

THE SPRING FORECAST

FOR SOUTHERN MDB REGIONS 2017



As predicted by Kevin Long (Bendigo VIC) 30 AUG 2017 ph (03) 5441 2394

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QUICK SUMMARY OF THE WINTER GROWING SEASON

Northern half of the MDB: The Summer wet season was below par. This dry trend has been maintained during the Winter period, resulting in a very poor northern growing season so far and very little chance of any improvement during Spring. Most of the rain for 2017 came from the buildup and landfall of Cyclone Debbie in late March, with little since.

Further south: Many regions received very good April / May rains and the Winter growing was off to a good early start. Central Victorian and some southern NSW regions also received above-average rain during July / August. Therefore most southern MDB regions are on track for a good harvest season.

CLOSE TO RECORD LOW SEA ICE FOR THIS YEAR

Antarctic sea ice has remained at near-record low levels for most of the last year. I view this as one of the few positive drivers for this growing season. This low sea ice condition comes as a result of heat and moisture being injected into the upper atmosphere during the super strong El Nino event of 2015, now slowly working its way into the polar regions.

I forecast these residual effects are at the point of petering out. The next sea ice growth cycle will soon be established as the next El Nino event builds, and I forecast it will produce another "record high" sea ice cycle by October 2019. Once the Antarctic sea ice has returned to above-average, another dry climate force will be added to our climate mix. Increasing extremes of sea ice are becoming a much greater influence on our climate cycles.

EL NINO RISK REDUCING FOR THIS YEAR

In recent months there has been a significant move back towards a weak La Nina. Cooler sea surfaces are becoming dominant again in the central Pacific, and very cool sea currents are moving up the South American costal line.

WARM CENTRAL AND NORTHERN INDIAN OCEAN

This condition has again this Winter promoted good amounts of jetstream moisture during July / August for southern regions of the MDB. It has promoted many small rains events and reduced the frost intensity during mid-Winter. The jetstream has recently weakened and moved further north, reducing the rain potential and increasing the risk of frost damage to the southern half of the MDB during early to mid-Spring.

VERY COOL SOUTHERN SEAS

A large dominance of below-average sea surface temperatures (SST) to the south and west of Australia will continue to reduce the chances of significant rain coming in from that direction. The southern Indian Ocean remains much cooler generally than it was during last year. Cooler than average seas around most of Australia are forecast to produce below-average rain for the entire MDB this Spring. **These cool seas have the potential to produce wide spread drought.** Regions that have received enough rain to promote a good growing season this year can count themselves lucky so far. Furthermore I forecast dryer climate is to come.

THE SPRING FORECAST **IN BRIEF: Strong highs. Weak southern lows. Weak cold fronts.**

The El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) remains neutral, and cooler seas are dominating most regions around Australia. Only a fare chance of productive rain should be expected during the last week of each Spring month.

Frost damage to sensitive crops will be a much greater risk than it has been for many years due to the cooler Indian Ocean and reducing jetstream moisture flows. Very cool southerly winds are forecast to develop occasionally, thus helping to keep the average temperature cooler than it was last year.

I forecast most northern MDB regions of the MDB will receive barely 60% of average rainfall for this year, but southern regions have a good chance of receiving up to 80%. Central Victoria is likely to get the lion's share, with regions south of the divide remaining very dry - especially so in central Gippsland.

Winter hydro power production and environmental releases have remained high, thus limiting G-MW average reservoir rise to only 11% increase so far this year. Currently 80% full. This rise represents only 1/3 of the yearly water required.

I wish you all the best for the 2017 harvest season. Kind regards, Kevin.

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