Summary of key issues

- During the week ending 21 March 2018, little to no rainfall was received across most of the country, with rainfall being restricted to northern Australia, parts of the eastern and southern coasts, and Tasmania.

- Maximum temperatures were 4°C to 8°C above average across south-eastern Australia for the week ending 20 March 2018, with the highest anomalies in central and northern New South Wales.

- Following a drier than average February 2018 across much of southern Australia, March-to-date (1 to 21 March) has been particularly dry across winter cropping regions in central and southern New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

- The dry conditions have reduced pasture availability for livestock and is likely to have led to an increase in supplementary feeding programs. Dry conditions are also likely to limit field work in the lead up to the planting of this year’s winter crop.

- The Australian Plague Locust Commission report that the locust population level remained low in most regions during February. The outlook for autumn is for Australian plague locust population densities to remain low in most regions of inland eastern Australia.

- During the next eight days, rainfall is mainly expected in northern Australia, parts of the east coast, and western Tasmania. A trough and potential formation of a second tropical cyclone across northern Australia in consecutive weeks, are forecast to bring between 25 and 150 millimetres of rain to northern parts of Queensland and eastern parts of the Northern Territory.

- Water storage levels in the Murray–Darling Basin (MDB) decreased during the week ending 22 March 2018 by 139 gigalitres (GL) to 11,924 GL and are at 53 per cent of total capacity. This is 16 percentage points or 3,510 GL less than at the same time last year.

- Allocation prices in the southern Murray–Darling Basin increased in the week ending 22 March 2018 to $115 per ML. This is an increase of $3 from the same time last week.
1. Climate

1.1. Rainfall this week

During the week ending 21 March 2018, little to no rainfall was received across most of the country, with rainfall being restricted to northern Australia, parts of the eastern and southern coasts, and Tasmania. Rainfall totals between 15 and 100 millimetres were recorded in Tasmania, far northern Western Australia, northern parts of the Northern Territory, and northern Queensland. Higher totals (exceeding 100 millimetres) were recorded in parts of the Top End, including the highest recorded weekly total of 279 millimetres at Warruwi Airport. Totals between 10 and 25 millimetres were recorded in coastal parts of southern Queensland, along the coast of New South Wales and in eastern Victoria. Similar totals were recorded in southern parts of Western Australia.
1.2. Temperature anomalies this week

For the week ending 20 March 2018, maximum temperatures were 4°C to 8°C above average across south-eastern Australia, with the highest anomalies in central and northern New South Wales. They were 2°C to 4°C above average in central parts of Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Maximum temperatures were close to average for the remainder of Australia. Minimum temperatures were close to average for most of the country, with the exception of northern New South Wales, and south-western Queensland where they were 2°C to 4°C above average.

Maximum temperature anomalies for the week ending 20 March 2018

Minimum temperature anomalies for the week ending 20 March 2018

Note: Spatial temperature analyses are based on historical weekly temperature data provided by the Bureau of Meteorology. These temperature anomaly maps show the departure of the maximum and minimum temperatures from the average over the 1961 to 1990 reference period. For further information go to: http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/awap/temp/index.jsp.
1.3. Monthly rainfall to date

Dry conditions have continued across southern Australia during March 2018, following a drier than average February. March-to-date (1 to 21 March) rainfall remains at less than 20 per cent of the monthly average across winter cropping regions in central and southern New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. Soil moisture levels in these areas are also very much below average.

Due to the current dry state of soils, the availability of soil moisture to plants from future rainfall events may be initially limited and have reduced effectiveness to promote growth until the soil water balance is restored. The drying of the soil profile is likely to have been further exacerbated by recent warmer than average temperatures and with little rain forecast in southern Australia during the next 8 days soil moisture is unlikely to improve substantially during the remainder of the month. The dry conditions have reduced pasture availability for livestock and is likely to have led to an increase in supplementary feeding programs.

Rainfall percentages 1 to 21 March 2018

Note: This map compares the rainfall received since the start of the current month with the long-term average for the entire month.

Source: Australian Bureau of Meteorology
1.4. Australian Plague Locust

The Australian Plague Locust Commission (APLC) produces a monthly Locust Bulletin during the periods of locust activity (spring, summer and autumn). The bulletin gives regional summaries of the locust situation and weather events of potential significance for locust development. It also provides a forecast of likely developments for the next two months (or from autumn to spring) for the Australian plague locust (*Chortoicetes terminifera*), spur-throated locust (*Austracris guttulosa*), and the migratory locust (*Locusta migratoria*).

According to the APLC, the Australian plague locust population level remained low in most regions during February. Small increases in population density from very low levels in previous months were detected in part of Central West New South Wales and in Southwest Queensland. Although some localised low density breeding is likely to have occurred in other regions during January and February, most habitats dried out rapidly and prolonged high temperatures are likely to have caused increased mortality of nymphs and adults.

The outlook for autumn is for Australian plague locust population densities to remain low in most regions of inland eastern Australia. Given the current low population levels, there is a low risk of regional infestations developing and a very low risk of swarms affecting any agricultural region during autumn. At this stage there is no indication of high density nymph infestations developing in any region during spring.


**Australian Plague Locust Distribution**

1 to 28 February 2018

---

Densities estimated for areas of locust habitat, based on current surveys and reports from current and previous month.

©Commonwealth of Australia 2018, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources  
Issued: 01/03/2018
1.5. Rainfall forecast for the next eight days

During the next eight days, rainfall is mainly expected in northern Australia, parts of the east coast, and western Tasmania. A trough and potential formation of a tropical cyclone in the Gulf of Carpentaria are forecast to bring between 25 and 150 millimetres of rain to northern parts of Queensland and eastern parts of the Northern Territory. Higher totals (exceeding 200 millimetres) are forecast around Cairns and southern parts of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Elsewhere, totals between 25 and 100 millimetres are forecast for north-eastern parts of coastal New South Wales, eastern parts of the Pilbara, and western Tasmania.

This rainfall forecast is produced from computer models. As it contains no input from weather forecasters, it is important to check local forecasts and warnings issued by the Bureau of Meteorology.

Total forecast rainfall (mm) for the period 22 to 29 March 2018
2. Water

2.1. Water availability

Water storage levels in the Murray–Darling Basin (MDB) decreased during the week ending 22 March 2018 by 139 gigalitres (GL) to 11,924 GL and are at 53 per cent of total capacity. This is 16 percentage points or 3,510 GL less than at the same time last year.

Information on water available in dams used for irrigation in the Murray–Darling Basin from 1 January 2001 to 22 March 2018 is shown above. The top horizontal (short dash) line indicates the storage level during a similar time last year. The bottom horizontal (long dash) line indicates the amount of ‘dead’ or unusable storage.
2.2. Water allocations

The current water allocations for the 2017–18 water trading season for licence holders in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia water systems are summarised in the following table and charts.

On 15 March 2018 NSW Department of Primary Industries – Water announced allocation increases of:

- 4 per cent for NSW Murrumbidgee general security to 38 per cent
- 2 per cent for NSW Murray general security to 51 per cent

On 15 March 2018 the Resource Manager for Northern Victoria announced seasonal determination increases of:

- 3 per cent for Victoria Campaspe low reliability to 58 per cent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water allocations in the Murray–Darling Basin (NSW, Victoria and South Australia)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>New South Wales</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Murray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Murrumbidge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Lower Darling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Macquarie and Cudgelong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Hunter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Lachlan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Lower Namoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Upper Namoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Gwydir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Border Rivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Peel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victoria</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Murray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Goulburn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Campaspe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Loddon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Bullarook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Australia</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 3a/3b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia Murray</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Select water allocation percentages in the southern Murray–Darling Basin
2.3. Water markets

Allocation prices in the southern Murray–Darling Basin increased in the week ending 22 March 2018 to $115 per ML. This is an increase of $3 from the same time last week. This contrasts with an average price of $105 in February across the whole southern MDB, and $42 during the same month last year.

The trades shown reflect market activity and do not encompass all register trades. The price line reflects locally fitted price values for the entire southern Murray–Darling Basin. Data shown is current until 22 March 2018. Trade activity is shown as colour density.

| Allocation trade prices, southern Murray–Darling Basin trade zones (price per ML) |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Current week: 16/03/18 – 22/03/18                 | Southern MDB     | Victoria Goulburn | SA Murray        | NSW Murrumbidgee   | Victoria Murray   | NSW Murray       |
|                                                   | $115.39          | $109.14           | $108.30          | $154.06            | $120.17           | $112.62          |
| Last week: 09/03/18 – 15/03/18                   | $112.76          | $96.29            | $108.31          | $149.10            | $112.44           | $109.57          |
| February 2018                                     | $105.11          | $82.05            | $112.79          | $130.68            | $108.21           | $108.51          |
| February 2017                                     | $41.86           | $50.76            | $54.28           | $21.49             | $49.71            | $43.83           |
## 3. Commodities

### Selected World Indicator Prices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Week ended</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Latest price</th>
<th>Price week prior</th>
<th>Weekly change</th>
<th>Price 12 months prior</th>
<th>Year on year change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Dollar – AUD/USD Exchange Rate</td>
<td>21-Mar</td>
<td>US$/A$</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat – US no. 2 hard red winter wheat, fob Gulf</td>
<td>20-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coarse Grains – US no. 2 yellow corn, fob Gulf</td>
<td>21-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canola – Rapeseed, Europe, fob Hamburg</td>
<td>20-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton – Cotlook 'A' Index</td>
<td>21-Mar</td>
<td>USc/lb</td>
<td>92.2</td>
<td>93.1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar – Intercontinental Exchange, nearby futures, no.11 contract</td>
<td>21-Mar</td>
<td>USc/lb</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>-28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wool – Eastern Market Indicator</td>
<td>15-Mar</td>
<td>Ac/kg clean</td>
<td>1,751</td>
<td>1,778</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>1,546</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wool – Western Market Indicator</td>
<td>16-Mar</td>
<td>Ac/kg clean</td>
<td>1,834</td>
<td>1,859</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>1,554</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Selected domestic crop indicator prices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Week ended</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Latest price</th>
<th>Price week prior</th>
<th>Weekly change</th>
<th>Price 12 months prior</th>
<th>Year on year change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milling Wheat – ASW1, track quote, Port Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>20-Mar</td>
<td>A$/t</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed Wheat – General purpose, Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>21-Mar</td>
<td>A$/t</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed Barley – Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>21-Mar</td>
<td>A$/t</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canola – Portland, Vic.</td>
<td>19-Mar</td>
<td>A$/t</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain Sorghum – Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>21-Mar</td>
<td>A$/t</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Selected domestic livestock indicator prices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Week ended</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Latest price</th>
<th>Price week prior</th>
<th>Weekly change</th>
<th>Price 12 months prior</th>
<th>Year on year change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beef – Eastern Young Cattle Indicator</td>
<td>15-Mar</td>
<td>Ac/kg cwt</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>-8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutton – Mutton indicator (18–24 kg fat score 2–3), Vic</td>
<td>16-Mar</td>
<td>Ac/kg cwt</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamb – Eastern States Trade Lamb Indicator</td>
<td>15-Mar</td>
<td>Ac/kg cwt</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig – Eastern Seaboard (60.1–75 kg), average of buyers &amp; sellers</td>
<td>09-Mar</td>
<td>Ac/kg cwt</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>-21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goat – Eastern States (12.1–16 kg)</td>
<td>12-Mar</td>
<td>Ac/kg cwt</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>-28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live cattle – Light steers ex Darwin to Indonesia</td>
<td>17-Mar</td>
<td>Ac/kg lwt</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live sheep – Live wether (Muchea WA saleyard) to Middle East</td>
<td>19-Mar</td>
<td>$/head</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Week ended</td>
<td>Unit</td>
<td>Latest price</td>
<td>Price week prior</td>
<td>Weekly change</td>
<td>Price 12 months prior</td>
<td>Year on year change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy – Whole milk powder</td>
<td>20-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>3,226</td>
<td>3,232</td>
<td>&lt;1% ↓</td>
<td>2,855</td>
<td>13% ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy – Skim milk powder</td>
<td>20-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>1,887</td>
<td>2,051</td>
<td>-8% ↓</td>
<td>1,948</td>
<td>-3% ↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy – Cheddar cheese</td>
<td>20-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>3,609</td>
<td>3,759</td>
<td>-4% ↓</td>
<td>3,406</td>
<td>6% ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy – Anhydrous milk fat</td>
<td>20-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>6,249</td>
<td>6,245</td>
<td>&lt;1% ↑</td>
<td>5,799</td>
<td>8% ↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Global Dairy Trade prices are updated twice monthly on the first and third Tuesday of each month.
2.4. Selected world indicator prices

- **World wheat indicator price**
  - US No. 2, hard red winter wheat, fob Gulf
  - Week ended 20 March 2018

- **World coarse grains indicator price**
  - US corn No. 2, fob Gulf
  - Week ended 21 March 2018

- **World canola indicator price**
  - Europe fob Hamburg
  - Week ended 20 March 2018

- **World cotton indicator price**
  - Cotlook ‘A’ index
  - Week ended 21 March 2018
Global Dairy Trade (GDT) weighted average prices

- Whole milk powder price
  - 20 March 2018

- Skim milk powder price
  - 20 March 2018

- Cheddar cheese price
  - 20 March 2018

- Anhydrous milk fat price
  - 20 March 2018
2.6. **Selected domestic crop indicator prices**

**Grain sorghum indicator price**  
Sydney, NSW  
Week ended 21 March 2018

**Feed barley indicator price**  
Sydney, NSW  
Week ended 21 March 2018

**Feed wheat indicator price**  
General Purpose, Sydney, NSW  
Week ended 21 March 2018

**Milling wheat indicator price**  
ASW1, track quote, Port Adelaide, SA  
Week ended 20 March 2018
Canola indicator price
Portland, Victoria
Week ended 19 March 2018

A$/t
Jan  Feb  Mar  Apr  May  Jun  Jul  Aug  Sep  Oct  Nov  Dec

2016  2017  2018
2.7. Selected domestic livestock indicator prices

Eastern Young Cattle Indicator
Week ended 15 March 2018

Eastern States Trade Lamb Indicator
Week ended 15 March 2018

Mutton indicator price in Victoria
(18–24 kg fat score 2–3)
Week ended 16 March 2018

Pig indicator price Eastern Seaboard
(60.1–75 kg)
Week ended 9 March 2018
2.8. **Selected fruit and vegetable prices – week ended 17 March 2018**

- Weekly wholesale prices for blueberry, pineapple (smoothleaf), watermelon (seedless) & banana (cavendish)
- Weekly wholesale prices for kiwifruit (hayward), strawberry, apple (royal gala) & avocado (hass)
- Weekly wholesale prices for onion (brown), cauliflower, potato (white, brushed) & tomato (field gourmet)
- Weekly wholesale prices for broccoli, lettuce (iceberg), pumpkin (grey bulk) & bean (round stringless)
3. Data attribution

**Climate**

Bureau of Meteorology

**Water**

New South Wales

Queensland

South Australia

Victoria

**Commodities**

**Fruit and vegetables**

**Pigs**

**Canola**
- Weekly Times: hardcopy

**Dairy**
- World wheat, canola
- International Grains Council
- World coarse grains
- United States Department of Agriculture
- World cotton
- Cotlook: [www.cotlook.com/](http://www.cotlook.com/)

**World sugar**
- New York Stock Exchange - Intercontinental Exchange
- Wool

**Milling wheat**
- ProFarmer
- Domestic wheat, barley, sorghum

**Domestic canola**
- The Weekly Times: hardcopy
- Cattle, beef, mutton, lamb, goat and live export