

Rain keeps season on even keel

By PAULA THOMPSON

CROPS and pasture paddocks received a much-needed boost in the past week with most areas of the state recording 30 millimetres to 50mm of rain.

While the falls were widespread, some areas, such as the far West Coast and northern Mallee, only received smaller gaugings and are still looking for more rain to kick the season along.

The falls keep SA on track for a slightly above average 2012 harvest and provided a significant boost for dwindling paddock feed.

ABARES is predicting a South Australian 2012 harvest of 6.8 million tonnes, down 12pc on last year's 7.8mt, but still up on the five-year average of 6.18mt.

The latest Bureau of Meteorology seasonal rainfall outlook shows the chances of receiving above median rainfall in SA from July to September are 35 per cent to 45pc, with all key outlook indicators remaining neutral.

Cleve farmer Ben Ranford said the season was shaping up to be one of the best on the eastern Eyre Peninsula. He received 35mm of rain in the past week, coming on top of 12mm the previous week.

"We have been very fortunate, we've had good rains of 5mm to

KeyPoints

- Widespread falls of 30-50mm
- Pastures receive much-needed boost
- Far West/northern Mallee looking for more rain

15mm most weeks since early May," he said.

"It's one of the only years where you can drive from north of Cowell down to Port Lincoln and it's looking terrific the whole way."

Waikerie farmer Tim Paschke was happy to receive 9mm in the past week but said only a short drive away falls were much less.

"As you go towards Loxton, guys there had less than 5mm," he said.

"We're really quite lucky here at Waikerie, we've got a fairly full profile of moisture, but you only have to go 10 kilometres east of us to find guys who are looking for more rain."

Landmark senior agronomist Craig Hole said the South East generally had 40mm to 50mm in the past week and it was desperately needed.

Mr Hole said while croppers had been looking for further falls, it was graziers who saw the most benefits from last week's rains.

"While crops weren't looking too bad, pasture growth was terrible," he said.



'Pretty good' start at Hart

MID NORTH farmer Michael Jaeschke (pictured in a paddock of Tjilkuri durum wheat) received 26 millimetres of rain at his home property at Hart in the past week and 32mm where he share-farms near Clare. He says it has helped keep the season on track.

Michael has sown about 1000 hectares this year, with a mix of durum and bread wheat, malting barley and peas.

"It has been a pretty good season so far," he said. "I didn't do much dry-seeding, just a bit of feed. The

rest was sown after the break at the end of May.

"The crops went in pretty much on time, similar to the previous year."

Michael said the rain in the past week was well-timed, as the top-soil had started to dry out before the falls.

"At this stage I'd say we're looking at a slightly above-average season, depending on what happens in September," he said.

"We're tracking along similarly to last year, just with a bit less sub-soil moisture."

"In some instances the growth rates were lower than in 2006.

"The turnaround in pastures since last Thursday has been tremendous."

Bute farmer John Green received 40mm in the past week.

"The whole countryside has transformed from grey to green in the last week," he said.

"With more rain expected to come through this week, everyone is a lot happier than they were two weeks ago."

YP AG agriservices agronomist Chris Davey said the northern YP recorded between 30mm to 55mm in the past week.

"This is really just a fantastic establishing rain, it will allow the crops to come up beautifully without any stress," he said.

Jolpac Rural agronomist, Bordertown, Nathan Tink said the district received about 40mm in the past week and 100mm for the month.

"All the cereals are now coming up nicely and beans and canola are also looking good," he said.

Lock farmer Andrew Hentschke said he received about 50mm in the past week-and-a-half.

"Before the rains we'd had a few frosts, which really slowed things up, and I was getting a little worried as far as feed goes. So the rain was very well-timed," he said.

Manoora farmer Allen Kelly said he had 36mm come through with last week's rains.

New number may change MDBA limits

THE quantitative number underpinning the Murray Darling Basin Authority's controversial draft basin plan could potentially be reduced to zero with the addition of new works and measures and other water saving initiatives, according to Federal Independent MP Tony Windsor.

He says 2750 gigalitres is the number used to describe how much water must be transferred from productive purposes to achieve environmental outcomes in the basin, or sustainable diversion limits in the plan.

That number is a hot political topic with irrigators and rural communities demanding as little water as possible be taken from primary production uses, to avoid social and economic devastation, while environmental groups have drawn a line in the sand at 4000gL.

But Mr Windsor believes more than 50 per cent of 'the number' has already been achieved through various water infrastructure programs and other measures to improve water-use efficiency, making the figure more like 1200-1300gL.

The Regional Australia Committee has reignited its Basin inquiry, chaired by Mr Windsor, and is now looking to identify further water savings through a combination of environmental works and measures, improved on-farm infrastructure, strategic buy-backs and other structural works - possibly lowering the final number to zero.

One submission highlights Mr Windsor's theory and could potentially reduce the volume of water taken from consumptive purposes in the Basin.

Water for Rivers Business Manager Ross Davies said his company had developed new technology that was expected to achieve 220-270gL a year in water efficiency benefits in the Murrumbidgee alone, at a cost of \$80 million, and could be used throughout the river system to achieve similar benefits.

- COLIN BETTLES

Where the rain fell

Rainfall for the seven days to 9am on Tuesday, June 26:

Upper North

- Appila 28
- Orroroo 16
- Wirrabara 41

Eyre Peninsula

- Cleve 36
- Darke Peak 29
- Lock 52

Yorke Peninsula

- Curramulka 56

Murray Mallee

- Karoonda 20
- Palmer 20
- Tailem Bend 41

Upper South East

- Bordertown 39
- Coonalynpn 57
- Keith 35

Lower South East

- Naracoorte 33

Mid North

- Auburn 58
- Georgetown 42
- Snowtown 36

Lower South East

- Frances 47
- Kalangadoo 70
- Naracoorte 33

• Source: Bureau of Meteorology

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