Summary of key issues

- ABARES released the [March 2019 edition of Agricultural commodities](#) this week. The report contains ABARES latest outlook for Australia’s key agricultural commodities to 2023–24.

- During the week ending 6 March 2019 rainfall was recorded across parts of northern Australia, as well as isolated parts of eastern and southern Australia. Little to no rainfall was recorded in summer cropping regions during the week ending 6 March 2019.

- February 2019 mean, maximum and minimum temperatures were above average for much of the country. It was the fourth warmest February on record for Australia in terms of mean temperature. The national mean temperature was 1.38 °C above average.

- February 2019 rainfall was below average for Australia as a whole. February rainfall was severely deficient to well below average across north-eastern New South Wales, much of southern Queensland, most of South Australia excluding the south-eastern quarter, and large areas of the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

- February rainfall was generally severely deficient for most summer cropping regions.

- Summer 2018-19 was particularly dry across much of Australia. Nationally it was the seventh-driest summer on record, and the fourth-lowest and fifth-lowest on record for the Northern Territory and Western Australia respectively. Nationally, the most notable rainfall event was the extremely heavy rainfall and flooding occurred in tropical Queensland with the delayed onset of the monsoon. Summer 2018-19 rainfall was extremely low to severely deficient for summer cropping regions in Queensland and northern New South Wales.

- In summer cropping regions across northern New South Wales and Queensland, upper and lower layer soil moisture was generally lowest on record to very much below average for this time of year.

- During the next eight days, rainfall is expected across all states and territories, with the heaviest falls forecast for Tasmania, the far north and the eastern coast of Australia.

- In summer cropping regions, rainfall of between 1 and 15 millimetres is expected across northern and eastern cropping areas of Queensland.

- Water storage levels in the Murray-Darling Basin (MDB) decreased between 27 February and 6 March 2019 by 149 gigalitres (GL). Current volume of water held in storage is 9,274 GL which represents 37 per cent of total capacity.

- Allocation prices in the southern Murray-Darling Basin increased from $446 per ML in the week ending 18 February 2019 to $471 per ML in the week ending 25 February 2019.

- ABARES has released a [water market outlook](#) for allocation prices within the southern Murray-Darling Basin. The report details the prevailing conditions in 2018-19 and provides forecasts for the 2019-20 water year.
1. Climate

1.1. Rainfall this week

During the week ending 6 March 2019 rainfall was recorded across parts of northern Australia, as well as isolated parts of eastern and southern Australia. Rainfall totals of between 10 and 50 millimetres were recorded across isolated areas of north-eastern and south-eastern New South Wales, across northern and eastern Queensland, part of eastern Victoria, the north of the Northern Territory, northern Western Australia and western Tasmania. Higher rainfall totals in excess of 50 millimetres were recorded across scattered areas of tropical northern Australia.

Little to no rainfall was recorded in summer cropping regions during the week ending 6 March 2019.
1.2. Monthly temperatures

February 2019 mean, maximum and minimum temperatures were above average for much of the country. It was the fourth warmest February on record for Australia in terms of mean temperature. The national mean temperature was 1.38 °C above average. Maximum temperatures were 2.05 °C above average and minimum temperatures were 0.71 °C above average. The Northern Territory and Western Australia both experienced their fourth warmest mean monthly temperature on record for February. Cooler than average mean maximum and minimum temperatures occurred in a large area of western Queensland due to well above average rainfall and extended flooding.

Maximum temperature deciles for February 2019

Minimum temperature deciles for February 2019

1.3. Monthly rainfall

Rainfall for February 2019 was below average for Australia as a whole. February rainfall was severely deficient to well below average across north-eastern New South Wales, southern Queensland, most of South Australia excluding the south-eastern quarter, almost all of the Northern Territory and most of Western Australia excluding the inland west.

From late January into early February, an active monsoon trough and a slow-moving low pressure system caused extremely heavy rainfall and flooding in northern Queensland. February rainfall was extremely high in northern Queensland, from the inland west to the east coast and parts of the west of Cape York Peninsula.

February 2019 rainfall was generally severely deficient for most summer cropping regions.

Rainfall percentiles for February 2019

![Rainfall percentiles map of Australia](image)

Source: Bureau of Meteorology

Note: Rainfall for February 2019 is compared with rainfall recorded for that period during the historical record (1900 to present). For further information, go to http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/awap/
1.4. Seasonal rainfall

Summer 2018-19 was particularly dry across much of Australia. Nationally it was the seventh-driest summer on record, and the fourth-lowest and fifth-lowest on record for the Northern Territory and Western Australia respectively. Rainfall for the season was severely deficient to well below average for large areas of Western Australia, much of the Northern Territory, north-eastern and central South Australia, southern Queensland, northern New South Wales, parts of southern Victoria and parts of southern Tasmania.

In contrast, much of northern Queensland experienced well above average to extremely high rainfall due to several intense rainfall events. Well above average rainfall also occurred in an isolated part of north-western Victoria.

Nationally, the most notable rainfall event was the extremely heavy rainfall and flooding occurred in tropical Queensland with the delayed onset of the monsoon. An active monsoon trough and a slow-moving low pressure system resulting in eleven days of consecutive heavy rain in some areas and some locations receiving a year’s worth of rain in a two-week period.

Summer 2018-19 rainfall was severely deficient to extremely low for summer cropping regions in Queensland and northern New South Wales.

Rainfall percentiles for summer 2018-19 (1 December 2018 to 28 February 2019)
1.5. Monthly soil moisture

Upper layer soil moisture in February 2019 was generally average to above average across much of New South Wales, Victoria, northern Queensland, much of inland Western Australia, Tasmania and parts of South Australia and the Northern Territory. In contrast, it was very much below average to below average across north-eastern New South Wales, south-eastern Queensland, much of northern South Australia, the far north, south and west of Western Australia, and much of the Northern Territory.

In summer cropping regions across northern New South Wales and Queensland, upper layer soil moisture was generally lowest on record to very much below average for this time of year.

Modelled upper layer soil moisture for February 2019

Source: Bureau of Meteorology (Australian Water Resources Assessment Landscape model)

Note: This map shows the levels of modelled upper layer soil moisture (0 to 10 centimetres) during February 2019. This map shows how modelled soil conditions during February 2019 compare with February conditions modelled over the reference period (1911 to 2015). Dark blue areas on the maps were much wetter in February 2019 than during the reference period. The dark red areas were much drier than during the reference period. The bulk of plant roots occur in the top 20 centimetres of the soil profile. Soil moisture in the upper layer of the soil profile is therefore useful indicator of the availability of water, particularly for germinating seed.
Lower layer soil moisture for February 2019 was below average across most of Australia. It was average or above average across northern and western Queensland, parts of inland Western Australia and isolated areas across southern New South Wales, northern Victoria, north-eastern Tasmania and north-western South Australia.

In summer cropping regions across northern New South Wales and Queensland, lower layer soil moisture was generally lowest on record to very much below average for this time of year.

**Modelled lower layer soil moisture for February 2019**

Source: Bureau of Meteorology (Australian Water Resources Assessment Landscape model)
Note: This map shows the levels of modelled lower layer soil moisture (10 to 100 centimetres) during February 2019. This map shows how modelled soil conditions during February 2019 compare with November conditions modelled over the reference period (1911 to 2015). Dark blue areas on the maps were much wetter in February 2019 than during the reference period. The dark red areas were much drier than during the reference period. The bulk of plant roots occur in the top 20 centimetres of the soil profile. The lower layer soil moisture is a larger, deeper store that is slower to respond to rainfall and tends to reflect accumulated rainfall events over longer time periods.
1.6. Rainfall deficiencies

The rainfall deficiencies presented below are sourced from the Bureau of Meteorology’s monthly ‘Drought Statement’. As short to longer-term deficiencies become evident the Bureau of Meteorology monitors these events through their lifecycle – from emergence through to their dissipation – with the time-period of analysis each month increasing from a fixed starting point to the easing of the deficiencies.

For further information, go to http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/drought

For the 11-month period ending February 2018, rainfall deficiencies have decreased in western Queensland and east of the Northern Territory. However, rainfall deficiencies generally increased in severity across the remainder of Australia. Rainfall deficiencies increased in northern and western New South Wales, northern Victoria, the south-eastern quarter of Queensland, central Northern Territory, eastern South Australia and parts of northern Western Australia. Serious to severe rainfall deficiencies persist across much of New South Wales, parts of eastern Victoria, parts of southern and central Queensland, large areas of eastern South Australia and parts of southern and northern Western Australia.

Serious to severe rainfall deficiencies continue to persist at longer timescales. For the 23-months starting in April 2017, serious to severe rainfall deficiencies are evident across large areas northern New South Wales, parts of eastern Victoria, large areas of eastern South Australia, south-western and central Queensland, and parts of western and southern Western Australia (Bureau of Meteorology ‘Drought Statement’, 6 March 2019).

Rainfall deficiencies for the 11-month period 1 April 2018 to 28 February 2019
Rainfall deficiencies for the 23-month period 1 April 2017 to 28 February 2019
1.7. Rainfall forecast for the next eight days

During the next eight days, rainfall is expected across all states and territories, with the heaviest falls forecast for Tasmania, and the far north, south-west and the eastern coast of mainland Australia. Rainfall totals of between 10 and 50 millimetres are forecast for isolated parts of north-eastern New South Wales, the east coast and far north of Queensland, the north of the Northern Territory, far north and far south of Western Australia, and western Tasmania. Heavier falls in excess of 50 millimetres are forecast for isolated areas of far north Queensland.

In summer cropping regions, rainfall of between 1 and 15 millimetres is expected across northern and eastern cropping areas of Queensland. Little to no rainfall is expected across other summer cropping regions of Queensland and New South Wales.

This rainfall forecast is produced from computer models. As the model outputs are not altered by weather forecasters, it is important to check local forecasts and warnings issued by the Bureau of Meteorology.

Total forecast rainfall (mm) for the period 7 to 14 March 2019
2. Water

2.1. Water markets – current week

Water storage levels in the Murray–Darling Basin (MDB) decreased by 149 gigalitres (GL) between 27 February 2019 and 6 March 2019. The current volume of water held in storage is 9,274 GL, which represents 37 per cent of total capacity. This is 36 percentage points or 5,096 GL less than at the same time last year.


Allocation prices in the southern Murray–Darling Basin increased from $446 per ML in the week ending 18 February 2019 to $471 per ML in the week ending 25 February 2019.

Surface water trade activity, Southern Murray–Darling Basin

To access the full, interactive, weekly water dashboard, which contains the latest and historical water storage, water market and water allocation information, please visit http://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/publications/weekly_update/weekly-update-070319

Note: The trades shown reflect estimated market activity and do not encompass all register trades. The price line reflects value weighted average prices for the entire southern Murray-Darling Basin. Data shown is current as at Thursday 7 March 2019, and encompasses water activity until 25 February 2019. ABARES has changed the data source for this output. Data is now sourced from the Bureau of Meteorology water dashboard.
## 3. Commodities

### Select 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>06-Mar</td>
<td>US$/A$</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0% ●</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>-9% ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat – US no. 2 hard red winter wheat, fob Gulf</td>
<td>05-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>&lt;1% ▼</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>-15% ▼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coarse Grains – US no. 2 yellow corn, fob Gulf</td>
<td>06-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>-2% ▼</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>-3% ▼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canola – Rapeseed, Europe, fob Hamburg</td>
<td>05-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>-3% ▼</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>-8% ▼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton – Cotlook 'A' Index</td>
<td>06-Mar</td>
<td>USc/lb</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>&lt;1% ↑</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>-12% ▼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar – Intercontinental Exchange, nearby futures, no.11 contract</td>
<td>06-Mar</td>
<td>USc/lb</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>-4% ▼</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>-5% ▼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wool – Eastern Market Indicator</td>
<td>21-Feb</td>
<td>Ac/kg clean</td>
<td>2,027</td>
<td>1,968</td>
<td>3% ↑</td>
<td>1,820</td>
<td>11% ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wool – Western Market Indicator</td>
<td>22-Feb</td>
<td>Ac/kg clean</td>
<td>2,161</td>
<td>2,130</td>
<td>1% ↑</td>
<td>1,895</td>
<td>14% ↑</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>05-Mar</td>
<td>A$/t</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>&lt;1% ▼</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>20% ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed Wheat – General purpose, Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>06-Mar</td>
<td>A$/t</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>-5% ▼</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>44% ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed Barley – Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>06-Mar</td>
<td>A$/t</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>-3% ▼</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>29% ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canola – Portland, Vic.</td>
<td>29-Oct</td>
<td>A$/t</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>11% ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain Sorghum – Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>06-Mar</td>
<td>A$/t</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>0% ●</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>-7% ▼</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>28-Feb</td>
<td>Ac/kg cwt</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>-4% ▼</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>-19% ▼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutton – Mutton indicator (18–24 kg fat score 2–3), Vic</td>
<td>01-Mar</td>
<td>Ac/kg cwt</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>&lt;1% ▼</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>2% ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamb – Eastern States Trade Lamb Indicator</td>
<td>28-Feb</td>
<td>Ac/kg cwt</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>-1% ▼</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>5% ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig – Eastern Seaboard (60.1–75 kg), average of buyers &amp; sellers</td>
<td>22-Feb</td>
<td>Ac/kg cwt</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>0% ●</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>20% ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goat – Eastern States (12.1–16 kg)</td>
<td>04-Mar</td>
<td>Ac/kg cwt</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>0% ●</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>26% ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live cattle – Light steers ex Darwin to Indonesia</td>
<td>02-Mar</td>
<td>Ac/kg lwt</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>0% ●</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>6% ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live sheep – Live wether (Muchea WA saleyard) to Middle East</td>
<td>04-Mar</td>
<td>$/head</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>0% ●</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>-15% ▼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Week ended</td>
<td>Unit</td>
<td>Latest price</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global Dairy Trade (GDT) weighted average prices ¹</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy – Whole milk powder</td>
<td>06-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>3,186</td>
<td>3,022</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3,232</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy – Skim milk powder</td>
<td>06-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>2,462</td>
<td>2,580</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>2,051</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy – Cheddar cheese</td>
<td>06-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>3,888</td>
<td>3,667</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3,759</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy – Anhydrous milk fat</td>
<td>06-Mar</td>
<td>US$/t</td>
<td>5,837</td>
<td>5,620</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6,245</td>
<td>-7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Global Dairy Trade prices are updated twice monthly on the first and third Tuesday of each month.
3.1. Selected world indicator prices

World wheat indicator price
US No. 2, hard red winter wheat, fob Gulf
Week ended 5 March 2019

World coarse grains indicator price
US corn No. 2, fob Gulf
Week ended 6 March 2019

World canola indicator price
Europe fob Hamburg
Week ended 5 March 2019

World cotton indicator price
Cotlook 'A' index
Week ended 6 March 2019
3.2. Global Dairy Trade (GDT) weighted average prices

- Whole milk powder price
  - 6 March 2019

- Skim milk powder price
  - 6 March 2019

- Cheddar cheese price
  - 6 March 2019

- Anhydrous milk fat price
  - 6 March 2019
3.3. Selected domestic crop indicator prices

Grain sorghum indicator price
Sydney, NSW
Week ended 6 March 2019

Feed barley indicator price
Sydney, NSW
Week ended 6 March 2019

Feed wheat indicator price
General Purpose, Sydney, NSW
Week ended 6 March 2019

Milling wheat indicator price
ASW1, track quote, Port Adelaide, SA
Week ended 5 March 2019
3.4. Selected domestic livestock indicator prices

Eastern Young Cattle Indicator
Week ended 28 February 2019

Mutton indicator price in Victoria
(18–24 kg fat score 2–3)
Week ended 1 March 2019

Eastern States Trade Lamb Indicator
Week ended 28 February 2019

Pig indicator price Eastern Seaboard
(60.1–75 kg)
Week ended 22 February 2019
3.5. Selected fruit and vegetable prices – week ended 7 March 2019

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)
4. 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