

SEASONAL CROP OUTLOOK

Sorghum – December 2017

SUMMARY

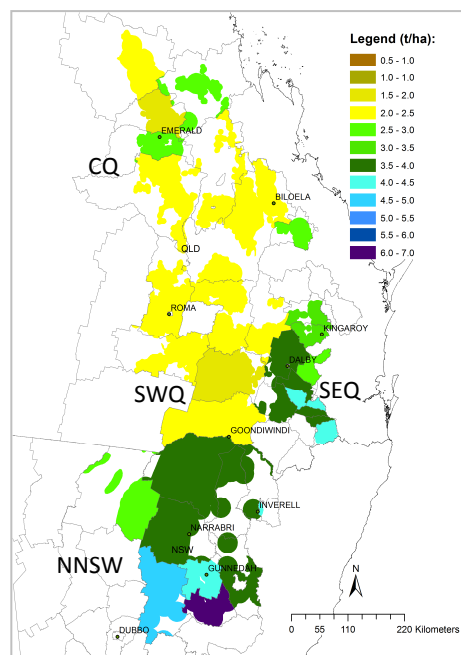
Simulated crop shire scale yield based on current soil moisture conditions up to the end of November 2017 and projected rainfall indicate an average yielding sorghum crop for the 2017/18 summer growing season. There remains, however, variation in the outlook among local regions. More specifically, most areas in CQ are showing slightly above average crop yield expectations, while most areas in southern QLD and NNSW are having sorghum yield outcomes close to or below the long-term expectation. **It should be noted**, this is still early in the growing season and the range of likely sorghum yield outcomes remains wide. Widespread average to above average rainfall is needed, during the next couple of months to induce good summer plantings and improve the current crop outlook across all areas of the north-eastern Australian (NEAUS) summer cropping region.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

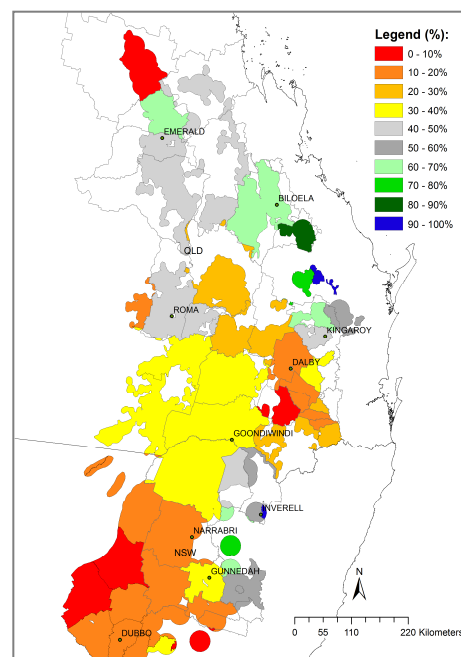
Rainfall recorded during November was average to below average across most of the NEAUS summer cropping region. However, rainfall during the last 3 months was above average for most parts of CQ and SWQ, while SEQ and NSW recorded average rainfall during that period. Currently, estimated stored soil moisture levels (simulated through winter fallow using APSIM) varied across the summer cropping region. Most areas of CQ region have soil water recharge levels close to or slightly above 50% of the total plant available soil water capacity (50% to 60%). Conversely, most areas in southern QLD and NNSW have recharged to one-third (30%) and less than one-third of the available soil moisture profile levels for that region, respectively (Map 2). Although some plantings have occurred widespread above average rainfall is needed over December to induce further planting opportunities across the entire summer cropping region. The recent pattern of the SOI remained “consistently positive” for the Oct/Nov period, indicates an increased chance of receiving above average rainfall for most of the northern and southern parts of the summer grains cropping region over the next 3-months (www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au). *Note: this outlook is only applicable to a winter fallow period.*

OUTLOOK

This regional sorghum crop outlook is based on the assumption of cropping after winter fallow. The benchmark for this outlook is the simulated long-term median shire sorghum yield within the broad NEAUS cropping region (Map 1). The median yield is based on predicted performance over the past 115-years using an agro-climatic model for sorghum with long-term rainfall records (see descriptive note for more details). Probability of exceeding the long-term shire median yield for this year is shown in Map 3. Any areas coloured in light grey, yellow and red have a poor to very poor chance of having crops above the long-term median yield, whereas areas coloured in dark grey, green and blue have good to very good chances of producing higher yielding crops. Map 3 is derived by considering conditions up the end of November and projected forward based on rainfall conditions in years with SOI phase similar to this year i.e. “consistently positive” at the October to November period. The calculation of benchmark yields and outlook chances do not take into account effects of poor crop nutrition or damage due to pests, diseases, frosts or extreme events (e.g. heat waves).



Map 1: Long-term median simulated shire sorghum yield (115 years)



Map 2: Aggregated soil water recharge status (%) as at 1st December 2017. A short 8-month winter fallow was simulated from 1st of April 2017 to end of October 2017.

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