



Western Australian broadacre agriculture

REGIONAL SNAPSHOTS

Mid West

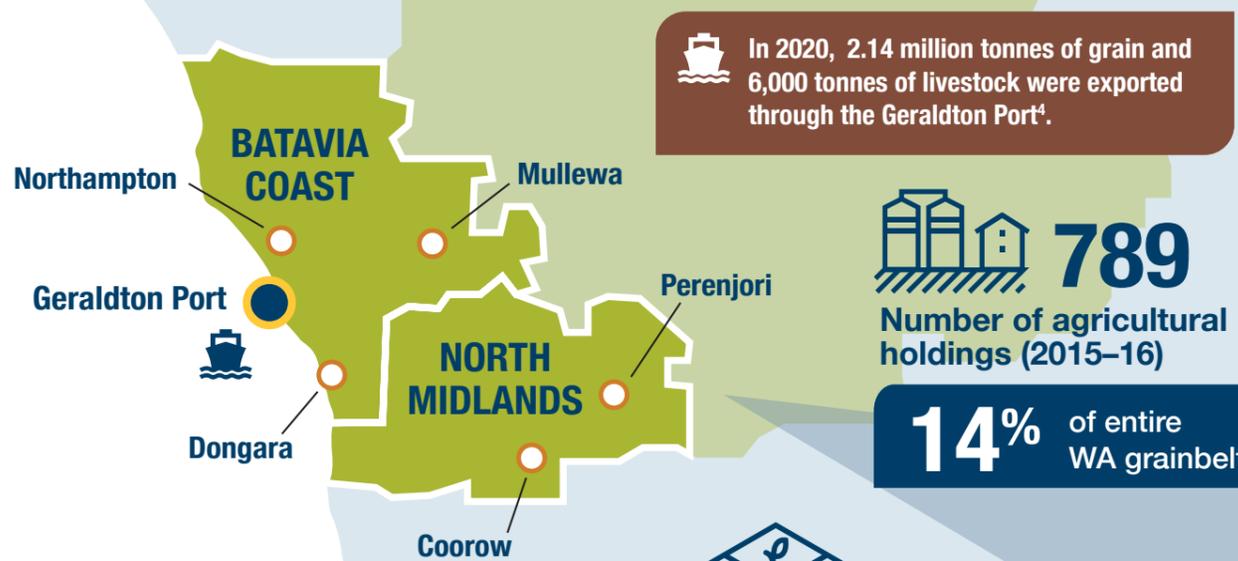
At a glance

- The Mid West region covers about 28 million hectares and has a diverse economy built around agriculture, mining, tourism and fishing.
- There are three distinct subregions – Batavia Coast, North Midlands and the Murchison. Broadacre agriculture is concentrated in the North Midlands and Batavia Coast subregions and generates about \$930 million in value each year.
- Wheat is the predominant agricultural crop, generating more than 65% of the region's production value each year.



Mid West region agricultural statistics

Broadacre agriculture in the Mid West region is concentrated in the subregions of the North Midlands and Batavia Coast, which together cover about 5.2 million hectares or just under 20% of the entire Mid West region. About half of all North Midlands and Batavia Coast land is arable. Grain production is the dominant enterprise in the subregions (83% of annual \$0.93 billion value) with wheat the main crop (79% of total grain production). Livestock (predominantly sheep meat and wool) account for about 11% of the Mid West region's annual production value with horticulture (primarily cucumbers) accounting for about 4%.



In 2020, 2.14 million tonnes of grain and 6,000 tonnes of livestock were exported through the Geraldton Port⁴.

789
Number of agricultural holdings (2015–16)

14% of entire WA grainbelt

877,000
Broadacre sheep numbers (2015–16)

7% of WA grainbelt total

3,599 ha
Average property size (2019)²

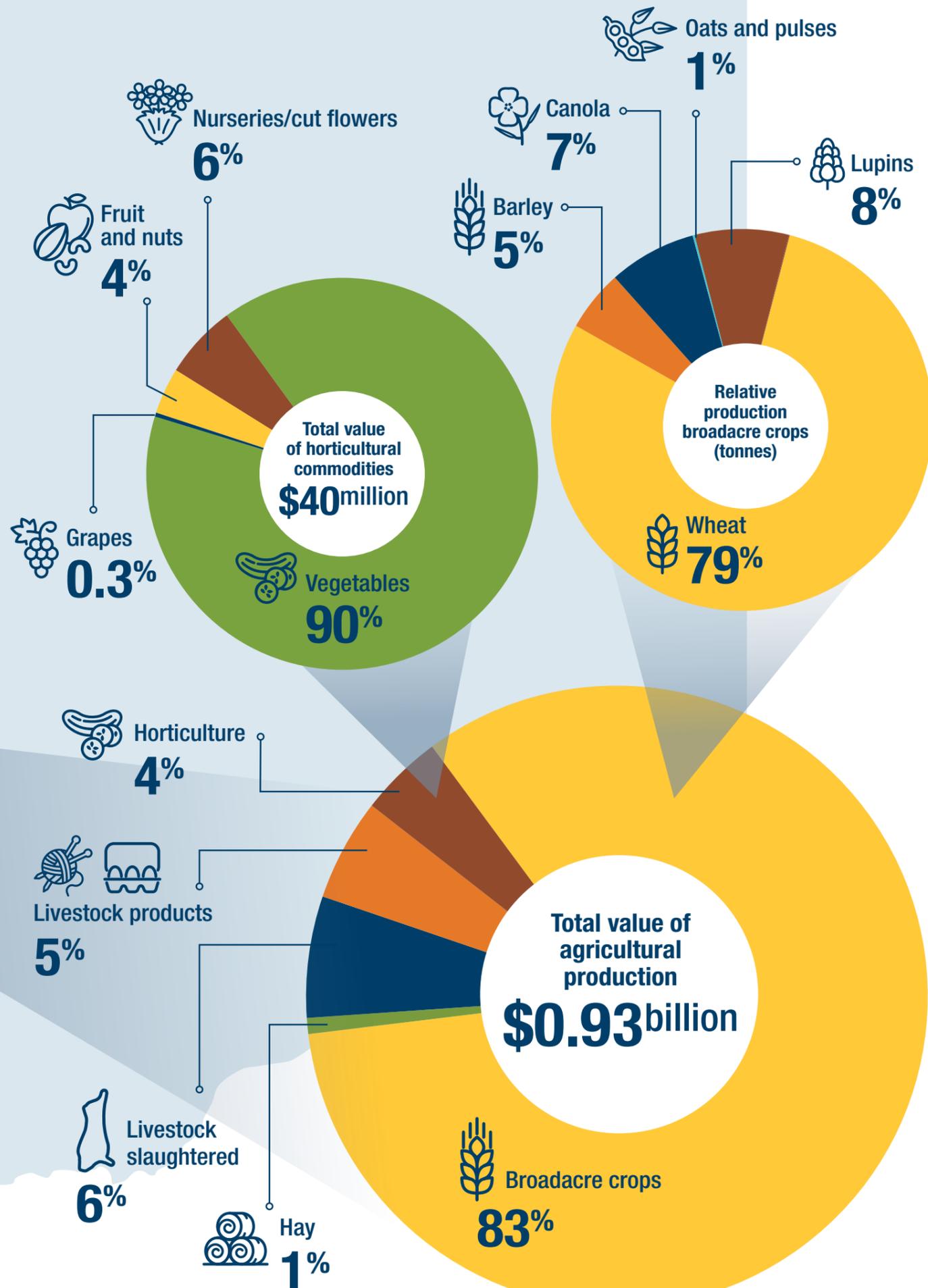
38% of properties are larger than 4,000ha. Median land value (2020)³ \$1,500/ha

\$40 million
Horticulture production (2015–16)

4% of WA total

2,611,400 tonnes
Annual broadacre crop production (five-year average 2016–20)¹

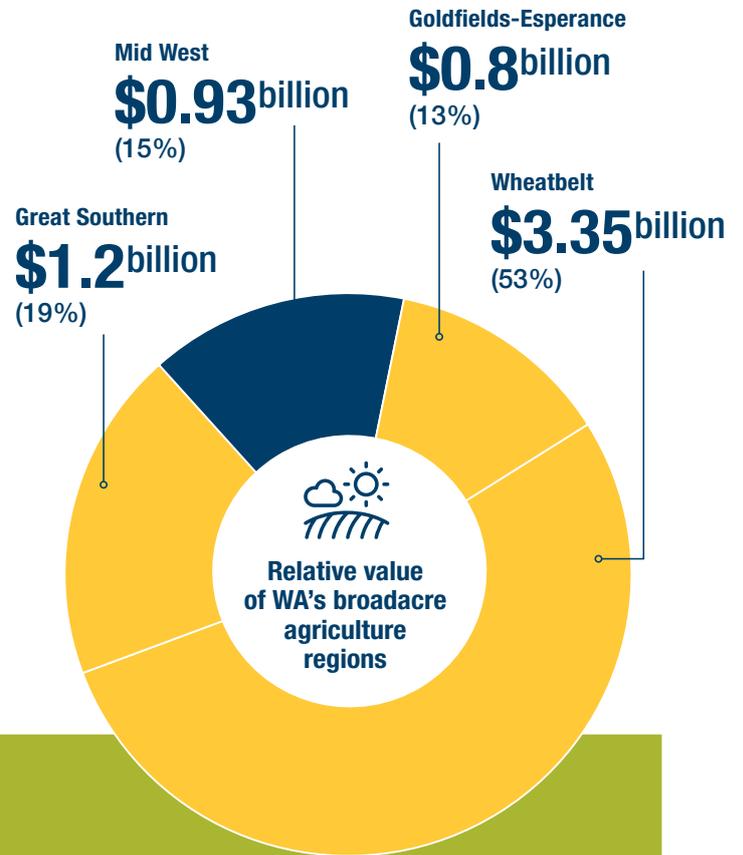
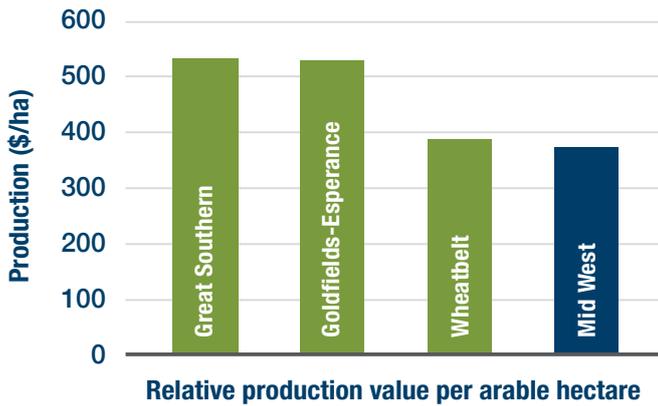
19% of WA grainbelt total



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), ¹Grains Industry Association of WA, ²DPIRD, ³Rural Bank, ⁴Mid West Ports



Region Comparisons



Production values per arable hectare across the regions reflect differences in annual rainfall.



Region Trends



Population (as at 2020)

- 52,769 people in Mid West. Population has declined by 7% since 2013.
- 49,936 (95%) of these in the North Midlands and Batavia Coast subregions.



Employment

- 7% (2252) of employed population in Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries.
- 27% (1273) of businesses in Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries.



Rainfall

- Annual rainfall in the Mid West region ranges from 225–450mm in the west to less than 175mm in the east. Average annual rainfall over the past 20 years has declined significantly compared to the region's 100-year average.



Crops

- Wheat dominates broadacre cropping and agricultural exports in the Mid West, which could represent a risk to the region as the climate becomes drier and the seasons more variable.



Livestock

- Sheep numbers are small and stable following a large decline over recent decades as many farmers have moved to 100% cropping. Removal of fencing and shearing sheds may hinder future growth potential.



Horticulture

- Cucumber production in growth tunnels has expanded significantly since 2015 with 250 tunnels expected in operation by 2023. Tomatoes, once the dominant horticultural industry, are now a minor commodity compared with cucumbers.



Aquaculture

- Wild-caught fishing businesses predominate in the Mid West, with WA rock lobster the dominant industry (80%). Aquaculture, centred at the Abrolhos Islands near Geraldton, hosts a yellowtail kingfish pilot, with emerging developments in edible and pearl oysters, clams, seaweed and live coral. There are also several small-scale land-based developments.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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DPIRD Regional Intelligence and Adoption Team (2021) *Broadacre agriculture regional snapshot: Mid West, Western Australia*. [Brochure] <https://agric.wa.gov.au/n/9181>