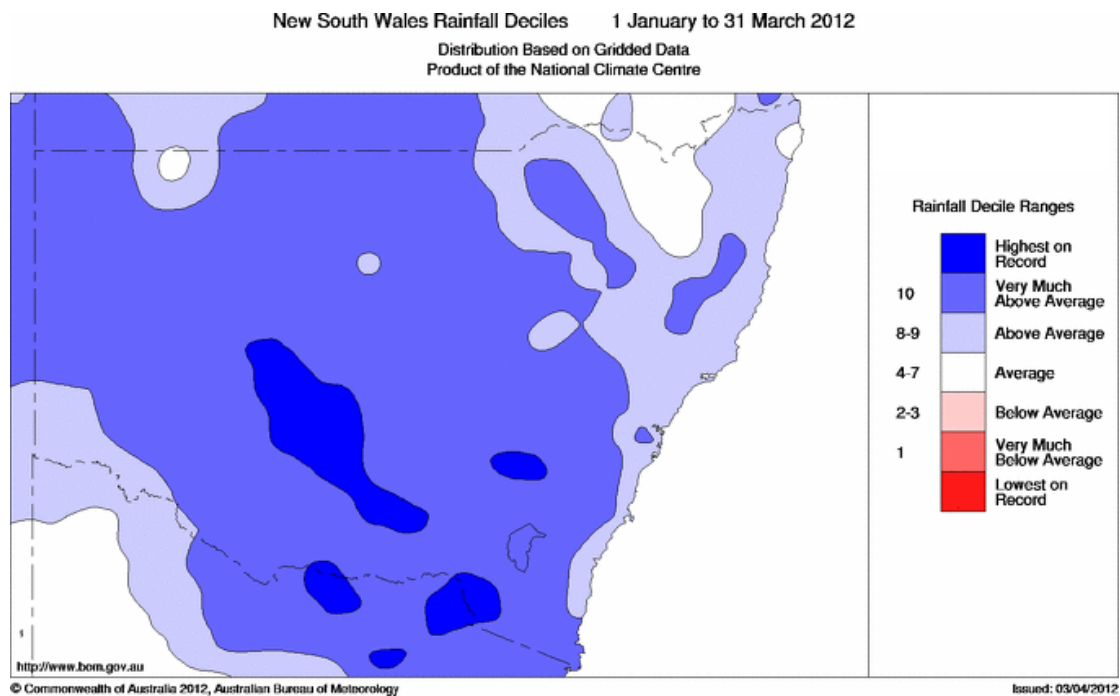
STATE WATER STORAGES

River Valley	12 March 2012	10 April 2012	Change
<i>Storage Dam, Nearest Town</i>	<i>Level %</i>	<i>Level %</i>	<i>%</i>
Border Rivers			
Pindari Dam, Inverell	100	98	2
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	82	82	0
Chaffey Dam, Tamworth	101	101	0
Macquarie Valley			
Burrendong Dam, Wellington	128	103	25
Windamere Dam, Mudgee	56	58	(2)
Oberon Dam, Oberon	85	89	(4)
Lachlan Valley			
Wyangala Dam, Cowra	101	94	7
Carcoar Dam, Carcoar	100	49	51
Murrumbidgee Valley			
Burrinjuck Dam, Yass	103	92	11
Blowering Dam, Tumut	95	94	1
Murray Valley			
Dartmouth, Mitta Mitta (Vic)	81	82	(1)
Hume Dam, Albury	85	88	(3)
Hunter Valley			
Glenbawn Dam, Scone	100	100	0
Glennies Ck Dam, Singleton	100	99	1
Lostock Dam, Singleton	101	100	1
Coastal Area			
Toonumbar Dam, Kyogle	101	101	0
Broggo Dam, Bega	unk	101	unk

Information sources: NSW rainfall (actual) March 2012



NSW rainfall (3 month decile) January to 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