



## Managing Climate Variability

Improving seasonal forecasts for woolgrowers

# LandWater & Wool

## Shaping the future



Australian Government  
Land & Water Australia

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## Improving seasonal forecasts for woolgrowers - a better climate for wool production

Improved climate forecasts which enable stocking rates to be better matched to feed availability are a priority for the long-term sustainability and productivity of the wool industry.

The *Land, Water & Wool* Managing Climate Variability sub-program is helping woolgrowers in low rainfall areas more effectively use seasonal climate forecasts when making grazing management decisions for the season ahead.

The focus is on better adaptation of existing information, not improving it. The program aims to rapidly increase wool producer awareness and the use of seasonal forecasts, initially in priority, drought-prone regions, through:

- better informed decision-making giving woolgrowers
- a better idea of the season ahead
- demonstrating to the global wool market that woolgrowers are among the world's best in adapting new knowledge to sustainable resource management in a very challenging environment.

*Land, Water & Wool* is a joint investment between the wool industry's peak research and development body, Australian Wool Innovation Limited (AWI), and the nation's premier investor in natural resource management research; Land & Water Australia.

**Managing Climate Variability** is one of eight *Land, Water & Wool* sub-programs. The others include:

- Benchmarking and Evaluation
- Sustainable Grazing on Saline Land (SGSL)
- River management and water quality
- Managing climate variability
- Managing pastoral country
- Future woolscapes
- Sustainable Grazing Systems Harvest Year

One of the woolgrowers involved in the project is David Lindner, whose family runs a 16,000 head self-replacing Merino flock on their 520-square kilometre property, 'Wonga Station', near Morgan SA. The property's average annual rainfall is 230 mm.

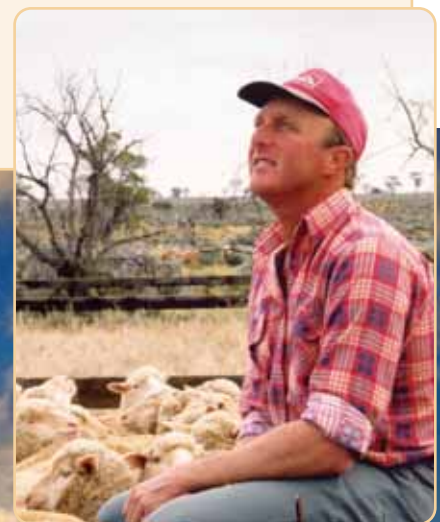


Before becoming involved in the project, David had used little seasonal forecasting information but relied on his own historical rainfall records and 'gut feel' to make management decisions.

David is interested in adopting a controlled grazing system on his property and believes improved rainfall predictions will assist with the management of grazing and pasture rest periods.

"I believe this project will give me a greater understanding of climate risk so that in the future I have the confidence to use forecasting tools, along with my own assessments of land and pasture condition," he said.

A total of six projects throughout Australia have been established as part of this sub-program, and have ongoing, direct contact with more than 1000 woolgrowers through newsletters, local workshops and grower groups.



David Lindner, Morgan SA

DATE: JUNE 04

SUB PROGRAM: MANAGING CLIMATE VARIABILITY



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## Improved forecasts to boost profits in SA pastoral zone

The average rainfall for the 40 woolgrower families in the area stretching from north of Port Augusta to east of Burra in the pastoral zone of South Australia is less than 350 millimetres and rainfall distribution is highly variable.

One of the *Land, Water & Wool* Managing Climate Variability projects, Improved Seasonal Forecasts for Wool Producers in the SA Pastoral Zone, is helping these growers better identify the likely good seasons in advance to maximise their profits while better managing their risk and reducing their losses in below average seasons.

Each month participants in the project are e-mailed a package of climate risk management tools and services tailored for their region and property.

The information includes average monthly rainfall, rainfall deciles – which provide a comparison of current season rainfall compared with previous seasons – and three-month predictions of pasture growth produced by the Aussie Grass modelling tool.

## Key outcomes for woolgrowers

A range of climate risk tools and services which to help producers better understand our climate and encourage better grazing management decisions.

Greater confidence in understanding the climate and the ability to contribute to the rules-of-thumb they use to make decisions for the season ahead.

The ability for woolgrowers to better identify the likely good seasons in advance to maximise their profits, while better managing their risk and reducing their losses in below average seasons.

Opportunities for growers in wool producing areas of the pastoral zone to 'road-test' climate research and development within commercial wool enterprises.

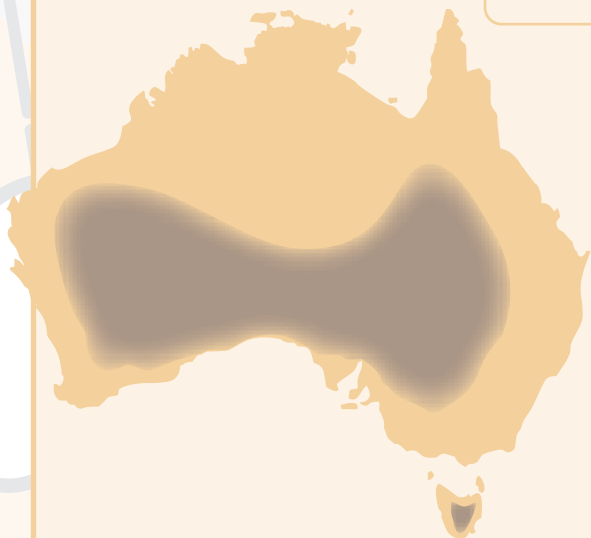
## Best Practice Survey results

A national survey of industry representatives and woolgrowers commissioned by *Land, Water & Wool* in 2002 found the following on the topic of climate variability:

Almost half of wool growers (44 per cent) take notice of seasonal forecasts and are likely to take some precautions or alter management strategies as a result.

60 per cent say they would be likely to take precautions if a seasonal forecast predicted double the chance that next season would be dry.

The shaded area indicates the wool producing areas of the pastoral zone in Australia. The Managing Climate sub-program projects are located in Western NSW, the Southern Pastoral Zone, WA; the Western Pastoral Zone, QLD; and the Pastoral Zone, SA.



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