

As Anzac Day, the traditional start for seeding approaches, SA growers are busy preparing paddocks for this season's crop. There has already been some dry sowing of feed crops, beans and canola.

Rainfall over the summer has been varied with the best falls recorded in the Mallee and South Eastern districts. Combined with falls of 15 to 30mm since Easter, these regions have good stored soil moisture that should allow timely sowing of all crops. Elsewhere across the mid-north and Eyre Peninsula, rain has been less plentiful and crops in these districts will rely on rainfall received over the growing season. In general growers are looking for 25mm plus over the next week to wet the topsoil and allow sowing to commence.

As well as spraying to control summer weeds that have germinated over the last few months, many growers have been faced with some tough decisions regarding what crops to sow based on lower than anticipated forward prices and the fact that many still have not yet sold a substantial portion of last year's crop. Consequently crops that provide the maximum gross margin whilst minimising risk are the most popular option that allow for rotational constraints. This will result in a reduction in hectares sown to barley by 15-20%. For many growers barley at current forward prices of \$140mt port basis is unprofitable particularly in marginal areas. Wheat hectares look set to increase to compensate for these lower barley number and those in higher rainfall districts will sow more lentils, hay crops and perhaps keep an extra mob of ewes for prime lamb production. On the back of last season's excellent result, canola area should be maintained at similar levels.

Another challenge in the northern Mallee and eastern border regions has been the arrival of a locust plague with reports that early sown feed crops have been decimated. Many growers despite good levels of soil moisture have been holding off seeding for fear of damage to young seedlings. One farmer south of Loxton reported over 300 acres of recently emerged crop completely wiped out in two days. Further rain and perhaps a frost may assist in keeping these pests under control.

The last week has seen steady sales of F1 barley with prices lifting to \$136mt port, as high as they've been since harvest. The increase is due to several buyers having boats to fill in the near future. Wheat remains in the doldrums with new crop APW multi grade bids in the low \$200's meeting minimal enquiry. Many growers are still reluctant to sell old crop wheat and are generally just marketing enough to cover input costs for the 2010 crop. Canola new crop bids are around the \$420 mark have seen some selling as growers look to get some cover prior to seeding.

For further details please contact your local Australian Grain Accumulation  
Field Merchant – David Evans, Adelaide (08) 8408 8400.