

Australian Oilseeds Federation

Crop Report



December 2007

Canola 2007/08

The canola crop has been boosted by better than expected yields in Western Australia. This will see over one million tonnes produced Australiawide.

	2006/07 Production (tonnes)	2007/08 Estimates		
		Area Planted (hectares)	Area Harvested (hectares)	Production (tonnes)
NSW	30,000	240,000	58,000	42,000
VIC	42,000	270,000	150,000	248,000
SA	75,000	160,000	160,000	185,000
WA	365,000	390,000	390,000	600,000
Total	512,000	1,060,000	758,000	1,075,000

Source: Industry Estimates, 7/12/07

Harvest is completed in **NSW**. Yields have been very variable ranging from less than 0.5t/ha to around 2 t/ha. Yields were not only impacted by drought, but also by late frosts in some areas. Yield of irrigated crops was also impacted by lack of water. Oil contents have also been adversely impacted by the dry conditions. Overall, estimates have improved slightly on last month.

The difficulty around accurately assessing the **Victorian** crop continues with significant variability in yields being experienced, reflecting the fact that some crops received rain in October and others did not. There has been a small area harvested in the Mallee and the North East/Central area harvested has been revised down further. The Wimmera has varied from crops cut for hay to crops yielding over 2 t/ha. For the crops harvested in the Wimmera, it is estimated that these will average 1.2 t/ha. The Western District will contribute the vast majority of the Victorian crop, with conditions very good. Despite earlier concerns, there appears to be little frost damage. Harvest is just commencing in this region and to date yields have varied significantly. It is expected that yields will favour the higher end of this range as harvest continues, but some uncertainty remains. Oil contents are also expected to be very good. While the production estimate has been left unchanged, the trade are calling the crop lower with estimates ranging from <200,000 tonnes up to 225,000 tonnes.

There has been little change to the estimates for **South Australia**. While the lower rainfall areas have seen lower yields, this has been partly compensated for by better yields in the higher rainfall areas. The South East, in particular, benefited from the good rain in late October. Oil contents are also expected to be good, ranging from 38% to over 42%. Estimates have been reduced slightly.

After a very poor start to the season in terms of rainfall, the **Western Australia** canola crop has shown its resilience and has rebounded with above average yields in many areas and a significant overall improvement in general conditions. While the Geraldton zone has remained very much below average, the other three Port Zones, where 90% of the States canola is produced, have improved dramatically on the back of average rainfall during the growing season. Late rains in October have seen bigger grains than expected with higher oil percentage including oil results between 43 and 44% on average in the southern port zones. Throughout the southern areas, yields have been 200 to 500 kg/ha better than expected. A mild finish to the season, combined with excellent harvesting conditions is expected to result in production around 600,000mt. Harvest is well advanced and expected to be completed in the next couple of weeks.

Sunflowers 2007/08

Prospects for sunflower crop have improved with the recent rainfall across the north, although production is still substantially below the five year average and domestic requirements.

	2006/07 Production (tonnes)	2007/08 Estimates	
		Area Planted (hectares)	Production (tonnes)
QLD	2,960	6,550	7,330
NSW	15,040	15,900	21,160
Total	18,000	22,450	28,490

Source: Industry Estimates, 7/12/07

The early sunflower plant was limited due to dry conditions and strong competition from sorghum. In northern NSW, there has been a small area planted. The recent rain has boosted these crops. There is also a small early plant on the Liverpool Plains. Crops are mostly monounsaturated type, with small areas of poly and confectionary types. There are a few early crops on the Downs.

In the Moree district, crops are at mid flower to early grain fill and are varied in their condition. This is strongly dependent on the storm rains that have been about the district in the last month. The distribution of rainfall has been extremely isolated so crops range from excellent condition to moisture stressed. Temperatures for the most part have been mild, however, the last few days have brought mid 30's with strong winds which can have a significant impact on grain weight and oil yield if occurring at early grain fill. Rutherglen bugs have been present in large amounts, with most crops having had one insecticide spray at budding and some having already had a second spray depending on crop stage and insect pressure.

The early plant on the Liverpool Plains commenced in mid September and stretched out until the end of October. Some patchy establishments resulted. The weeks following sowing were quite windy and drying. However, the early plant has benefited from storm rain over the last month to six weeks. The majority of the early plant is now budding with quite a few crops approaching flowering in the next two weeks. Rutherglen bug pressure has been extremely high with some crops having been sprayed up to three times already.

Prospects for the late plant have improved with recent rain in the north and continued strong prices for sunflowers. Grower enquiry has increased. On the Downs, there is some concern about the potential for white fly and this may support sunflowers over soybeans. Central Queensland will be the major region for late crop plant. The late plant on the Liverpool Plains will be a mix of planned plantings (into fallows) and opportunity double cropping. A number of growers have received very high rainfalls and this has provided an opportunity for planting back into recently harvested winter cereal stubble. The total area to be planted will depend somewhat on the rain received in the next week.

Soybeans 2007/08

Soybean planting is just getting underway and weather conditions and prices of competing products over the next month will determine the final area planted. At this stage, it is estimated that area planted will be just over 15,000 hectares, a slight improvement on last season, but still well below the five year average.

	2006/07 Production (tonnes)	2007/08 Estimates	
		Area Planted (hectares)	Production (tonnes)
QLD	11,125	5,250	13,975
NSW	20,760	9,975	23,619
VIC	0	0	0
Total	31,885	15,225	37,594

Source: Industry Estimates, 7/12/07

Only a small proportion of the intended area is planted across Queensland. Improved conditions will see larger areas planted in some regions compared to the drought impacted 2006/07 crop, although overall the state remains similar to last year. In southern Queensland, rain has been patchy and planting will depend on further rainfall. There has been good grower interest reported. On the Western Downs, there are concerns about white fly and this may limit planting.

The North Coast of NSW is again expected to be the major production region. Area is expected to be similar or better than last year, although little is currently planted due to the wet conditions which have disrupted planting and the delayed cane harvest. Planting is expected to continue into late January. There has been some competition for soybean area from corn on the back of strong corn prices. The crops that have been planted have emerged and are in good condition.

The rest of NSW is still waiting for further rain. There have been some good falls, but it has been patchy and, in the north, soil moisture profiles are variable. In the central and south regions, there is little or no irrigation water. Like Queensland, most of NSW is still intended area to be planted, with little in the ground. In the north, prices of sunflowers and sorghum are offering competition to soybeans. In the central region, the Macquarie and Lachlan Valleys will require good rain to see area planted. There is a very small area planted in the Riverina and nothing planted in Victoria.

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