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Good prospects for a large winter crop

Generally favourable winter growing conditions are expected to lead to a large 2011-12 national winter crop, according to the latest edition of the *Australian Crop Report*.

ABARES acting Deputy Executive Director, Dr Terry Sheales, said rainfall in August and early September in most cropping regions had provided a good boost to winter crop production

“Consistent monthly winter rainfall of between 25 and 100 millimetres was received across Western Australia’s cropping regions, which is a stark turnaround from last season’s dry conditions,” Dr Sheales said.

“South Australia, Victoria and southern New South Wales recorded average August rainfall and crops in these regions look promising.

“However, north-west New South Wales and south-west Queensland have experienced below average winter rainfall and rain will be needed soon to achieve average yields.”

Australian winter crop production is forecast to be 41 million tonnes in 2011-12, a decline of 2 per cent from the large harvest of last season.

Of the major winter grains, wheat production is forecast to fall slightly to 26.2 million tonnes and for barley, production is forecast to fall by 11 per cent to around 8.3 million tonnes with canola production forecast to rise by 7 per cent to 2.3 million tonnes.

While winter rainfall was good across the majority of cropping regions, further rainfall will be needed in the coming weeks to achieve prospective yields and good spring rainfall will also assist the planting of summer crops.

Increased availability of irrigation water has led to a forecast rise in rice plantings in 2011-12 to around 101,000 hectares, up from last season’s 89,000 hectares. Rice production is forecast to increase to around 909,000 tonnes and cotton plantings are forecast to be slightly higher than last season at around 600,000 hectares with production forecast to reach a record 1.1 million tonnes.

Grain sorghum plantings are forecast to decline by 3 per cent to 617,000 hectares and production is forecast to fall by 13 per cent to 1.9 million tonnes, owing to below average winter rainfall in key growing regions.

Overall, summer crop production is forecast to increase by 2 per cent to 4.8 million tonnes in 2011-12.

The report can be downloaded from: www.abares.gov.au/publications.

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