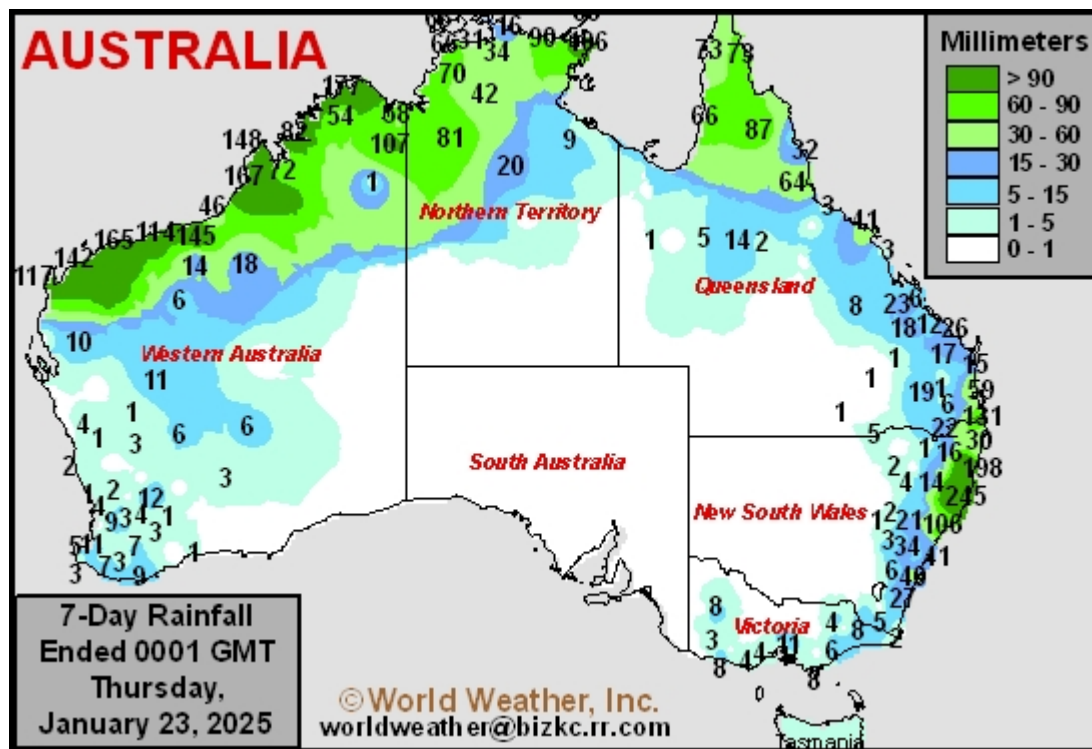


Eastern Australia Heat, Dryness Stresses Dryland Summer Crops

By Andrew Owen

Kansas City, January 23 (World Weather Inc.) – Eastern Australia's summer coarse grain, oilseed, and cotton areas dried down significantly during the past week. Rainfall was limited and daytime temperatures often surged near or above 100 degrees Fahrenheit in areas away from the coast. The environment was stressful for western crops in the region and may have already hurt production potentials in unirrigated fields. The need for rain and milder temperatures is high in order to limit any further production cuts. However, at least another week of drier and warmer-than-normal weather is in store for eastern Australia. Crop conditions will remain less than favorable to poor in unirrigated fields and could further impact crop yields. In the meantime, eastern production areas of both Queensland and New South Wales have not been without rain long enough to seriously harm production and a good drink of water soon could greatly benefit cotton, sorghum and other crops. Sugarcane has been least impacted since rain continues to fall near the coast periodically.

Queensland and New South Wales' summer coarse grain, oilseed, and cotton areas were virtually dry during the past week. Some locations in Victoria received up to 0.43 inch of rain for the seven-day period ending this morning, though most production areas were either dry or did not receive enough rain to counter evaporation. South Australia was also dry while portions of Western Australia received up to 0.47 inch of moisture.

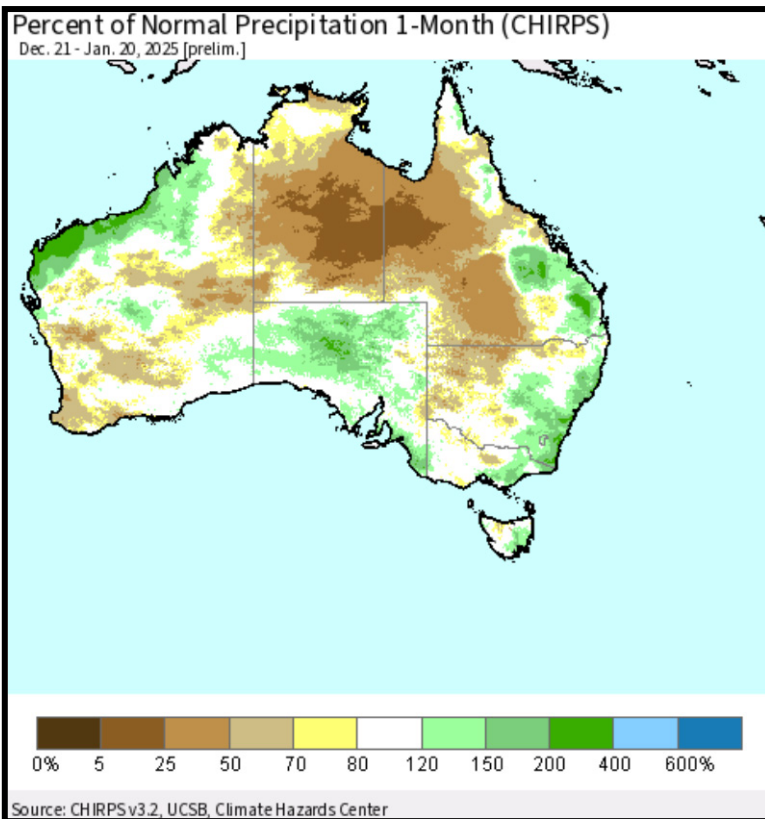


Temperatures across the main production areas this past week were often above normal with the hottest conditions occurring Wednesday. Highest readings ranged from 90 to 110 degrees Fahrenheit with pockets in Victoria only warming to the 80s. A few locations

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in Queensland and New South Wales also warmed as high as 115 degrees Wednesday. Lowest temperatures were in the 50s and 60s for much of crop country.

Unirrigated summer crop areas in western production areas of Queensland and New South Wales were already teetering on the edge of dryness early this month when showers and thunderstorms were occurring more routinely in eastern production areas. The ground is critically short in some of those western production areas. Most other areas away from the coast have dried down notably with the drier weather of late and rain must fall soon. Many areas in Queensland, northern and western New South Wales, and Western Australia have been drier than normal during the 30-day period ending January



20, but the most serious dryness has been west of the key production areas. Western and central portions of Queensland only received 25-50% of normal rainfall during this time, though that area is mostly livestock country and not an important part of the sorghum or cotton production region.

Dryland crop development conditions have deteriorated rapidly in many western crop areas in Queensland and New South Wales, but the situation could change greatly with the resumption of significant rain. Production may have already been hurt by the harsh environment, although the areas impacted are not very

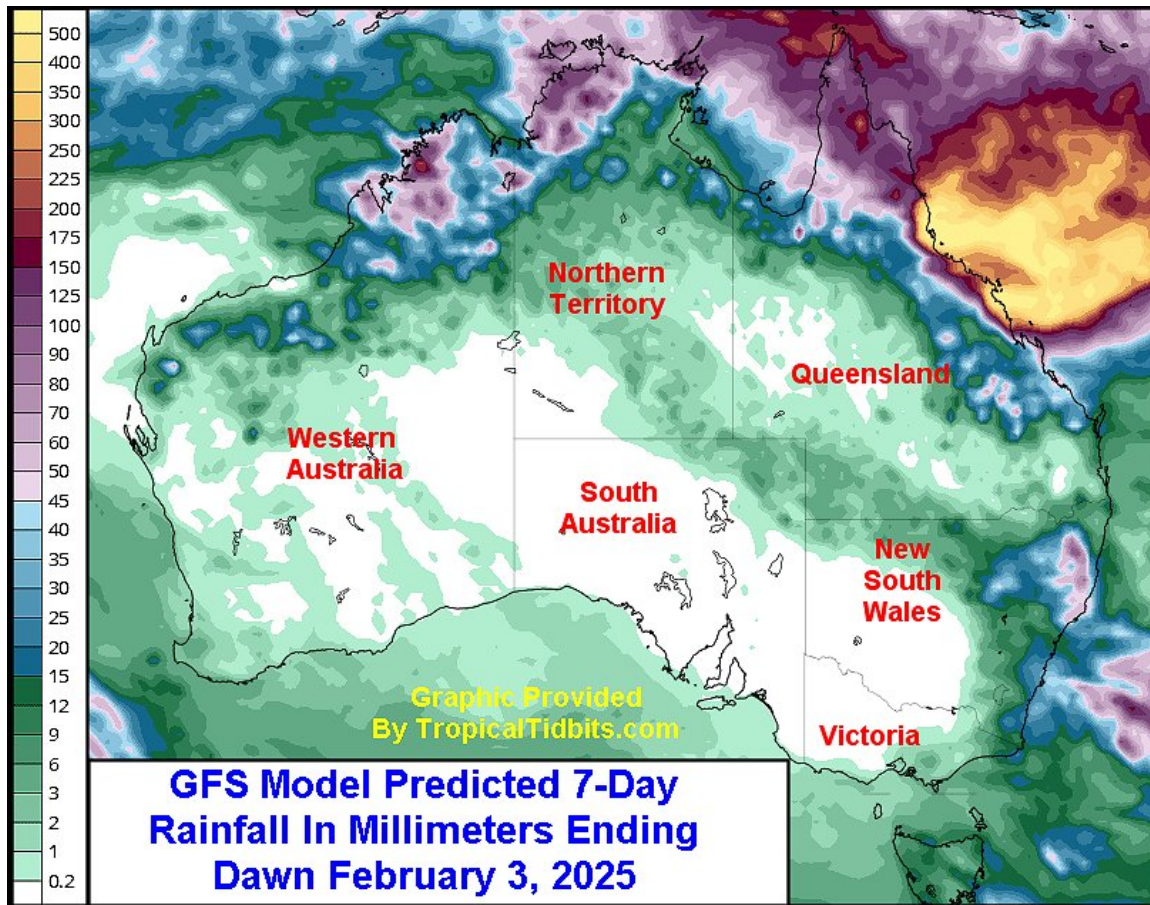
important to the entire summer crop production region. Rain was falling in eastern production areas much more routinely as recently as the first week in January and definitely in late December. That should have crops in the eastern parts of the production region stressed, but a good solid drink of water would be sufficient to restore more favorable conditions.

WEATHER OUTLOOK

Drier biased conditions will persist for much of Australia's main production areas during the coming week. A few light showers will occur in New South Wales and Queensland, though resulting rainfall will be lost to evaporation. Dry or mostly dry weather is slated for Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia. Temperatures will also remain above normal. Eastern Australia will often warm to a range of 90 to 110 degrees with

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portions of Victoria and southern New South Wales only warming to the 80s at times. Low temperatures will be in the 60s and 70s with pockets in the 50s.



There is potential for increased rainfall for eastern Australia January 31-February 6. A disturbance or two could track into the region and generate enough rain to marginally bolster soil moisture. However, most of the rain will be too light to significantly improve the moisture profile. The temperature profile will still trend above normal at times, though some cooling will be possible.

The environment will remain poor for aggressive crop development for at least the next seven to ten days (with a few exceptions) in eastern Australia due to the ongoing dryness and periods of hot weather. Western dryland crops will continue to be stressed and crops in the east will experience a greater level of stress that could hurt production if there is not greater rain soon. Rainfall during the second week of the forecast will only offer minor relief from the dryness and may be too light to significantly improve crop conditions.

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