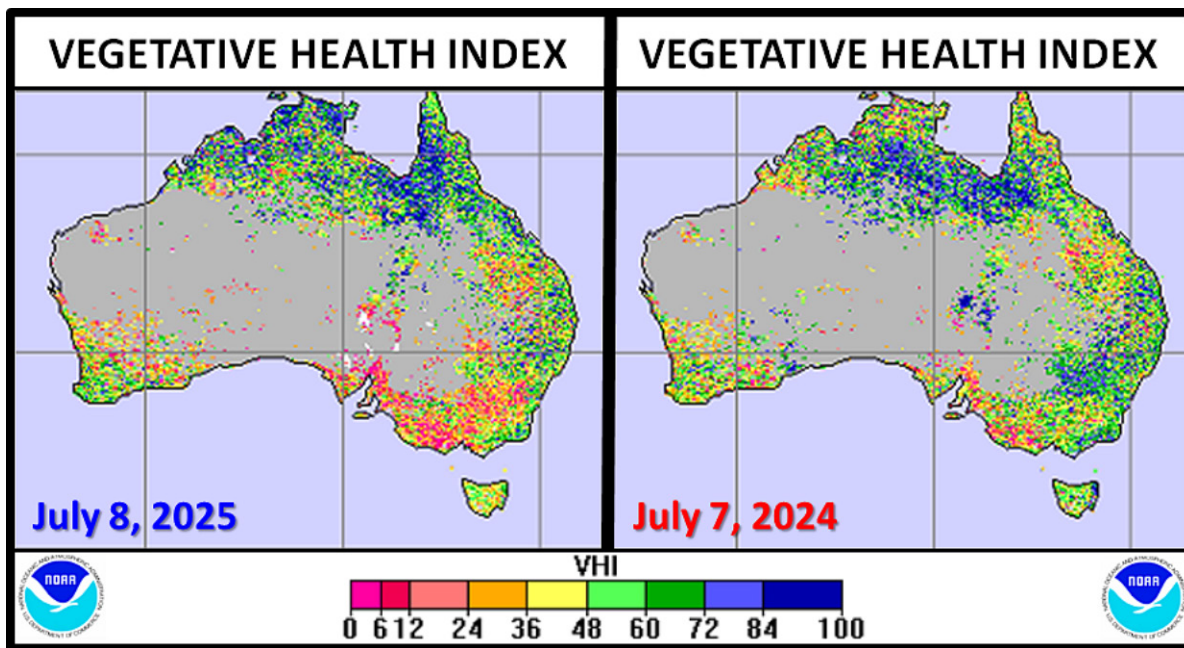


East Australia Winter Crops May Be Stressed, Underdeveloped

By Andrew Owen and Drew Lerner

Kansas City, July 16 (World Weather Inc.) – Winter crops in Australia are still trying to become better established after delayed autumn rainfall prevented planting in some parts of the nation until June and early July. Some areas that were planted early have not had as much rain as usual and those planted late need greater soil moisture to induce better stands. Unirrigated Queensland and portions of western and northern New South Wales' crops continue to struggle with severe moisture deficits. These areas are too dry for the best wheat, barley, and canola prospects and the need for rain is high. Drier-biased conditions will prevail for at least another week and the outlook will remain less than ideal. Western Australia, South Australia, and Victoria have had enough moisture recently to induce better establishment and improved long-term production potential; although, parts of Western Australia are a little too dry and would welcome increased rainfall. Southern Australia will see a good mix of rain and sunshine through the middle of next week; though, more rain will be needed.



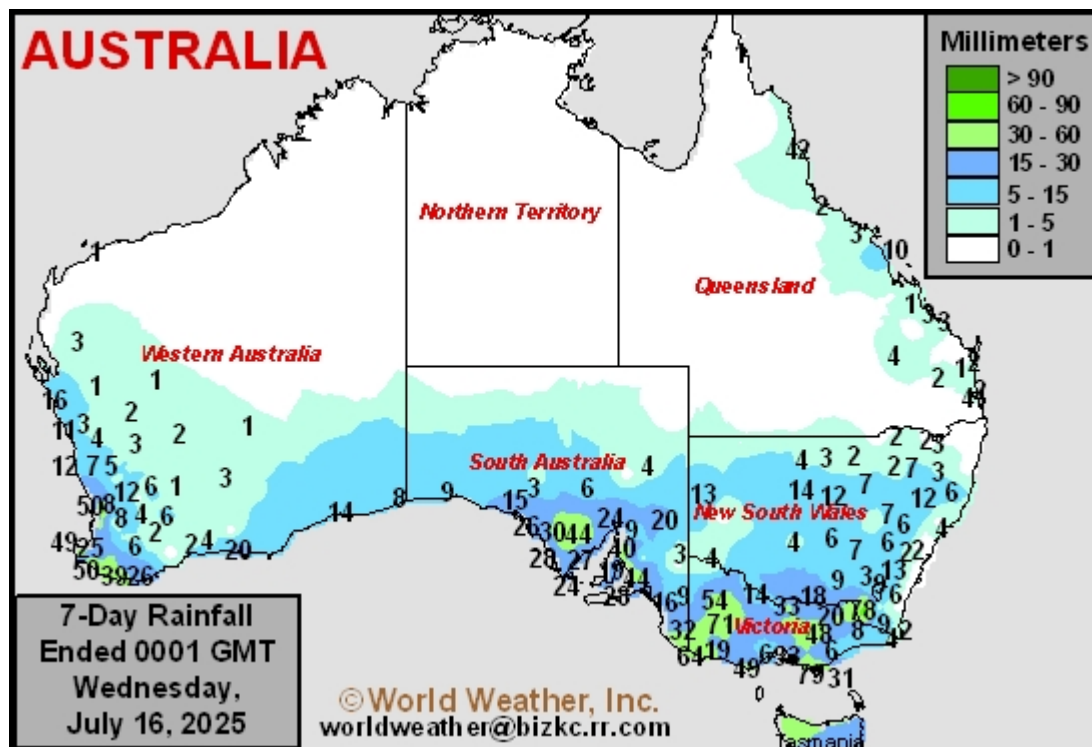
The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Vegetative Health Index clearly shows the under-developed crop situation across Australia this year relative to that of last year. The yellow, orange and red colorings on the images above reflect less developed vegetation relative to the average for this time in July. Crops last year were in much better shape in Queensland and New South Wales than at the same time this year. A similar comment can be made in regard to Victoria and South Australia crops. The situation in Western Australia is more similar to that of last year at this time.

The under-developed crops are the result of significantly delayed planting and the index fails to show production potential, which could easily improve greatly during the early spring if seasonal warming and rainfall increase normally so that crops have time to develop better root systems and (in the case of wheat and barley) new tillers. Recent rainfall

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tendencies in southern Australia have been trending wetter in recent weeks and many crop areas that were quite dry in late June are getting enough moisture to improve the moisture profile even though soil moisture is still notably below normal. *If timely rain continues through the winter while air temperatures are seasonably cool there is potential that the moisture will be conserved in the soil through lower evaporation rates and crops might be poised well to improve greatly before the more aggressive part of spring growth begins.*

For unirrigated areas of Queensland and northern New South Wales the need for rain is more urgent since warmer temperatures in late August and September usually spur on more aggressive crop development rates. Much improved soil moisture will have to be present by the latter part of August to ensure the best development potential. In the meantime, crops farther to the south have a longer period of time to accumulate soil moisture before aggressive growth evolves which leaves the door wide open for improved stands and production potentials over the next few weeks.



Rainfall varied across Australia's production areas during the past week. Queensland was mostly dry. New South Wales and portions of Western Australia received 0.12 to 0.79 inch of rain for the seven-day period ending this morning. Victoria and South Australia otherwise received 0.55 to 2.80 inches of moisture.

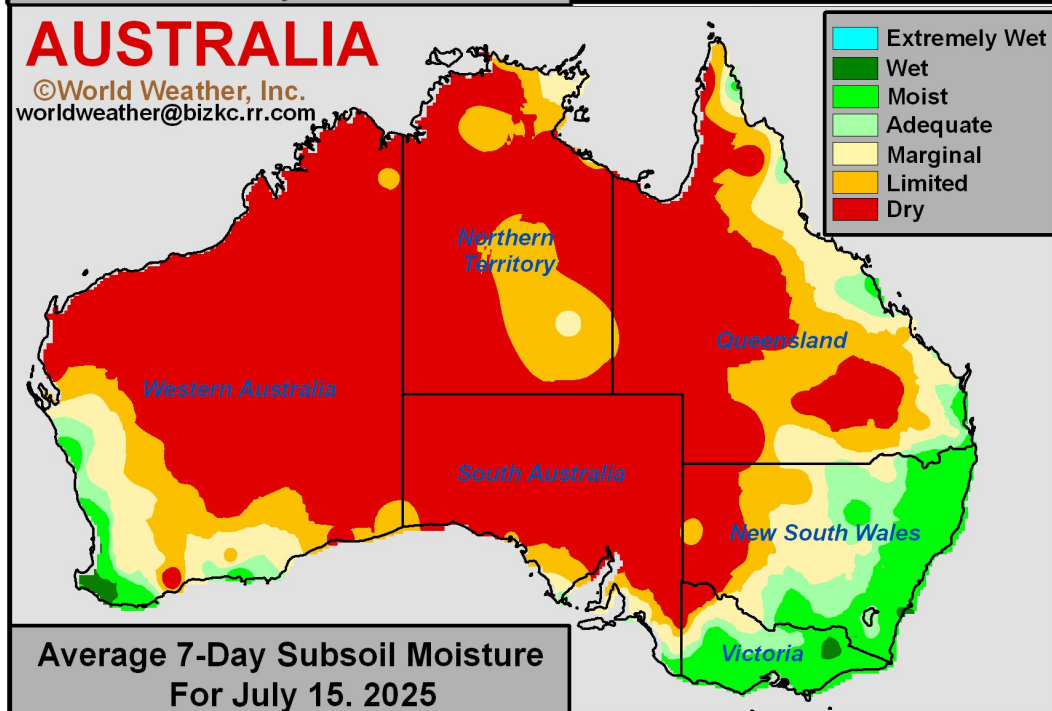
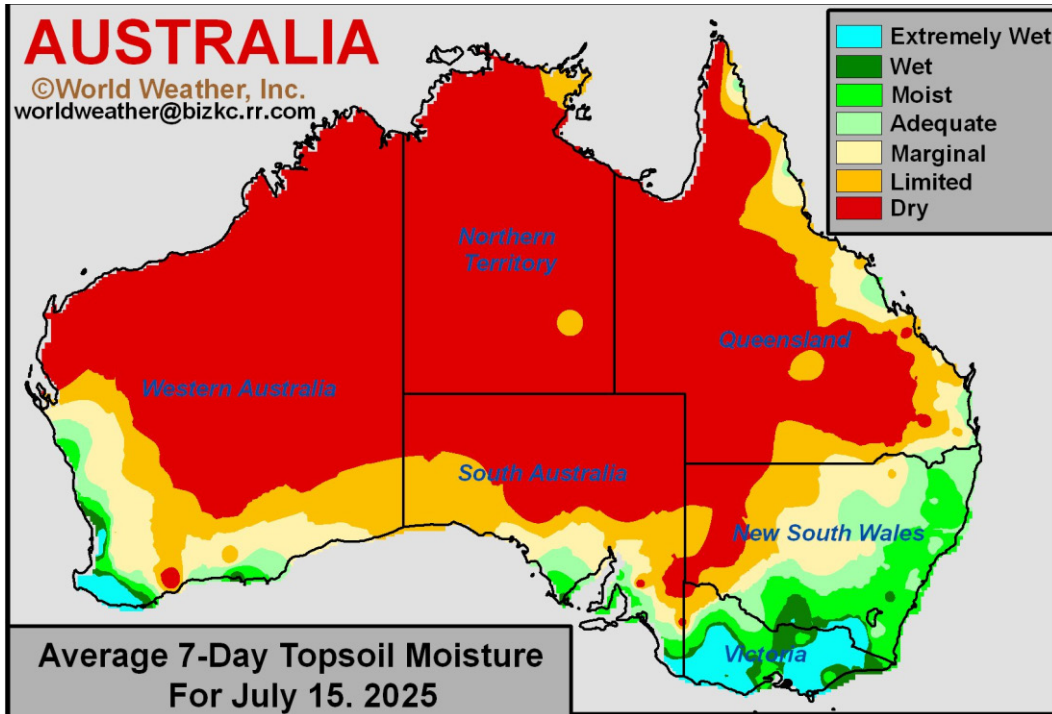
Temperatures during the past week were near to slightly above normal with highest readings in the 60s and 70s Fahrenheit. Lowest temperatures were in the 30s and 40s with pockets in Queensland, eastern New South Wales, and Western Australia cooling to the upper 20s.

Soil moisture remains short to critically short in unirrigated crop areas of Queensland, western New South Wales, and portions of Western Australia. Other production areas have seen topsoil moisture improve greatly, although more is needed.

Winter wheat, barley, and canola prospects remain favorable for Victoria, South

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Australia, and portions of southern and eastern New South Wales due to additional rain during the past week. These areas have ample moisture to support relatively favorable early season development potentials. Western Australia has some moisture for the grains and oilseeds, though the need for rain is high. Several fields are too dry to support ideal long-term crop prospects. Queensland and the remaining portions of New South Wales need abundant rain now and over the next few weeks to improve prospects for early season crop development.



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WEATHER OUTLOOK

Queensland and New South Wales will remain drier biased for at least the next seven days. Spotty rain will still occur at times in central New South Wales and southern Queensland, though resulting rainfall will be lost to evaporation. Western Australia, South Australia, and Victoria will otherwise see a mix of erratic rainfall and sunshine. Light showers will initially occur through Friday as a weak frontal boundary passes over southern Australia. A stronger frontal boundary will bring rain to Western Australia over the weekend and eventually South Australia and Victoria early next week. Moisture totals by next Wednesday morning will range from 0.25 to 1.00 inch with local amounts of 2.00 inches or more in southwestern Western Australia. Much of crop country in Australia will then have a few opportunities for erratic rainfall July 24-30.

Temperatures will be near normal for Australia through the middle of next week. Daytime highs will peak to the 50s and 60s most often with portions of Queensland and northern New South Wales often warming to the 70s. Low temperatures will be in the 30s and 40s with pockets in Victoria and New South Wales occasionally cooling to the upper 20s.

Winter wheat, barley, and canola prospects will remain favorable for Victoria and South Australia in the coming weeks due to the additional rainfall. Western Australia will also benefit from the precipitation that occurs, though the driest fields will need additional rain to ensure favorable production potentials. Unirrigated crops in Queensland and New South Wales will otherwise continue to struggle with severe moisture deficits which may lead to production worries especially as late August approaches. There is still at least 30 days for potential improvements to occur in the driest areas and farmers will be hoping for change.

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