
SA Heads for Record Harvest

Following widespread rainfall and mild temperatures from mid-September to late October that added considerable yield potential to crops across the state, harvest got under way last week across much of the northern cropping regions of South Australia. With total crop production estimated at 8.11 million tonnes from around 4 million cropped hectares, this would be the second largest crop ever produced, following the record crop in 2001.

Harvesting of barley, chickpeas, soybeans and canola commenced in northern areas from mid-October, with harvesting of wheat and other crops expected to get under way in the first half of November. Central and southern regions will be later again as many cereal crops are showing secondary green heads from the late rain.

Following cool conditions early this week the weather is improving and with temperatures forecast well into the 30's for the weekend and beyond, more and more headers should be on the move next week. Early wheat harvest reports indicate generally good-to-excellent quality, with high test weights although some lower protein levels following the soft finish. We have received one report from Wudinna on Eyre Peninsula of an outstanding crop yielding close to 4mt/ha.

Barley receivals have mostly been F1 grade with yields around 2.5 mt/ha so far. Some malt varieties have shown black tipping due to weather damage. Canola harvest is just starting, however, early reports from the mid-north indicate yields to 1.6mt/ha with oil percentages as high as 48%, a vast improvement on recent poor seasons.

In all of this, the big challenge is for the bulk handlers to receive grain and manage exports in a timely manner with resources expected to be stretched to the limit given the crop size. Many growers are mustering a good supply of books for the silo queue.

From a marketing perspective, grower activity and interest has increased as harvest approaches, however, forward selling has been minimal with growers generally unhappy with current price levels and prepared to warehouse and/or store on-farm commodities such as feed barley and chickpeas. New crop wheat multigrade contracts have traded in the low \$200's port with spreads to H1 now out to \$20mt as buyers anticipated lower tonnages of this grade. Feed barley has improved to \$140mt port, still below most growers' targets and canola has traded either side of \$400mt which for most producers seeking cash flow is a sell. Spreads to malt vary from \$8-10mt currently.

For further details please contact your local Australian Grain Accumulation
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