



Seasonal Update

This report provides an update on the impacts on grain and livestock production of factors such as rainfall, temperature, frost, disease and pests, and a regional update for the month to the beginning of July. For a full report, refer to www.agric.wa.gov.au and follow the 'Farm Systems' link.

2009 Seasonal Outlook

The Department of Agriculture and Food estimates a total grain crop of between 10 and 12 million tonnes for 2009 if average rainfall is received for the remainder of the growing season.

A late start and below average rainfall through the April-June period has contributed to lower than normal crop yield potentials through much of the central and north-eastern wheatbelt. While most of the wheatbelt has had good rain in late June to establish crops, some areas in the central wheatbelt are still waiting for falls to boost subsoil moisture. In contrast, above average rainfall in the far south has caused average crop yields to be lower than normal due to excess soil moisture and waterlogging in low lying areas. A dry July will benefit wetter districts, whereas a wet July will help inland areas.

Seasonal Outlook: Climate models continue to indicate an increased risk of an El Nino event developing later in 2009. While recent changes in these conditions are consistent with early stages of El Nino development, this time of year also has lower predictability for the Pacific Ocean.

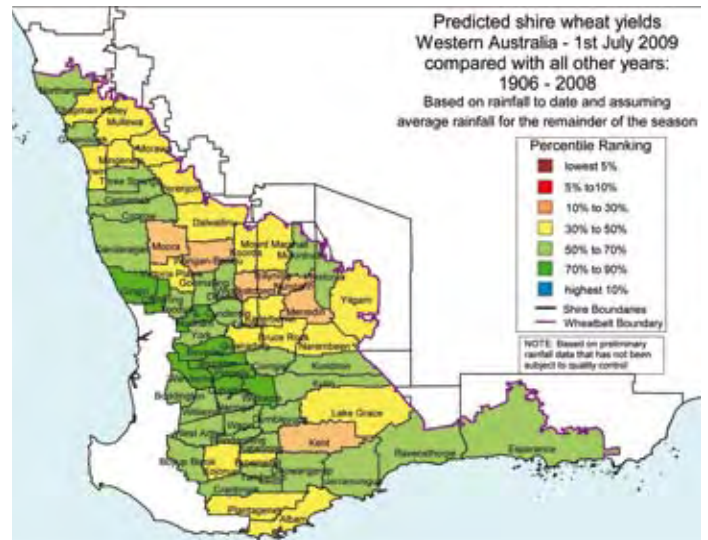
In the Indian Ocean, there is a risk of a positive-phase Indian Ocean Dipole event developing during winter which is associated with drier conditions across southern and south-eastern Australia.

The department's seasonal outlook system based on selected analogue years also indicates an increased risk of an El Nino event later in 2009. Rainfall over May to October under such conditions tends to be average or drier. While recent rainfall is welcome, the seasonal indicators still suggest that average or below average rainfall is likely for May to October. Climate model outlooks are indicating below normal seasonal rainfall is more likely for July to September.

Further detailed information can be found on the department's website at www.agric.wa.gov.au (under News) on the link to the 'Growing season outlook'.

Weather Patterns: Atmospheric and oceanic patterns in the Pacific basin indicated continued development towards an El Nino pattern. The Southern Oscillation Index has remained negative since May. Atmospheric pressures were well below normal for June, as a series of strong low pressure systems passed over southern Australia, particularly in the later part of the month. There was some cloud band activity over the Pilbara which yielded patchy rainfall.

Rainfall: Despite the persistence of strong winter-type weather systems, most of the northern, central and eastern



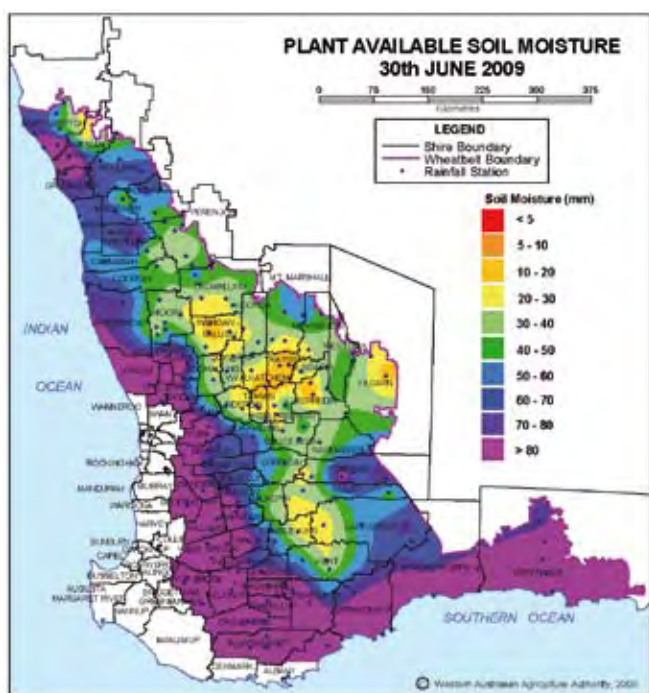
agricultural areas recorded only average or lower monthly rainfall. In contrast, the south-west and south coast were notably wetter than normal for June.

Temperatures: Both day-time and night-time temperatures were below average for the month. The early part of June saw some temperatures fall to near or below 0°C over the central and eastern agricultural areas. This was before the onset of strong frontal systems.

Pests and Diseases: Following widespread opening rains in late May, establishing crops and pastures were subject to varying pest damage. In locations where extended dry periods were followed by good opening rains, crops emerged at the same time as pests, such as redlegged earth mites and lucerne flea. The good growing conditions generally allowed these crops to outcompete any early attack from immature pests. Preventative bare-earth insecticide sprays were also applied to many paddocks, minimising most potential pest threats.

In areas where pre-season weeds fostered early insect populations and/or where less soil moisture was available to support newly emerged seedlings, lucerne flea, bryobia mites, rutherghlen bugs and weevils needed control. Some high rainfall southern locations also required control of slugs on properties where these pests had previously established. Localised damage by high numbers of mice was reported in crops at the early seedling stage in the Geraldton and Esperance/Ravensthorpe regions.

Widespread net blotch and scald on self sown barley in



some northern and central cropping areas was recorded in the past two weeks. Recent extended wet weather has been conducive to spore release from last year's barley stubbles and infection of seedling crops in some areas. Barley leaf rust has also been observed on two seedling barley crops north east of Esperance and in the South Stirlings.

For information on the latest disease forecast, visit www.agric.wa.gov.au and click on 'Crop Disease Forecast 2009' or PestFax 2009 (both under "News" on the department's website).

Agricultural and Pastoral Regions Update

Northern Agricultural Region

(Incorporating Geraldton, Three Springs and Moora districts)

Climate: While a series of cold fronts in June generated widespread rainfall, monthly rainfall totals were still well below average for most recording centres. About 75 per cent of the centres received more than 50 mm, but dry areas include Perenjori (26 mm) and Ballidu (37 mm). Cooler conditions occurred throughout the region.

Crops: Timely rainfall events in June maintained good crop growth in all but the southern districts of the region. Cereal crops in the central and northern districts are growing well. Some growers have had to control brome grass, primarily in dry sown wheat crops. There are also a few reports of patchy lupin and canola establishment because of 'furrow fill' of dry sown crops from heavy rain after seeding and poor vigour in lupin crops due to manganese deficiency in the seed. The more advanced crops have received their first post-emergent weed sprays and some growers have applied a post seeding application of nitrogen. In southern parts of the region which received less rainfall, crops have yet to emerge or are just emerging.

Pastures: Annual pasture growth and density is good, although its composition is very poor, with minimal legume content in most areas. Growth is approaching the stage where hand feeding of stock will be no longer required. Blue lupin germination has been very dense on suitable soil types. Perennial grasses are looking good with panic grass growing rapidly. Some growers have utilised cereals for early winter grazing.

Livestock: Supplementary feeding continued during June with less available feed in the southern parts of the region due to cooler temperatures. There have been reports of cattle deaths in the northern parts of the region due to grass tetany. This has occurred where cattle have been grazing lush, fast growing pastures resulting in a deficiency of magnesium. Brucellosis continues to be an issue with some sheep flocks in the Moora district.

Pests and Diseases: There have been several reports of wild dog activity in the Geraldton region. The department's biosecurity officers are working with landholders to implement control programs. Sightings of big groups of emus inside the State Barrier Fence are being investigated, with landholders being made aware of control options. Mice activity in the north of the region appears to have abated, probably due to the recent cold and wet weather. Several landholders have also undertaken control measures using a zinc phosphide product with excellent results.

Resource Management: Strong winds associated with the arrival of the cold fronts recorded maximum wind gusts of 65 km/hr at Morawa on 19 June. Fortunately, wind erosion was averted due to moist soil.

Central Agricultural Region

(Incorporating Lake Grace, Narrogin, Northam and Merredin districts)

Climate: Rainfall was variable at a district and regional level with the heaviest falls late in the month. Merredin and Lake Grace received 27 mm, Northam 45 mm and Narrogin 61 mm for June. Relatively widespread rainfall during the last few days of the month provided some relief, however, rainfall has still been below average across the region.

Crops: Seeding has mostly finished. In the drier parts of the region, seeding programs have been reduced. This includes areas around Merredin, Lake Grace and the north eastern parts of the Northam district. Paddocks that were dry sown have established well in areas with sufficient rainfall, although weeds, in particular barley grass, has become a serious issue. In drier parts there has been some poor germination of dry sown crops and reseeding has occurred. Crop growth is variable across the region from emergence to tillering.

Pastures: Until the recent rainfall events and especially with the cold weather, pasture growth has been very poor across the region. Parts of the Northam and Narrogin districts, however, are starting to pick up and there is reduced need for hand feeding. Most parts of the Merredin and Lake Grace districts are still hand feeding and this will continue until pasture has recovered.

Livestock: Feed is tight in the eastern parts of the Narrogin district, a wide area of the Lake Grace and Merredin districts and the north eastern parts of the Northam district. With recent rainfall events, this should pick up in the next couple of weeks. Lambing percentages appear to be down this year and many sheep are still being handfed. Pregnancy toxaemia has been reported in heavily pregnant ewes due to the wet conditions and sudden change to cold temperatures.

Pests and Diseases: Farmers around Lake Grace have been spraying for bryobia mites and lucerne flea on early sown canola crops. In the Northam district, growers have also been spraying for mites and vegetable weevil in canola. Current predictions are for locust activity in the eastern and north eastern areas of the region. Spotlight monitoring indicates rabbit numbers are low across the region, dropping considerably since early summer 2008.

Department staff are gearing up for winter declared weed programs and landholders are being reminded of their obligations to control declared weeds on their properties with staff more than happy to assist with control programs.

Resource Management: Dam water levels are at a reasonable level in most areas. Pastures and groundcover are generally low and there have been several wind erosion events resulting in isolated damage in shires in the middle and north of the region. Farmers are sowing seed into the wind eroded areas to help stabilise them and provide cover.

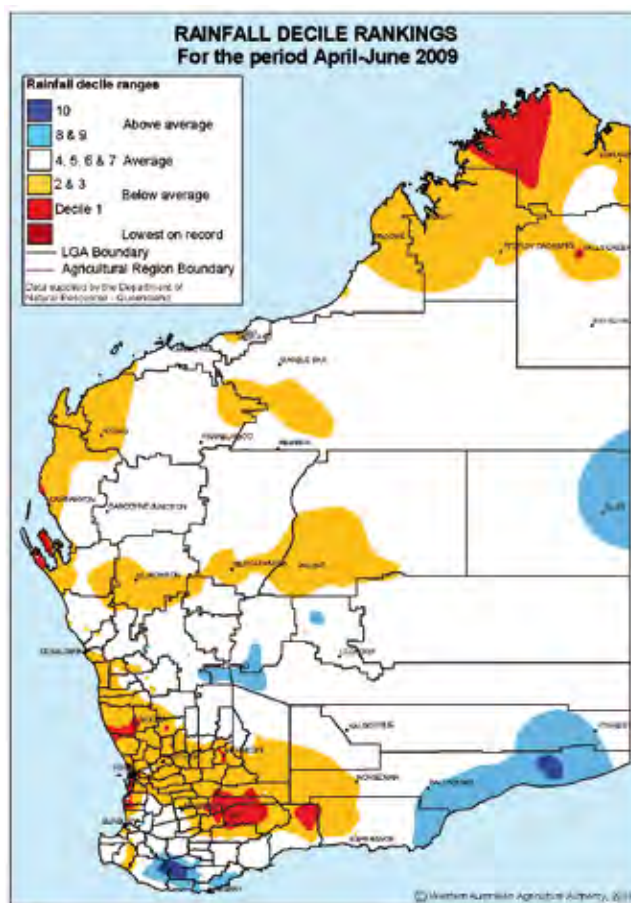
South West Agricultural Region

(Incorporating the Bunbury, Manjimup and Perth districts)

Climate: Most centres across the south west region received above average rainfall for June, with the exception of Mandurah, Medina and Perth. Dwellingup had the highest rainfall for the month with 313.4 mm. Gingin had the highest daily rainfall on 19 June with 70.2 mm. Both minimum and maximum daily temperatures have been an average 0.2°C cooler than the average for June.

Crops: Avocado growers experienced some mild winter frosts, but there has been minimal damage to trees or crops. Strong gusty winds continue to be the biggest crop threat with widespread reports of fruit losses, but within normal expected losses for winter. Pruning has commenced in many grape growing regions while grapevines are dormant. The volume of apples in storage is greater than at this time last season, due to a lower demand from the eastern states.

Pastures: The late May rains signalled a strong break to the season with good follow up rains throughout June. To manage the impact of a late break, many farmers over-sowed pastures with oats to provide early growth for bulk feed. The rain was welcomed in the south west, however, waterlogging has inhibited pasture growth in some areas. Given the late break, farmers are managing early growth to set up pastures for strong seasonal production. Early June saw most farmers restricting their stock and feeding supplements to allow pasture to establish, before starting the first light grazing rotation late in the month.



Livestock: In response to the relatively good milk prices, dairy farmers are still feeding their cows well. The WA dairy industry is still leading Australia in terms of annual growth (8.4 per cent compared to a national growth of 2.2 per cent).

Resource Management: Rainfall during the month has provided some run-off into dams, with irrigation dam capacity increasing by 3 per cent to a total of 42 per cent since the end of May.

Southern Agricultural Region

(Incorporating Esperance, Jerramungup, Albany and Katanning districts)

Climate: Good rains were received across the region in June. The falls ranged from well above average to average, which has alleviated the immediate issues associated with low soil stored moisture. The good rains have ensured that most seeding programs are now complete for the Great Southern. On the south coast, some areas are now very wet limiting access until conditions are drier. The Esperance southern mallee region has received about 60 mm of rain while the northern mallee has sufficient moisture for seeding.

Crops: Most cropping programs are complete with some waterlogged patches. The crop production area is slightly greater than in 2008, with considerable canola plantings. Growers are sowing more wheat and less barley, due to the expected price differential. Growers are now checking for insect risk and are being advised to apply nitrogen in small

doses to achieve yield potential and minimise leaching losses. Seeding commenced in earnest in Esperance, with the majority of farms completing their seeding programs. Due to dry conditions in the northern mallee and Beaumont areas, some seeding programs were modified or reduced.

Pastures: Pasture growth has slowed with the short days and wet soil conditions. Growth rates are about 15 kg/ha/day but heavy grazing pressure will keep paddocks short and below optimum growth rates for the next few weeks.

Hand feeding of stock continued during the month with most of the dry annual pastures still having enough ground cover to minimise erosion risk. The supply of perennial pastures available along the south coast has significantly reduced due to these poor growing conditions. June rainfall has stimulated a late germination of clover.

Livestock: Sheep are still being fed grain supplements to minimise losses from pregnancy toxæmia. This is especially the case in flocks lambing into July. Good lambing percentages are being reported with lambs in good condition. Lamb marking is commencing in some areas. Sale numbers have been down in Katanning, though prices appear to be holding at good levels. Fletchers Abattoir in Narrikup, which normally closes for a month for mid-winter maintenance, has shut two weeks early due to the low availability of sheep.

Pests and Diseases: Growers are now assessing germination or early sown crops and monitoring for post seeding pests and diseases. Some early sown barley crops are beginning to show signs of leaf rust. There is evidence of some black leg disease in canola crops. In a lot of cases it is too early to assess disease, as germinated crops are between the one and three leaf stage. Red legged earth mites are becoming active and pastures will need to be protected.

Resource Management: Heavy rain has flowed into farm dams and many are already full. Most of the rain received has been accompanied by high winds. This emphasises the value of good lambing paddock design and the extra value of shelter belts.

Rangelands

(Incorporating Kununurra, Derby, Karratha, Carnarvon, Meekatharra and Kalgoorlie districts)

Climate: Rainfall in the Gascoyne region has been substantially below average with falls between 10 mm and 25 mm, apart from isolated locations on the coast and in the southern Murchison, where falls were up to 50 mm. The Goldfields received rain through a succession of fronts resulting in average to slightly above average rainfall. The first winter ground frosts have been experienced throughout the district.

Across the north, the Pilbara has received rainfall with the highest recorded at Karratha (47 mm). The normal dry season prevails in the Kimberley. Temperatures have dropped, with minimum temperatures below what is normally experienced in the Pilbara.

Crops: Grape pruning has commenced in the Gascoyne and vegetable production is well underway with the picking of the first new season vegetables. Early season navel orange harvest is complete while harvesting of red fleshed grapefruit has commenced. Some growers are removing grapefruit trees in anticipation of a strong supply from Kununurra. Dragon fruit trials have been harvested with the pink fruit showing the most potential. In the east Kimberley, harvest of melons continues while the flowering of mangoes has commenced. The rice trials at Frank Wise Research station have germinated and are looking promising, as are the wheat variety and cotton variety trials.

Pastures: Gascoyne pasture conditions are poor on some properties, exacerbated by heavy stock levels. The below average June rainfall record represents a slow and weak start to winter pasture growth. Pasture growth in the Goldfields has been good possibly the best winter season start for some years. In the northern part of the Kalgoorlie district, poorer rainfall has not generated significant forage production. The Pilbara rainfall freshened up perennials and, in areas where they received greater than 15 mm, produced some pasture bulk as well. In the Kimberley, early dry season burning has been carried out to minimise the risk of late season fires to pastures. Pastures have hayed off and the quantity of forage available is below average.

Livestock: Kimberley and Pilbara mustering continues, with most livestock generally in good condition. Some pastoral leases north of Port Hedland are reducing cattle numbers due to a failed wet season. Goldfields livestock condition is being maintained in most of the district. The few remaining ewe flocks in the district have commenced lambing. Wild dog predation remains an issue for pastoral producers. Pastoralists in the north-eastern Goldfields continue to report diminishing goat numbers with the remaining animals being largely older billy goats with a reduced numbers of kids and young females.

Pests and Diseases: Cactoblastis moth has been released on a large outbreak of cactus in an area between Paynes Find and Mount Magnet. A meeting was held with Martu representatives in the Pilbara to discuss the rising population of feral camels in the western deserts, their impacts and options for control. An infestation of tussock moth (*Lymantria pelospila*) has occurred on the Dampier Peninsula causing defoliation of native trees.

Resource Management: Dam water supplies in the southern Goldfields remain good. A temporary closure of the Geraldton GME abattoir was reported during the month, brought about by an insufficient supply of sheep and goats, exacerbated by high live export demand. Two potential producer demonstration sites are being developed in the Kimberley, one on the sourcing and use of native seeds for revegetation of severely degraded land and a wet season phosphorous demonstration.

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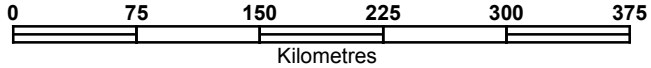
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Disclaimer

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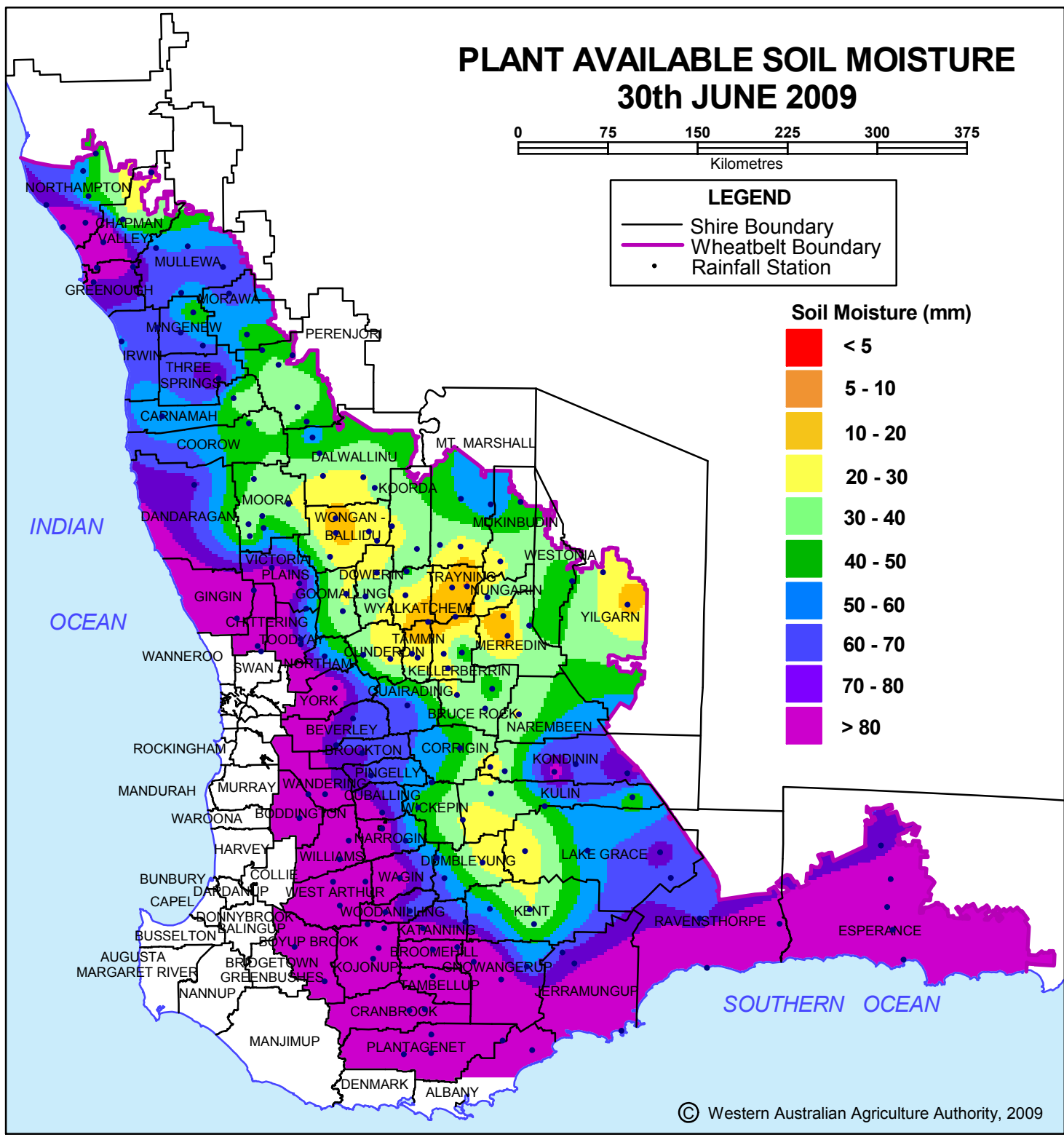
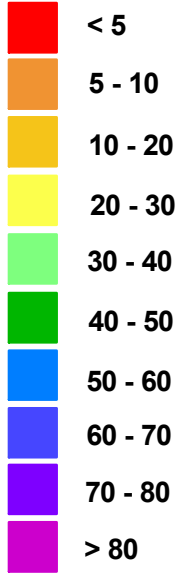
PLANT AVAILABLE SOIL MOISTURE 30th JUNE 2009



LEGEND

- Shire Boundary
- Wheatbelt Boundary
- Rainfall Station

Soil Moisture (mm)



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Predicted shire wheat yields Western Australia - 1st July 2009 compared with all other years: 1906 - 2008

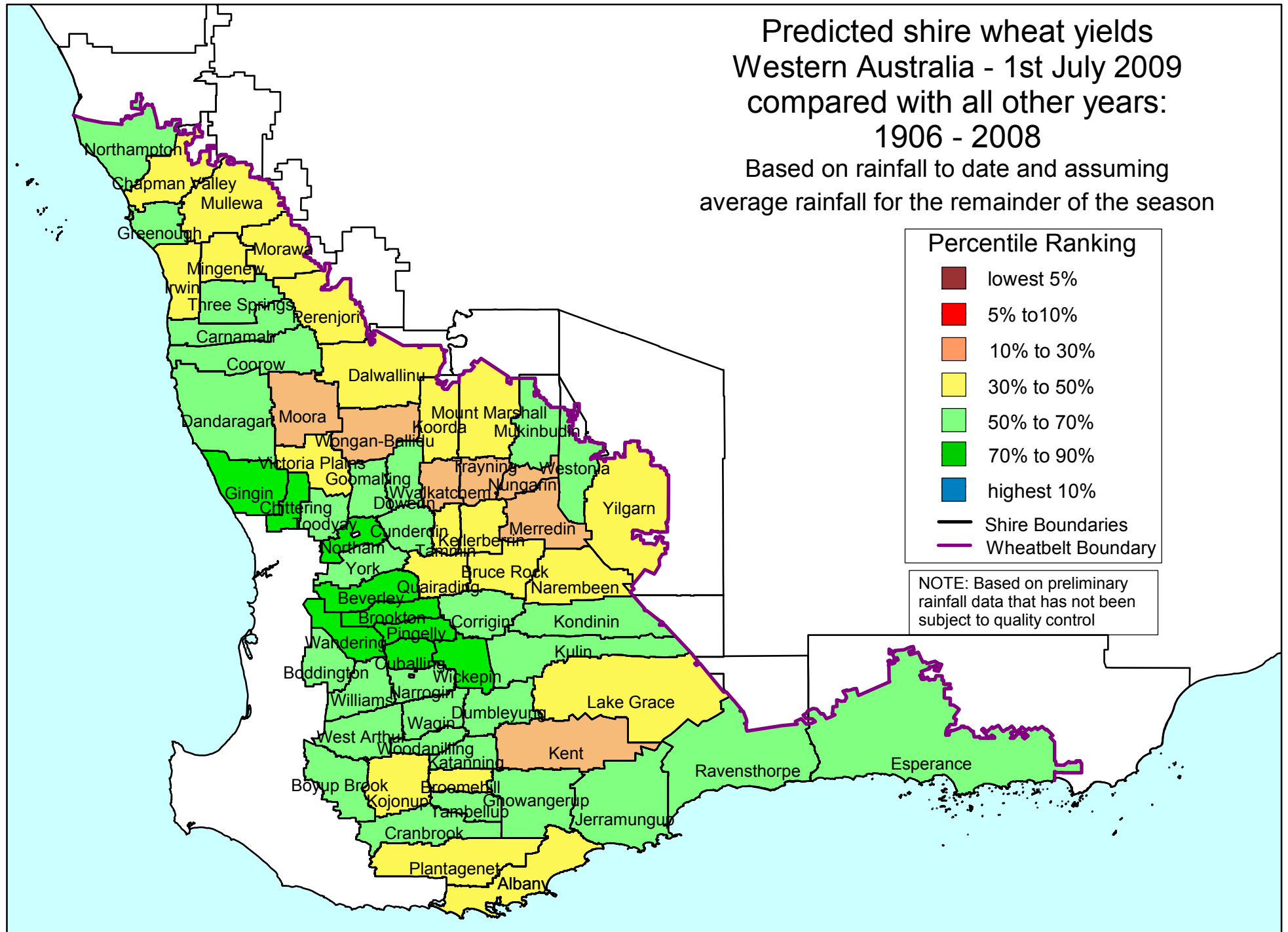
Based on rainfall to date and assuming
average rainfall for the remainder of the season

Percentile Ranking

- lowest 5%
- 5% to 10%
- 10% to 30%
- 30% to 50%
- 50% to 70%
- 70% to 90%
- highest 10%

- Shire Boundaries
- Wheatbelt Boundary

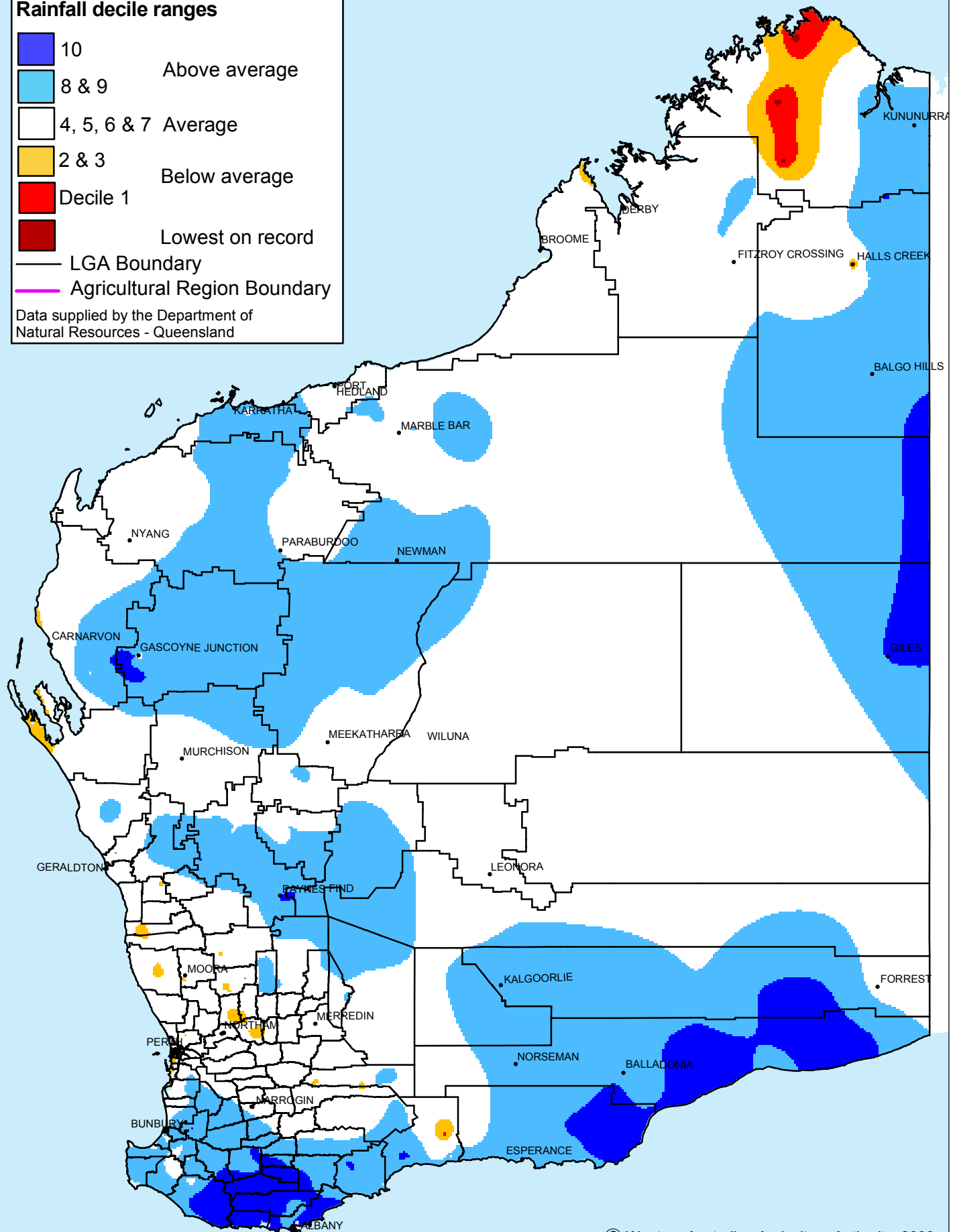
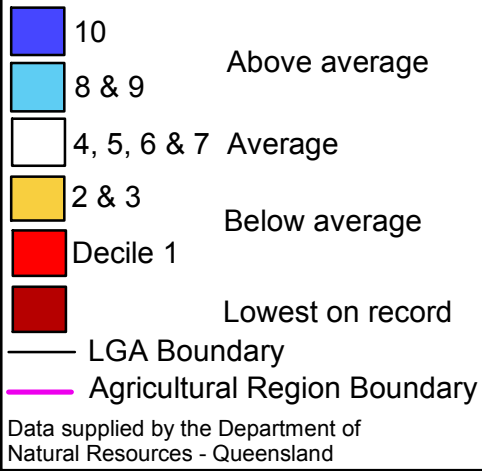
NOTE: Based on preliminary
rainfall data that has not been
subject to quality control



RAINFALL DECILE RANKINGS

For the month of June 2009

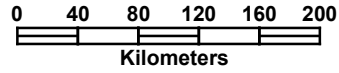
Rainfall decile ranges



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RAINFALL DECILE RANKINGS

For the month of June 2009

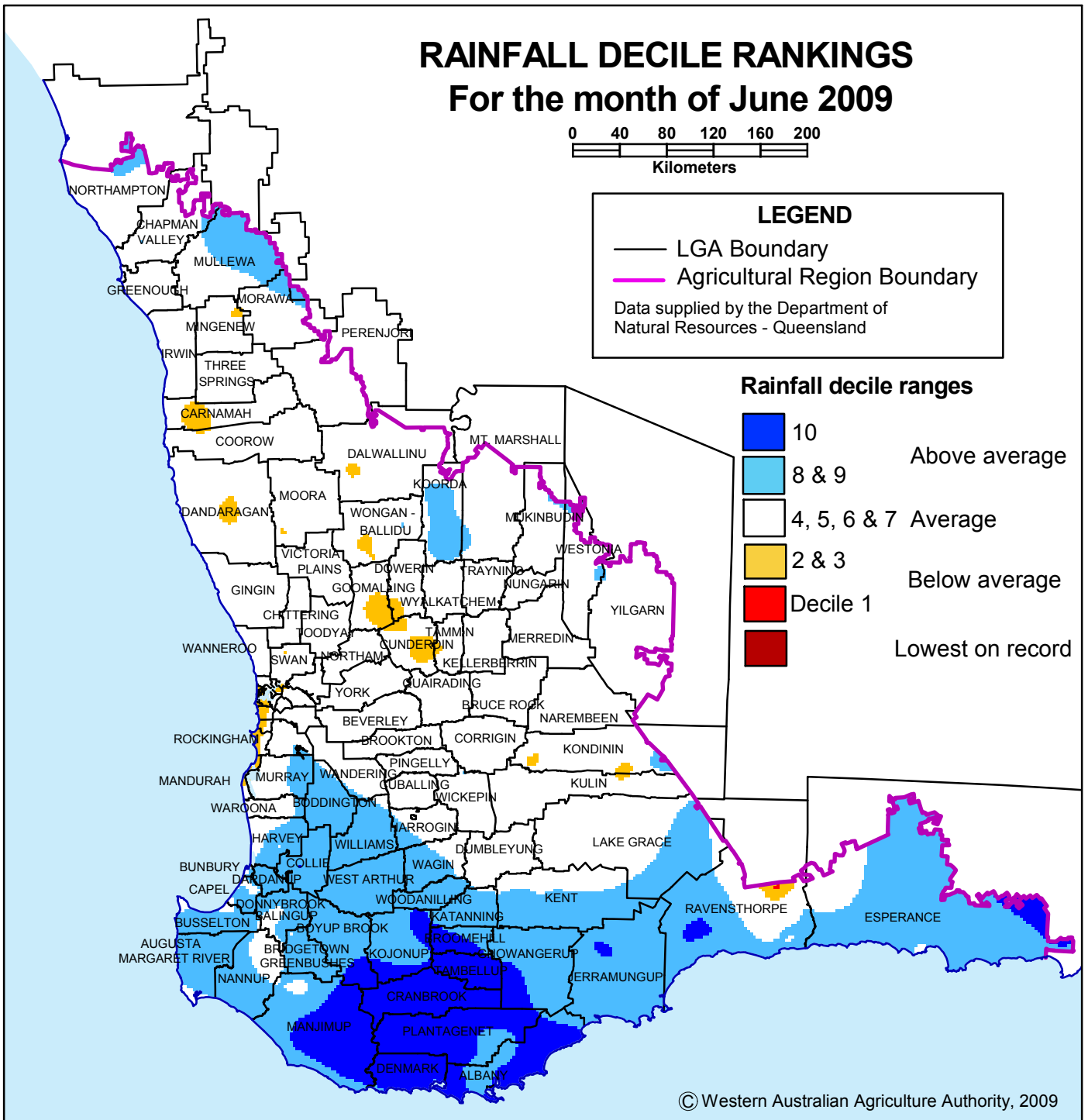
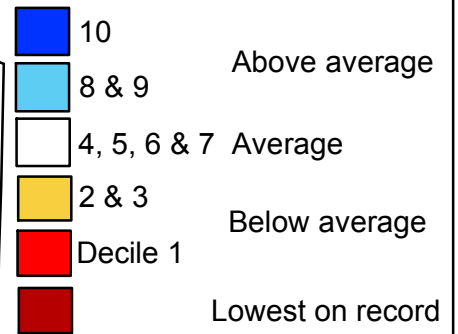


LEGEND

- LGA Boundary
- Agricultural Region Boundary

Data supplied by the Department of Natural Resources - Queensland

Rainfall decile ranges



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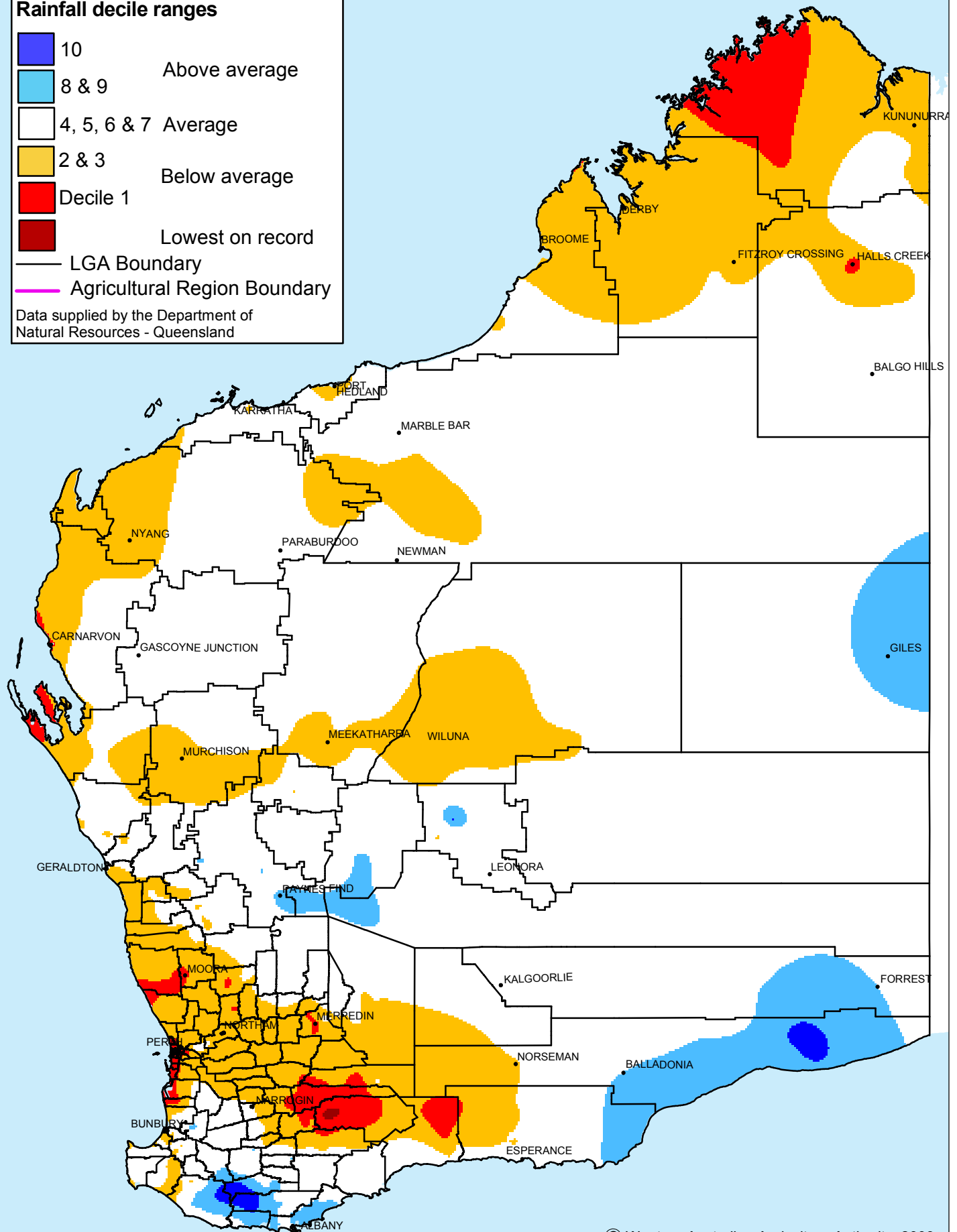
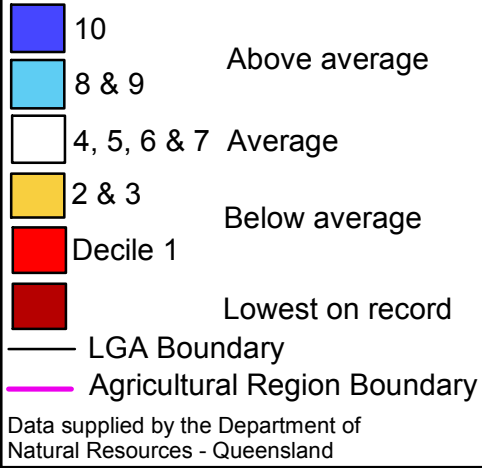


Department of Agriculture and Food



RAINFALL DECILE RANKINGS For the period April-June 2009

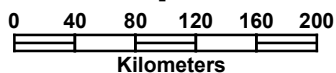
Rainfall decile ranges



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RAINFALL DECILE RANKINGS

For the period April-June 2009



LEGEND

- LGA Boundary
- Agricultural Region Boundary

Data supplied by the Department of Natural Resources - Queensland

Rainfall decile ranges

