

BCG TECHNICAL BULLETIN



No. 10

7 August 2026

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Table 1. Rainfall (mm) across the Wimmera and Mallee, number in brackets denotes decile for the period.

Duration (mm)	Ouyen	Manang	Swan Hill	Birchip	H'toun	St. Arnaud	Kerang	W'beal	Longy	Nhill	Kaniva	Boort	M'ville	Sea Lake
Nov 25 – Mar 26	263 (9)	155 (8)	211 (8)	225 (9)	183(8)	214 (8)	207 (8)	204 (9)	212 (9)	161 (8)	139 (9)	216 (8)	110 (6)	267 (9)
GSR (April-July)	121(6)	142(7)	119(5)	122(5)	116(1)	182 (4)	157(7)	146(4)	170 (6)	147(4)	193 (6)	128*(5)	116(4)	104*(4)
Aug (1-6)	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	1	2	2	3	0*	0	0*

*Complete data unavailable for specified period.

Climate: Pressure patterns remain stronger over tropical Australia and over southern areas, which is typical El Nino behaviour. If they continue, drier conditions are plausible and we will rely on good luck for rain in between high-pressure systems. Models remain fixed on drier and warmer outcomes being more likely for the rest of the season.

Currently the Pacific Ocean remains in a strong El Nino. Cloud and pressure patterns to the north of Australia are strongly aligned with a El Nino. The trade winds have become weaker this week as some tropical weather in the northern Pacific has altered them. This is likely to be temporary.

In the Indian Ocean, a burst of easterly wind off Java in the last week of July rapidly cooled the ocean in that zone. Water off Africa has warmed and so the Dipole Mode Index shows a moderate +IOD like value. A lack of cloud above Java is in the suspiciously +IOD like shape of an “eye”. No other parameter suggests the ocean is coupling with the atmosphere though.

In the last week, a burst of the Madden Julian Oscillation (MJO) coming into Sumatra is causing stronger westerly wind which may nullify the current +IOD condition. This current burst of the MJO is predicted to be in the moisture source region north of Australia when the weather system comes through on the weekend.



Disease: Stripe Rust has been detected at low levels in wheat in the northern Mallee and other disease such as scald and the net blotches in barley and blackleg in canola has been reported. Continued rain events and gradually increasing temperatures indicate this is still a high-risk season for disease and proactive disease management is still the best option. Refer to previous [Technical Bulletin](#) for disease management plan details.

Figure 1. Stripe Rust at low levels in the Northern Mallee (Source: Kelly Angel)

Yellowing areas of crop: Reports of yellowing crop areas that are potentially due to rapid growth, waterlogging, nutrient leaching or herbicide damage have growers either considering or applying more nitrogen or trace elements.

When identifying what could be the cause, look for a pattern of yellowing or poor performance. Work with your advisor who will have seen symptoms across the region and can recommend appropriate products and rates.

Here is a checklist of considerations:

- Is it in the drill rows? Could be due to machine set up, herbicide incorporation or blocked fertiliser rows.
- If it is in patches according to heavy or light soil it could be due to nutrient deficiency
- Leaching of mobile nutrients (Nitrogen (N) and Sulphur (S)) primarily occurs in light soils
- Denitrification of N occurs in on heavy soils
- If the damage is in straight lines it could be due to spray lines due to residual herbicides (eg Sulfonylurea (SU))
- If symptoms are in old header tracks (it could be Potassium(K) or N deficiency)

Different nutrient deficiencies will express on different parts of the plant (Figure 2). Old leaves display deficiencies of mobile nutrients - most often N). Young leaves display deficiencies of immobile nutrients - most common S. Also checked the roots where there could be herbicide damage, waterlogging or root disease.

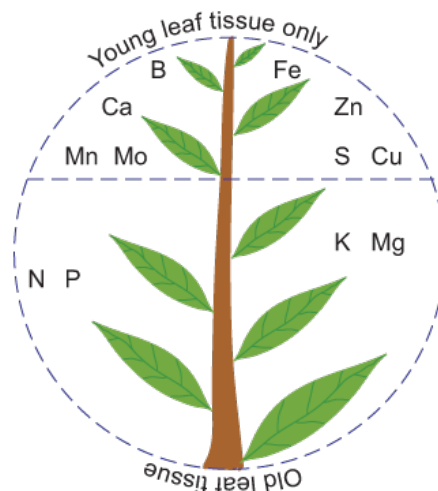


Figure 2. Where different nutrient deficiencies are expressed in a growing crop plant. (Source: Rob Norton, Norton Consulting.)

Water logging characteristics: A waterlogged soil exists where the air spaces in the soil are saturated and no longer contain oxygen, forcing anaerobic conditions. This diminishes the plant's ability to uptake nutrients and water through its root system resulting in reduced growth and yellowing leaves, known as chlorosis. Under experimental conditions, visual yellowing was observed in wheat after 2 weeks of waterlogged conditions (McCaskill pers comm). Plants will be most affected when they are rapidly growing, and as such, prolonged waterlogging during the advanced growth stages is where yield penalties are traditionally most severe. Waterlogging can cause permanent damage to roots however, if the crop stays alive, it will keep growing and once waterlogging conditions subside, due to warmer temperatures and dry conditions, crops can respond to the addition of nutrients under normal conditions. You can register for an upcoming [GRDC webinar](#) on Tues 11 August which will discuss the latest research on managing waterlogging risk.

Symptom diagnosis: The [GRDC Wheat and Barley leaf symptom back pocket guide](#) provides a guide to the visual symptoms of a range of nutrient deficiencies. [GRDC plant tissue testing factsheet](#) provides an overview of how to accurately sample. Consult with your advisor who will have knowledge of symptoms observed in the district. Plant tissue samples can be sent to [Nutrient Advantage](#) or [Eurofins APAL](#). For suspected disease, contact [CropSafe](#) to arrange a formal assessment, (03) 5450 8301 or crop.safe@agriculture.vic.gov.au.

Crop assessment: Consider the area of your paddock that is affected, the value of the crop. If the area is relatively small, it may be more profitable to focus on protecting yield potential in other areas that aren't affected. Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) imagery, if readily available, may be a useful way of making this assessment and to quantify how much area may need to be treated. Otherwise, conduct a visual assessment to make a percentage of area estimate.

New climate insights available in Yield Prophet

Yield Prophet users can now access a new climate output on their paddock page, showing the potential yield effects associated with different phases of ENSO and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD). With recent discussion about the influence of the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) and IOD on seasonal conditions across our region, this new feature can help farmers explore whether particular climate phases materially change predicted yields compared with the full historical record. The output is designed to provide additional context for seasonal decision-making, helping users better understand how major climate drivers may have influenced yield outcomes in similar years.

Below is a visual of a Yield Prophet output for Birchip (Figure 3) and Horsham (Figure 4), generated today selecting for the scenario of a Negative SOI combined with Positive IOD. At Birchip, in a Decile 5 (Probability 50%) scenario, a 3t/ha grain yield could be expected. At Horsham, a 4.6t/ha yield could be expected under the same climate conditions.

Climate Yield Prediction

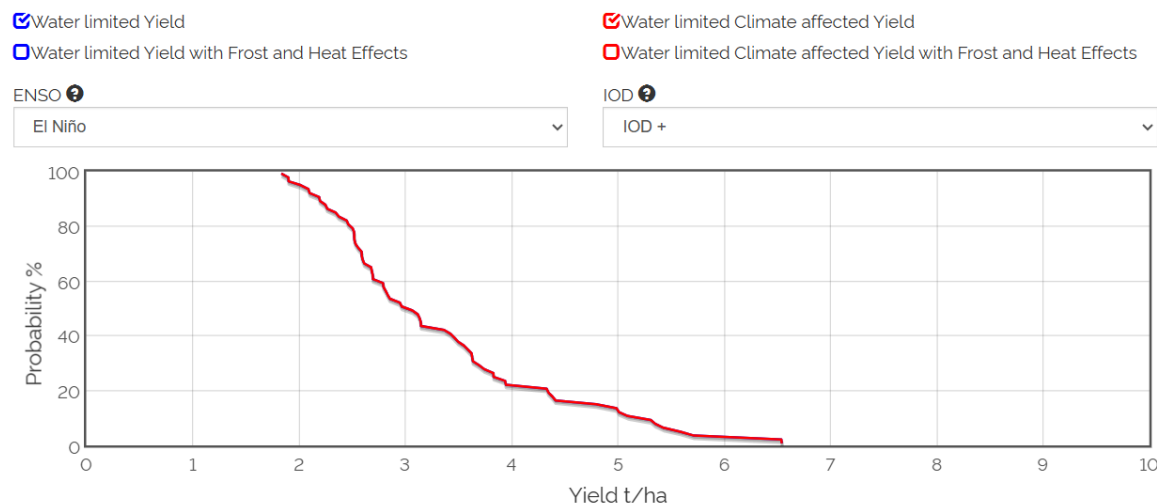


Figure 3. Climate Yield Prediction of a Scepter wheat crop growing at Birchip for a Negative SOI (El Nino) and a positive IOD

Climate Yield Prediction

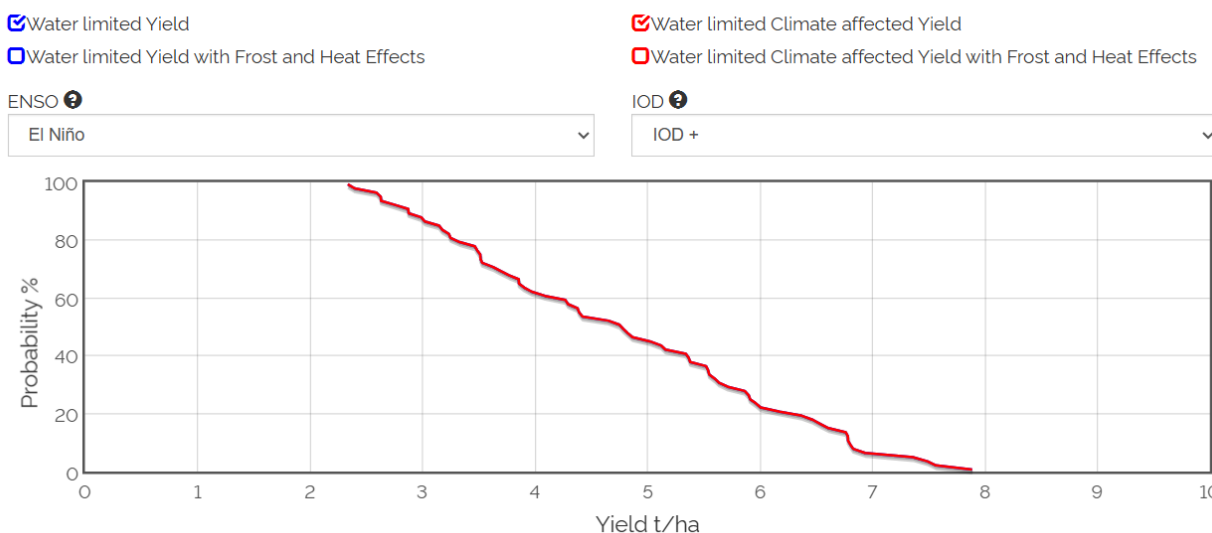


Figure 4. Climate Yield Prediction of a Scepter wheat crop growing at Horsham for a Negative SOI (El Nino) and a positive IOD

Global Markets

Global grain markets have eased recently after rallying strongly through July. The focus remains the Black Sea, where logistics issues continue to affect both Russia and Ukraine. Despite the ongoing disruption, markets have recently pulled back. Global demand has been surprisingly weak, with major importers choosing to draw on existing stocks rather than bid up for the more expensive volumes currently on offer. These remain war-driven markets, so volatility is likely to

continue. Beyond the Black Sea, the on-again, off-again nature of the US–Iran conflict is also being felt. Canola prices have been particularly volatile, with MATIF rapeseed rallying sharply for several weeks before giving up nearly A\$80/t in just over a week. Finally, the US corn crop, the largest crop grown globally, is progressing well. While parts of the crop have faced hot, dry conditions, recent rainfall and a solid forecast have helped offset those concerns.

Domestic Markets

Local markets have been strong, supported by the move higher in global values. The positive side of the recent offshore disruption is that Australia has the wheat stocks, port capacity and willing exporters to capture demand that may otherwise have gone to the Black Sea. More recently, however, offshore prices have eased, and local values have softened as well. Attention is now firmly on the forecast, which looks very favourable for most of Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales. If the forecast eventuates, it should keep yield prospects intact and help protect the crop against a potentially dry September and October, which the BOM continues to indicate is likely. In pricing, BAR1 delivered to Geelong and Melbourne ports is around \$335 to \$340/t for both new and old crop. ASW1 and APW1 are around \$375/t for both current and new crop delivery. New crop canola is trading north of \$830/t delivered, which is attracting some grower interest. Lentils continue to struggle, with August and September bids into Melbourne around \$630/t and new crop demand still very thin, showing around \$600 delivered at the moment.

Compiled by Louisa Ferrier with contributions from Alicia Mason, Darren Arney (Cloudbreak), Dale Grey (AgVic), Tom Kourambas (Marketcheck), Ash Moon, Brad Plant, Claire Pickles, DeAnne Ferrier, Brad Plant, Alan Bennett, James Taylor, Nigel Wilhelm (SARDI), Kate Burke (ThinkAgri), Rob Norton (Norton Agronomy), Malcolm McCaskill (AgVic), Fiona Best, Alison Frischke.