



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
ABARES

# Weekly Australian Climate, Water and Agricultural Update



8 March 2012

The full report is available from [www.daff.gov.au/abares](http://www.daff.gov.au/abares)

## Summary of key issues

- Exceptionally heavy rainfall during the past week over central and southeast Australia has caused flooding in some areas with damage to rural infrastructure.
- Areas along the South Australia – New South Wales border recorded over four times the average monthly rainfall for March within the first five days of March 2012 (Bureau of Meteorology Special Climate Statement 39, 6 March 2012).
- Several irrigation channels in the Riverina have been damaged by the flooding. Damage to orchards, vineyards, crops, stored-feed and stock losses have been reported. Fodder drops are under way in the region.
- Water storage levels in the Murray–Darling Basin increased this week by 2070 gigalitres to approximately 90 per cent of total capacity.
- The world sugar indicator price averaged US\$24.5 cents a pound in the week ending 7 March 2012, down slightly from the previous week.
- The world wheat indicator price (US hard red winter, free on board Gulf ports) averaged US\$303 a tonne in the week ending 6 March 2012, compared with US\$298 a tonne in the previous week.
- The Australian canola indicator price (Portland, Victoria) averaged \$499 a tonne in the week ending 5 March 2012, compared with \$492 a tonne in the previous week.
- The Eastern Market Indicator price for wool remained largely unchanged in the week ending 1 March 2012 at 1213 cents a kilogram clean. Bales offered for sale fell 10 per cent in the week.
- Saleyards lamb prices increased in all states in the week ending 2 March 2012. The largest increase was recorded in South Australia where the indicator price increased by 11 per cent to 515 cents per kilogram.

# 1. Climate

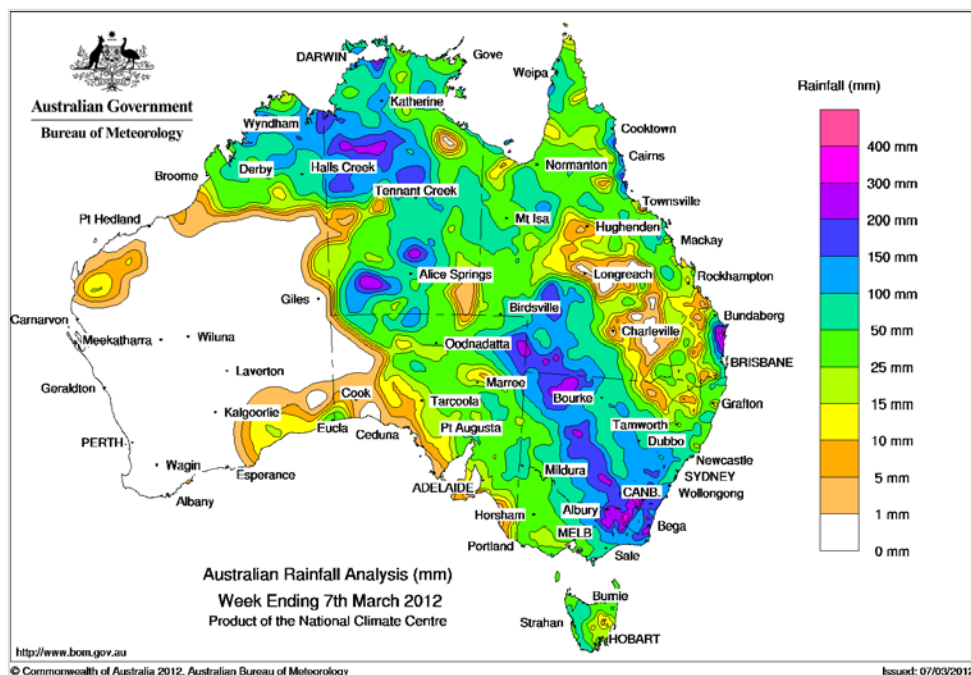
## 1.1. Notable events

- For the week ending 7 March, rainfall was recorded in all states and territories, with the highest falls occurring mostly in northern and eastern Australia. The highest measured total for the week was 394 millimetres at Perisher Valley in New South Wales.
- Areas along the South Australia – New South Wales border recorded over four times the average monthly rainfall for March within the first five days of March 2012 (Bureau of Meteorology Special Climate Statement 39, 6 March 2012).
- Exceptionally heavy rainfall during the past week over central and southeast Australia has caused flooding in some areas. Flooding in the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan river catchments has caused issues for local communities and damage to some infrastructure. Road closures are causing some concern for farmers getting produce to markets.
- Several irrigation channels in the Riverina have been damaged by the flooding. Damage to orchards, vineyards, crops, stored-feed and stock losses have been reported. Fodder drops are under way.
- 14 councils in southern New South Wales have been declared Natural Disaster Areas due to flooding in past weeks. Boorowa, Forbes, Coolamon, Cooma-Monaro, Corowa, Gundagai, Lockhart, Parkes, Snowy River, Tumut, Young, Upper Lachlan, Wagga Wagga and Weddin councils are all being assisted with Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.
- Rainfall throughout central Australia and the East Kimberly region over the past few months should provide favourable conditions for pasture growth.
- Upper layer soil moisture at the end of February 2012 was generally average or better in the wheat sheep zone with deficiencies in western Victoria. Lower layer soil moisture deficiencies remain in most of the Western Australian, South Australian and Victorian wheat sheep zones.

## 1.2. Rainfall this week

For the week ending 7 March 2012, rainfall was received in all states and territories. For further information, go to [www.bom.gov.au/climate/current/weeklyrain.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/current/weeklyrain.shtml).

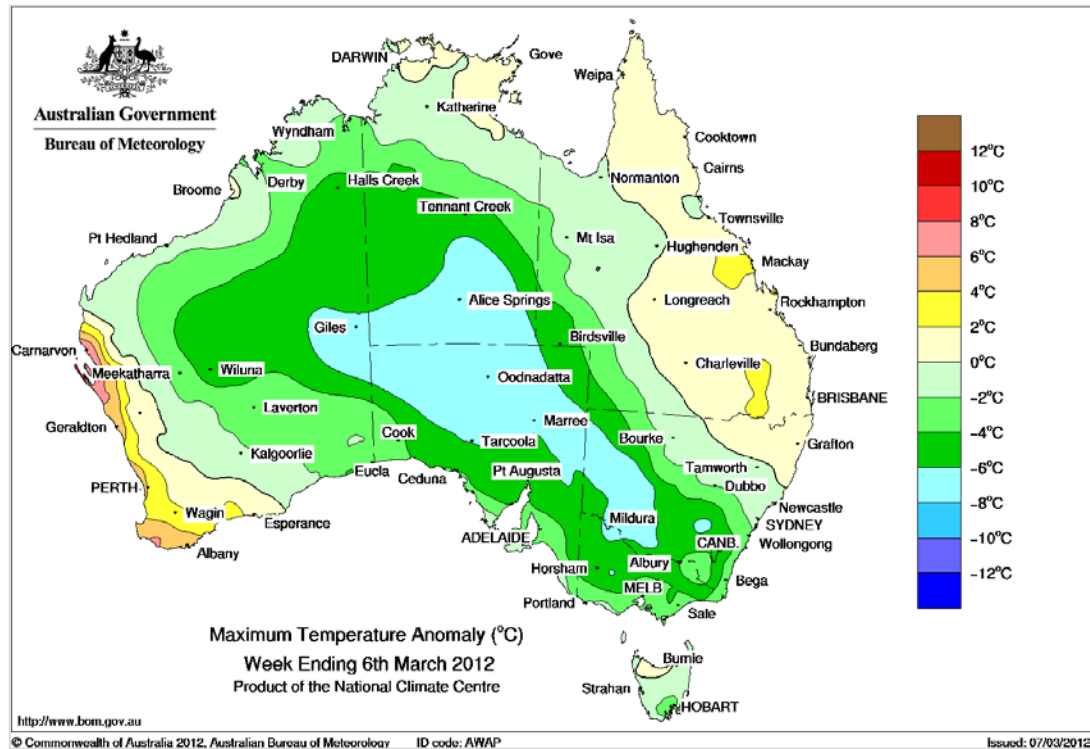
### Rainfall for the week ending 7 March 2012



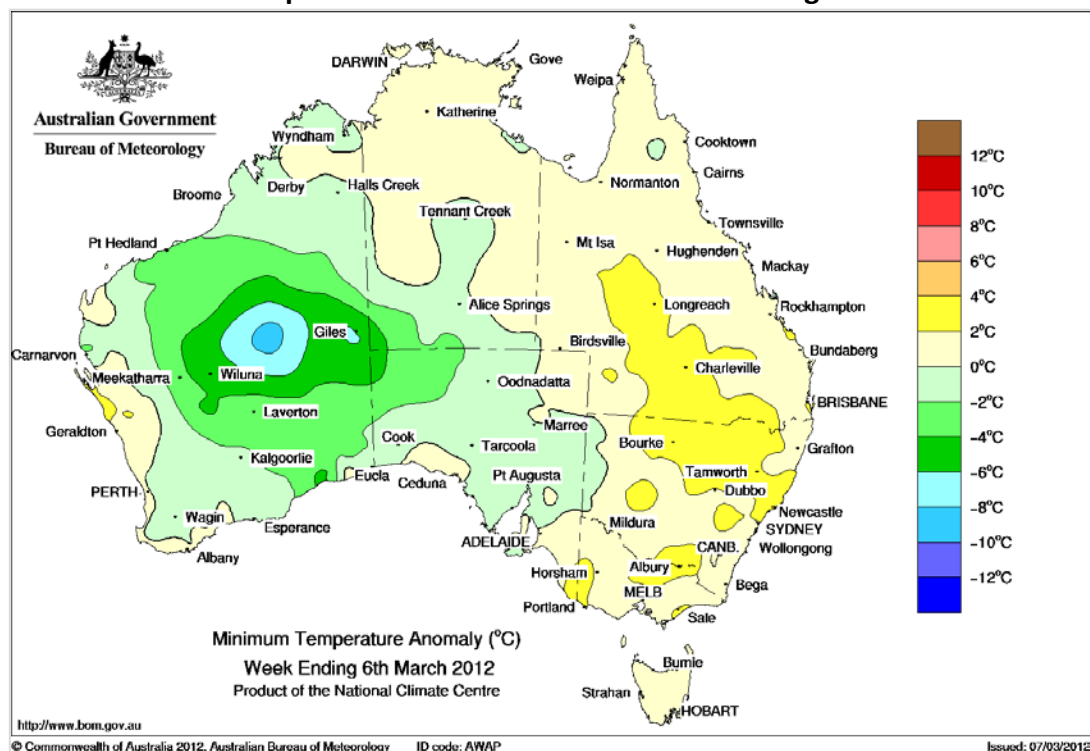
### 1.3. Temperature anomalies this week

Spatial temperature analyses are based on historical weekly temperature data provided by the Bureau of Meteorology. These temperature anomaly maps show the departure of the maximum and minimum from the long-term average. Temperature anomalies are calculated using high resolution gridded datasets from 1911 onwards. For further information on temperature anomalies, go to [www.bom.gov.au/jsp/awap/](http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/awap/).

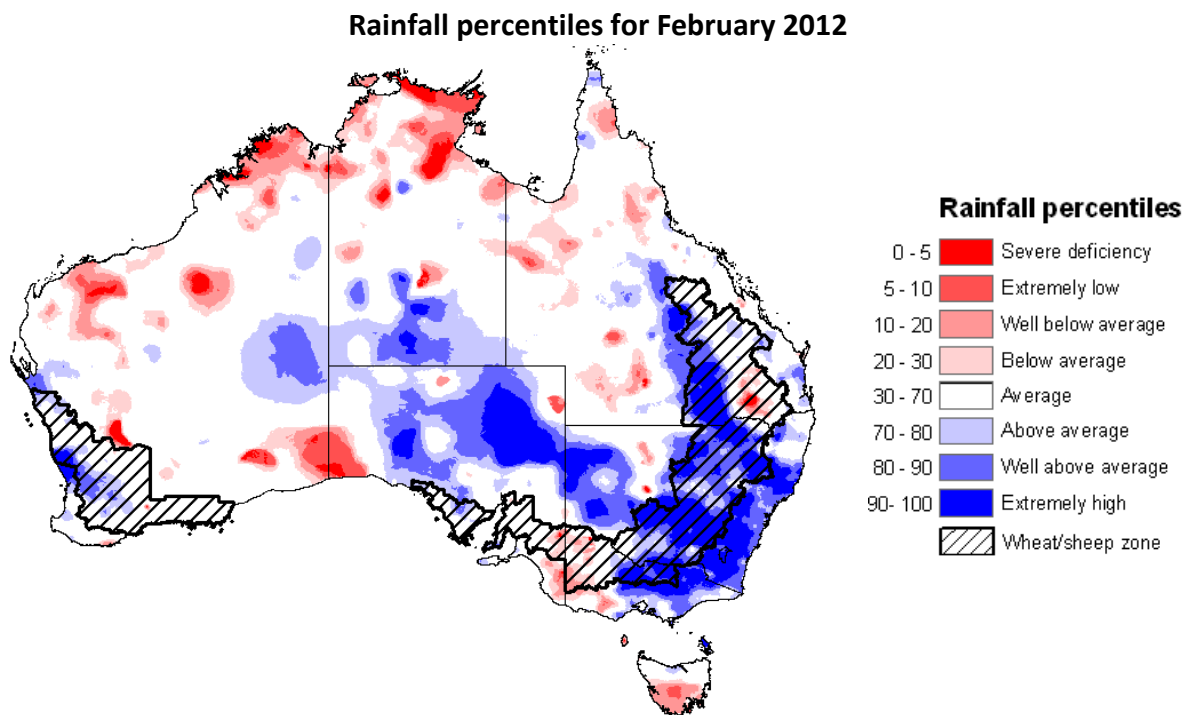
**Maximum temperature anomalies for the week ending 6 March 2012**



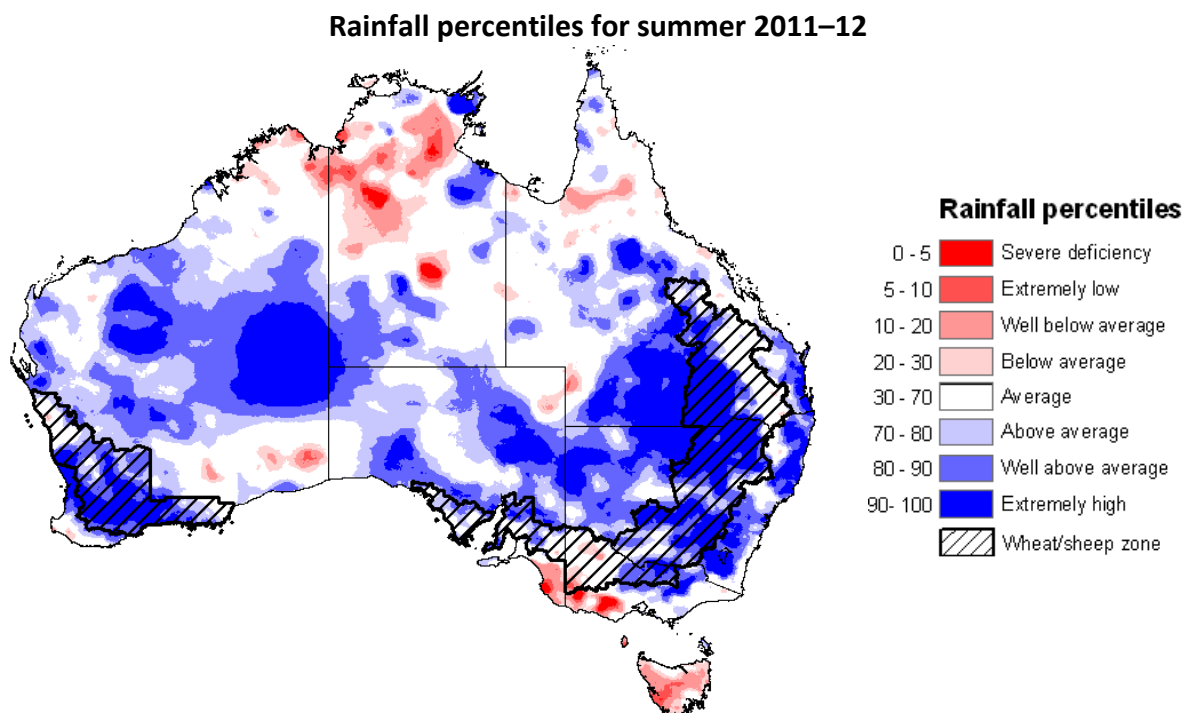
**Minimum temperature anomalies for the week ending 6 March 2012**



## 1.4. February 2012 rainfall

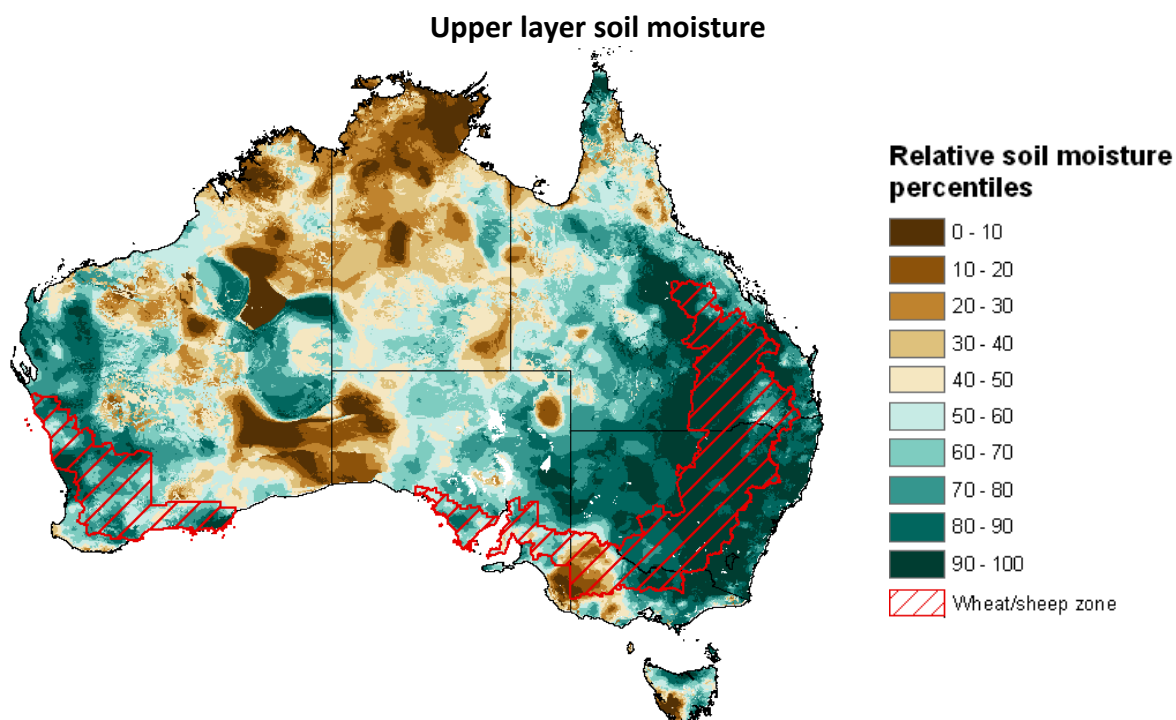


## 1.5. Summer 2011-2012 rainfall

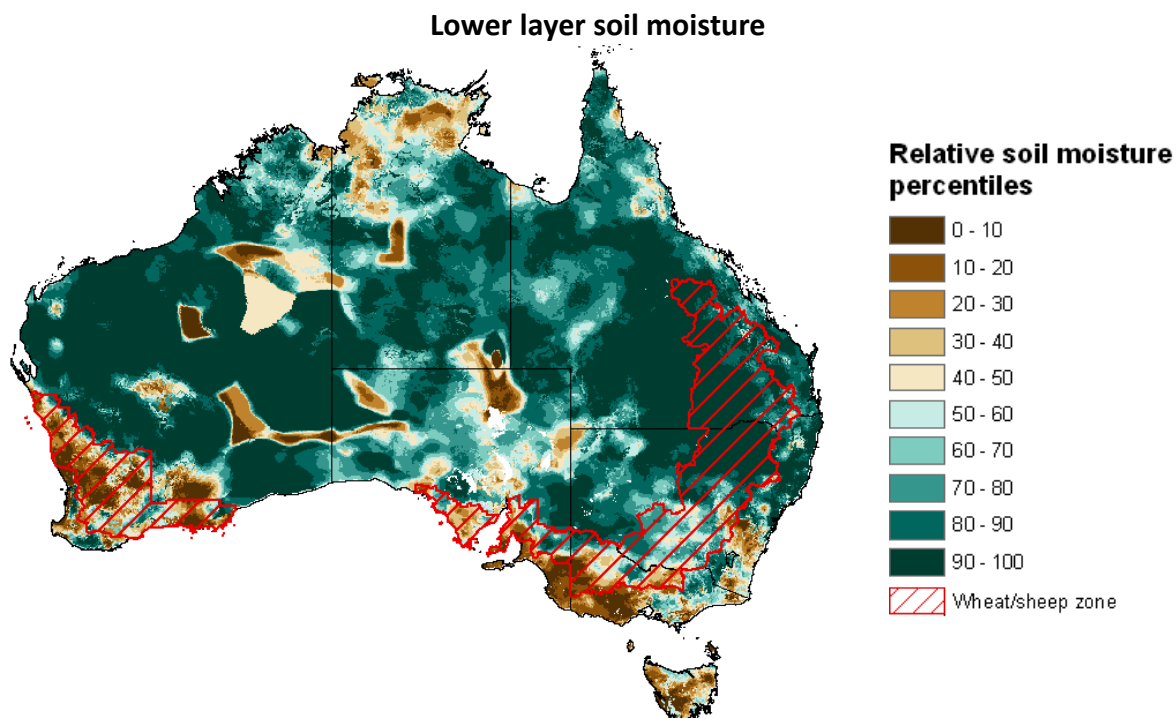


## 1.6. February 2012 relative soil moisture

The maps show the relative levels of modelled upper (0 to ~0.2 metres) soil moisture and lower (~0.2 to ~1.5 metres) soil moisture at the end of February 2012. These maps show soil moisture estimates relative to the long-term average with respect to the reference period 1961 to 1990.



The bulk of plant roots occur in the top 0.3 metres of the soil profile and soil moisture in the upper layer of the soil profile (0.2 metres) is the most appropriate indication of the availability of water, particularly for germinating plants. The lower layer soil moisture is a larger, deeper store that is slower to respond to rainfall and tends to reflect accumulated events over seasonal and longer time scales.

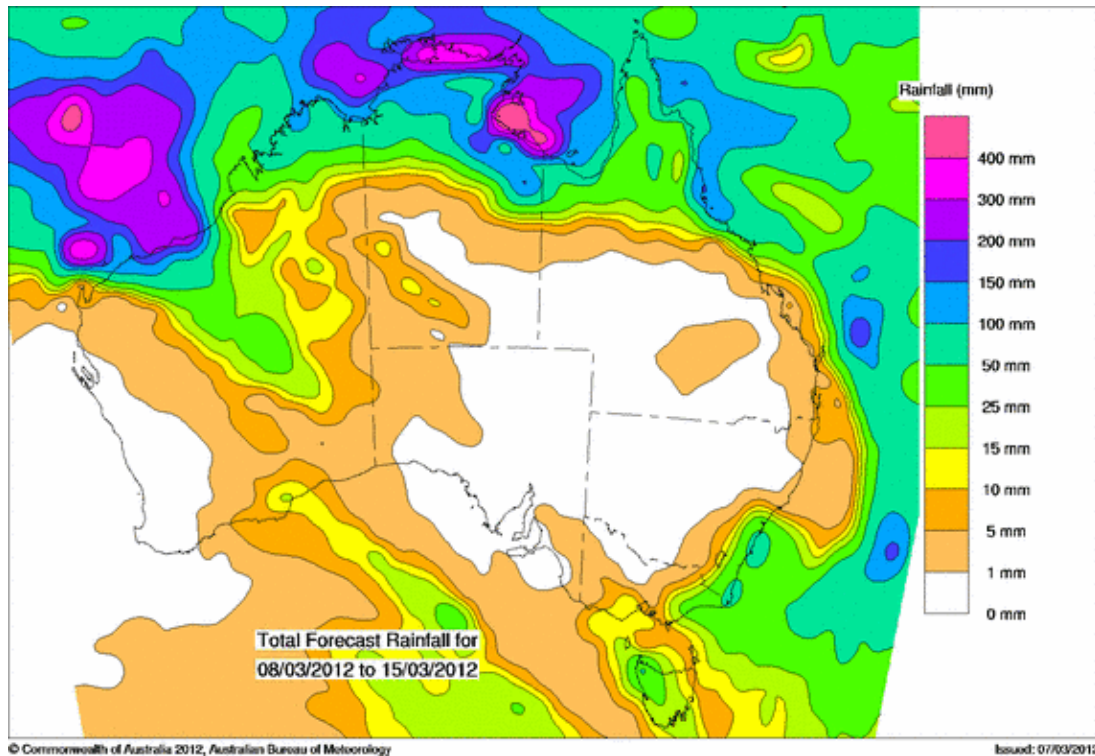




## 1.7. Rainfall outlook

The rainfall forecast below is produced from computer models. As it contains no input from weather forecasters, it is important to also check local forecasts and warnings by the Bureau of Meteorology.

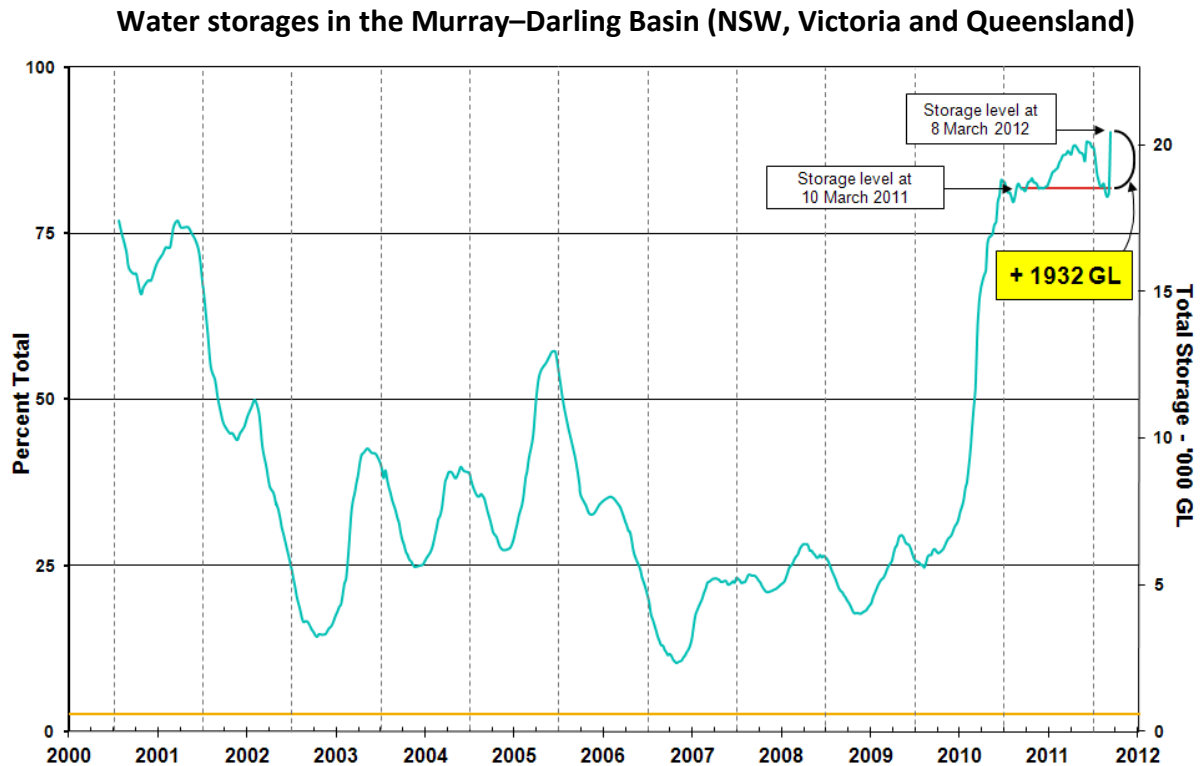
### Total forecast rainfall for the period 8 to 15 March 2012



## 2. Water

### 2.1. Water availability

- Water storage levels in the Murray–Darling Basin (MDB) increased this week by 2070 gigalitres (GL) to approximately 90 per cent of total capacity. This is 9 percentage points or 1932 GL more than this time last year.
- General security allocations in the NSW Lower Namoi increased to 112% of entitlement.
- All other water allocations remain unchanged.



Information on irrigation water available in the Murray–Darling Basin from 1 January 2001 to 8 March 2012 is shown above. The top horizontal (red) line indicates the storage level at the similar time last year. The bottom horizontal (orange) line indicates the amount of 'dead' or unusable storage.

## 3. Commodities

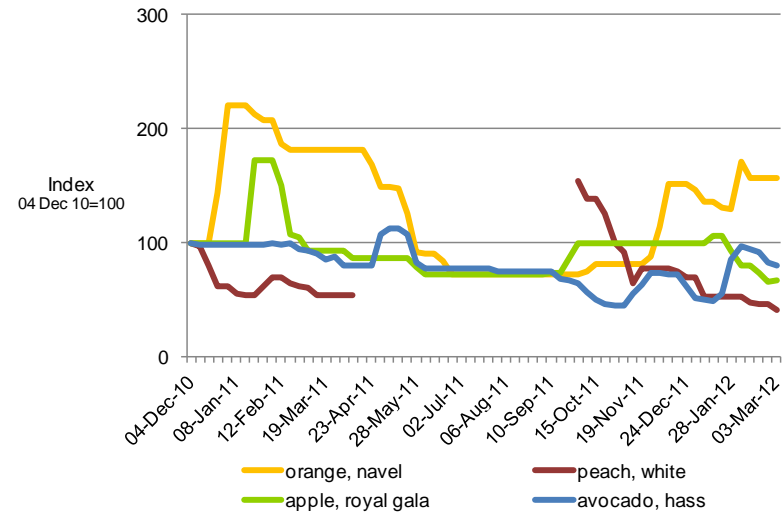
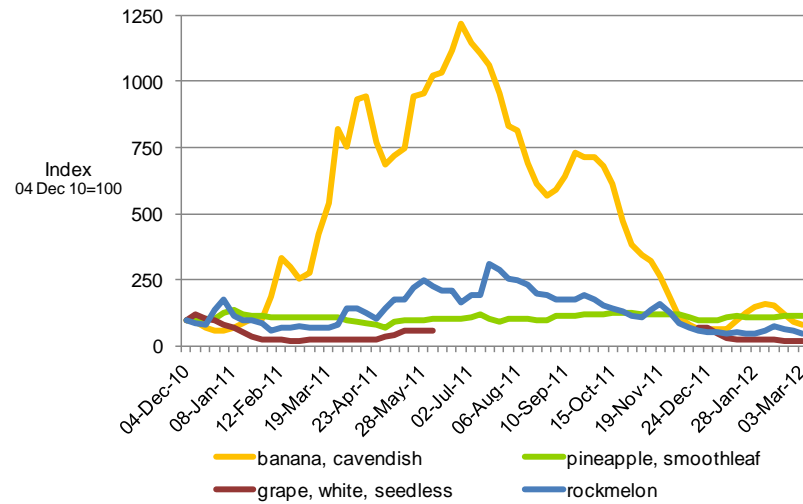
### 3.1. Production and commodities

- Wholesale prices for peach, rockmelon, bean, broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce and brown onion were lower in the week ending 3 March 2012.
- The world cotton indicator price (the Cotlook 'A' index) averaged US99.6 cents a pound in the week ending 7 March 2012, largely unchanged from the previous week. India banned all cotton exports on 5 March 2012.
- The world sugar indicator price averaged US24.5 cents a pound in the week ending 7 March 2012, down US0.7 cent a pound from the previous week.
- The Eastern Market Indicator price for wool remained largely unchanged in the week ending 1 March 2012 at 1213 cents a kilogram clean. Bales offered for sale fell 10 per cent in the week.
- The world canola indicator price (Rapeseed, Europe, cif Hamburg) was largely unchanged in the week ending 6 March 2012 at US\$623 a tonne
- The Australian canola indicator price (Portland, Victoria) averaged \$499 a tonne in the week ending 5 March 2012, compared with \$492 a tonne in the previous week.
- The world coarse grains indicator price (US no. 2 yellow corn, free on board Gulf ports) averaged US\$283 a tonne in the week ending 7 March 2012, compared with US\$281 a tonne in the previous week.
- The world wheat indicator price (US hard red winter, free on board Gulf ports) averaged US\$303 a tonne in the week ending 6 March 2012, compared with US\$298 a tonne in the previous week.
- Movements in young cattle prices during the week ending 2 March 2012 were highly variable. The Queensland trade steer price fell by 21 cents to 356 cents a kilogram. However, trade steer prices in South Australia and Western Australia rose by 69 cents and 37 cents to 377 and 407 cents a kilogram, respectively. Trade steer prices in New South Wales and Victoria were also higher compared to last week.
- Saleyard lamb prices increased in all states in the week ending 2 March 2012. The largest increase was recorded in South Australia where the indicator price increased by 11 per cent to 515 cents per kilogram.

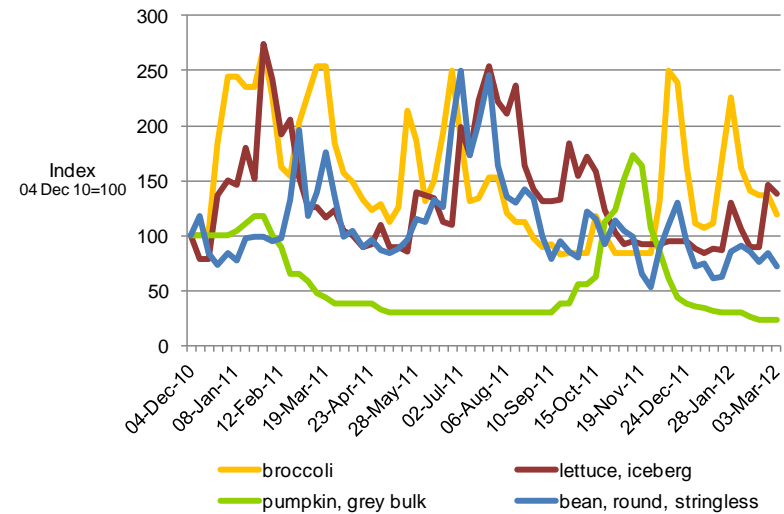
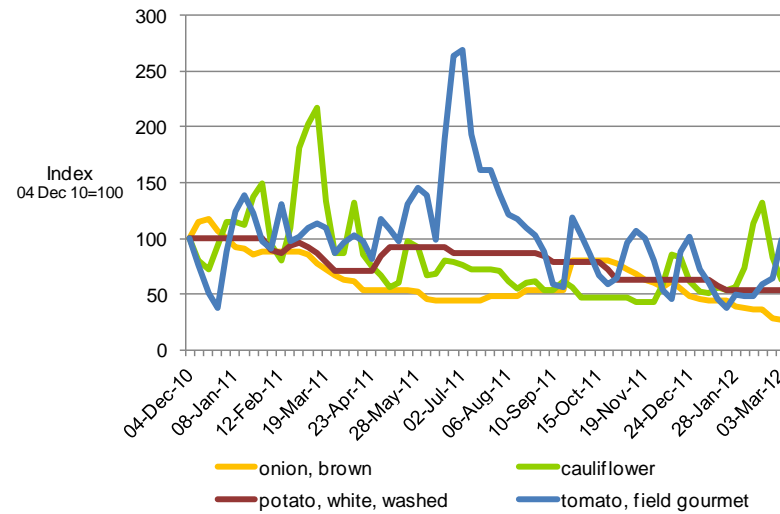


## 3.2. Recent movements in fruit and vegetable prices

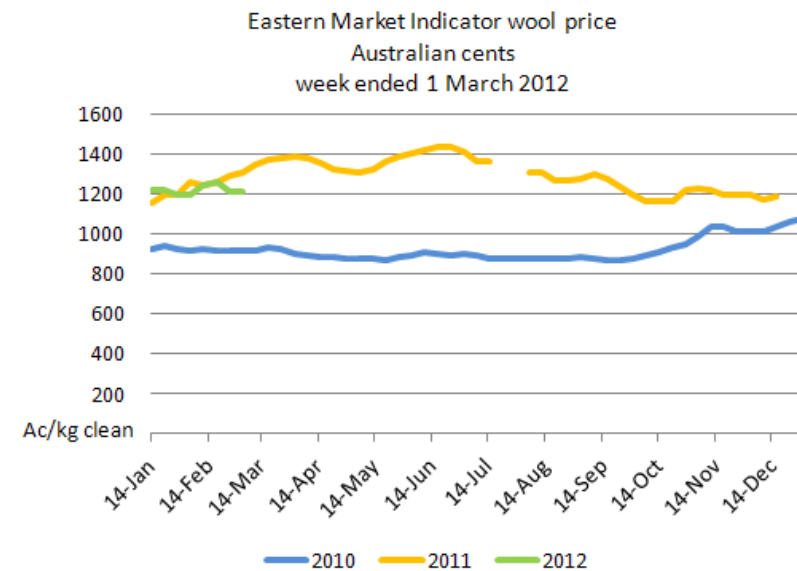
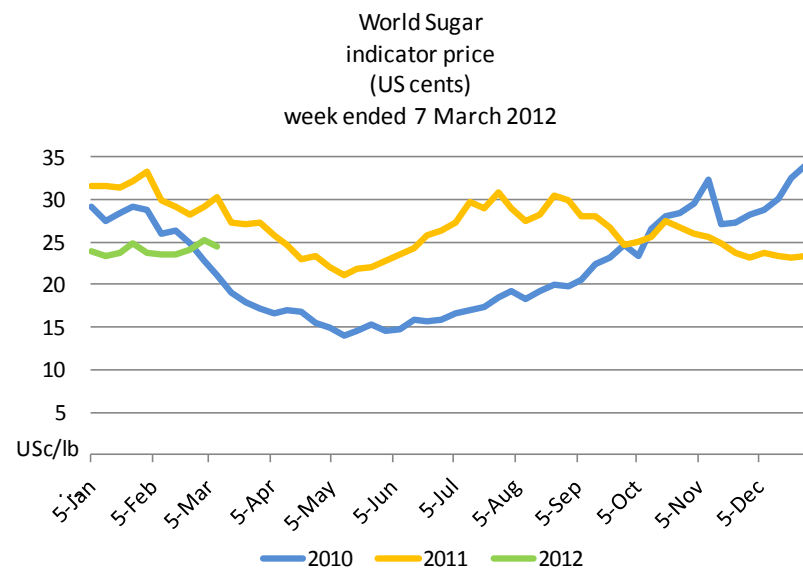
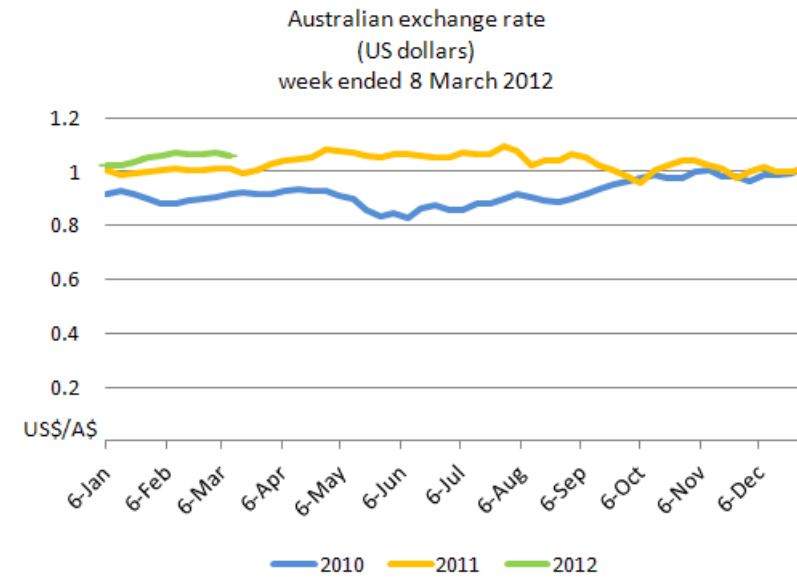
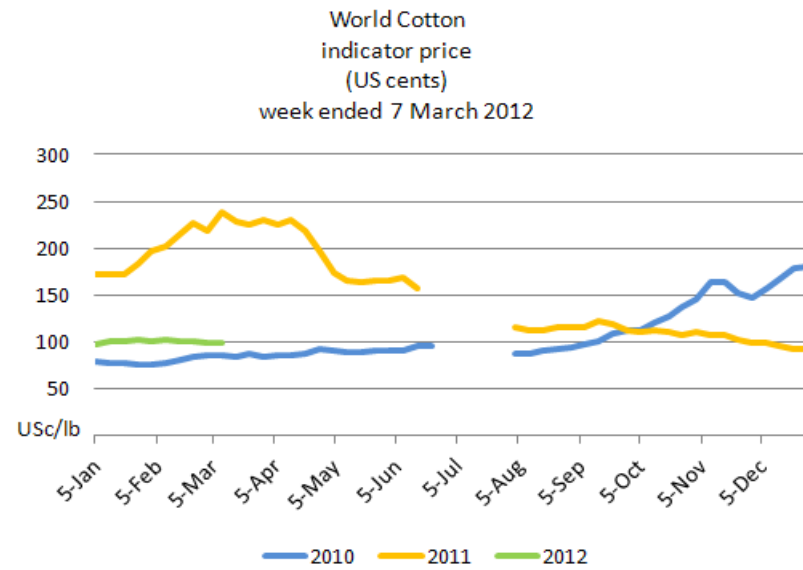
Weekly wholesale prices for selected fruit, Melbourne market



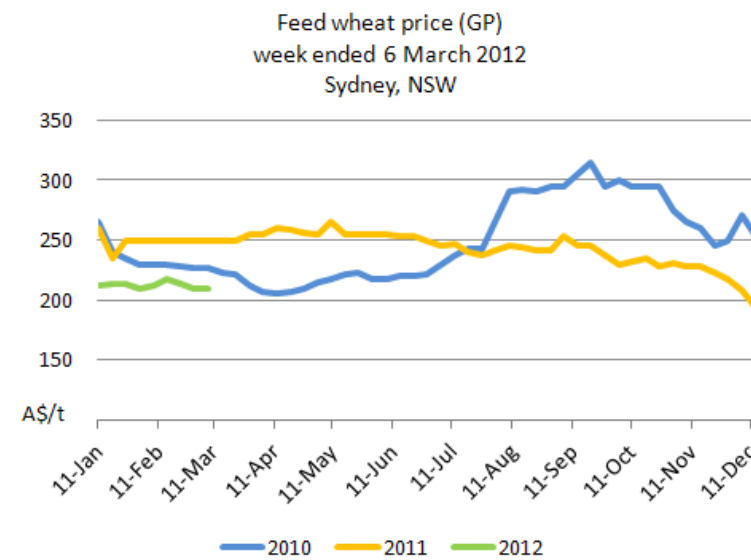
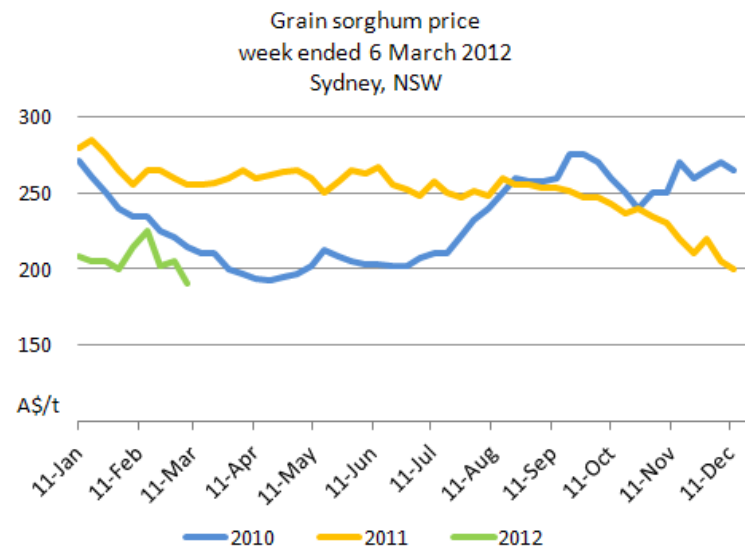
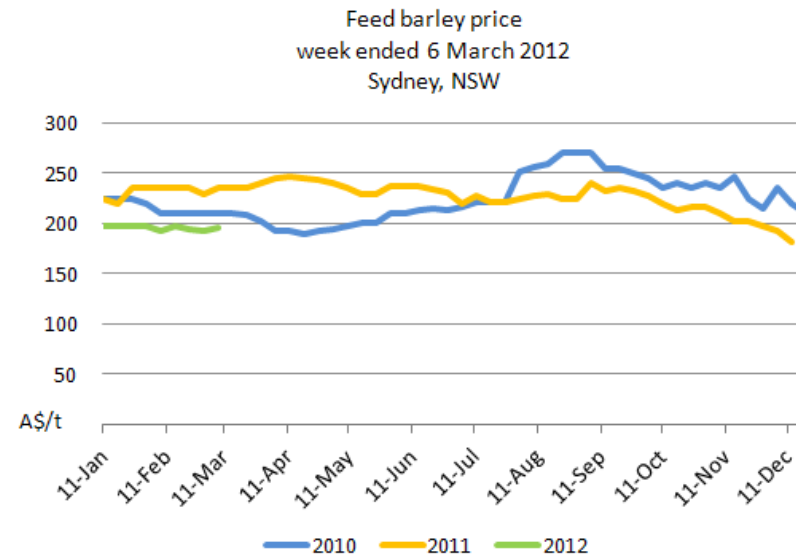
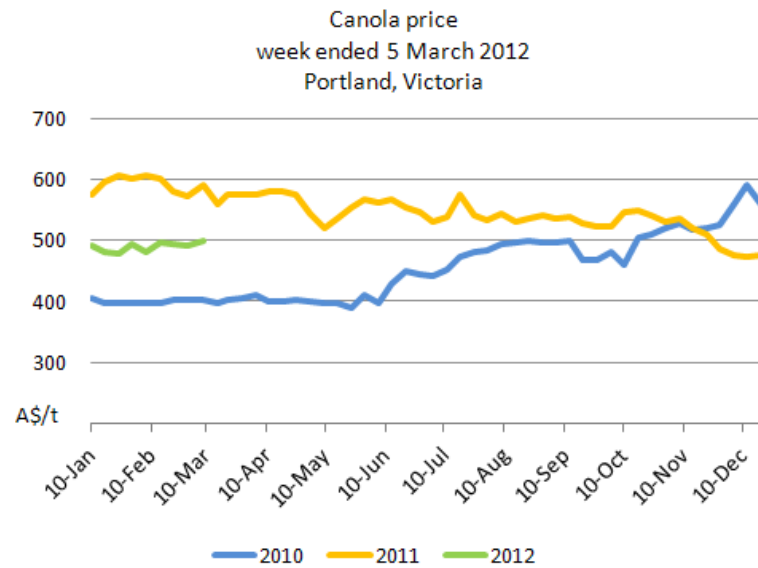
Weekly wholesale prices for selected vegetables, Melbourne market



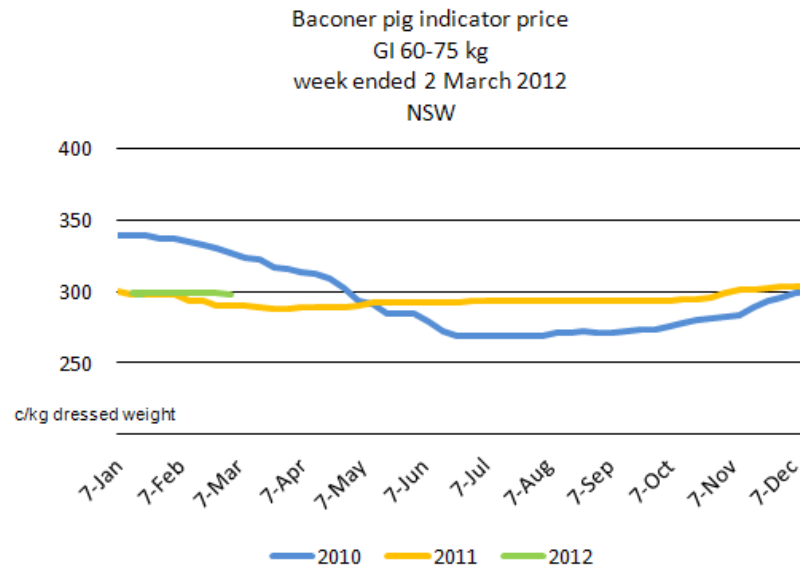
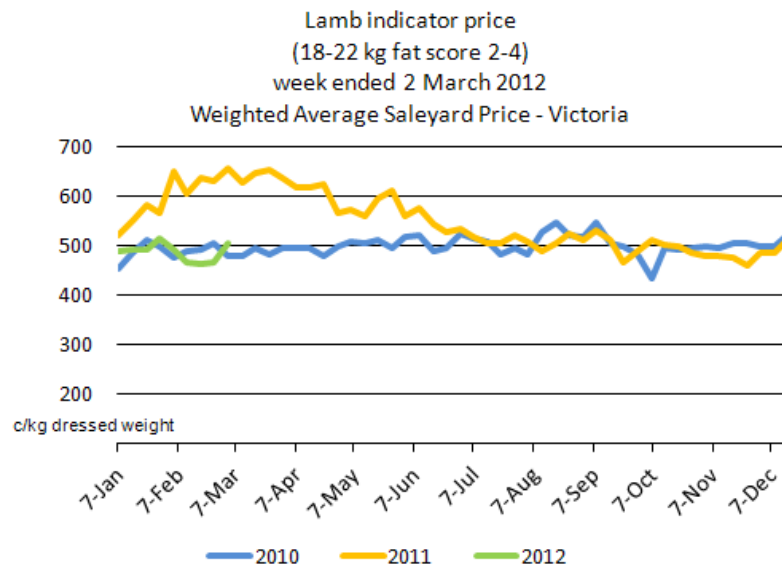
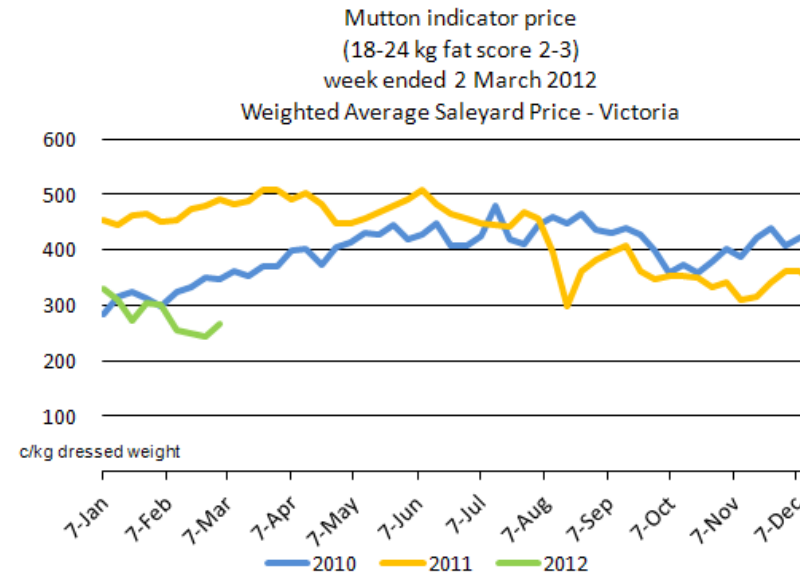
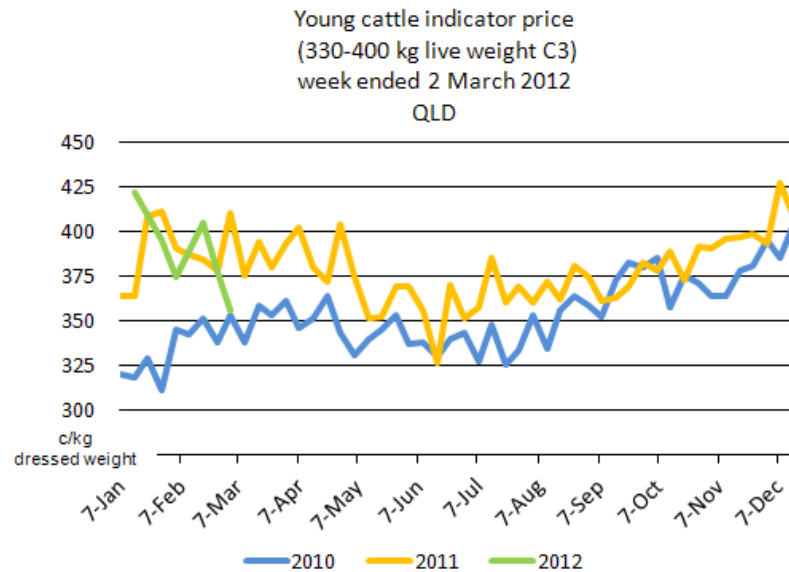
### 3.3. Selected world indicator prices



### 3.4. Crop indicator prices



### 3.5. Livestock indicator prices



## 4. Data attribution

### Climate

#### Bureau of Meteorology

- Weekly rainfall totals: [www.bom.gov.au/jsp/awap/rain/index.jsp](http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/awap/rain/index.jsp)
- Monthly and last 3-months rainfall percentiles: [www.bom.gov.au/jsp/awap/](http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/awap/)
- Temperature anomalies: [www.bom.gov.au/jsp/awap/](http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/awap/)
- Rainfall forecast: [www.bom.gov.au/jsp/watl/rainfall/pme.jsp](http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/watl/rainfall/pme.jsp)
- Seasonal outlook: [www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead](http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead)
- Drought statement: [www.bom.gov.au/climate/drought/drought.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/drought/drought.shtml)
- ENSO Wrap-Up: [www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/](http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/)
- Soil moisture (BoM, CSIRO and the former Bureau of Rural Sciences): [www.eoc.csiro.au/awap/](http://www.eoc.csiro.au/awap/)

### Water

#### New South Wales

- New South Wales Water Information: <http://waterinfo.nsw.gov.au/>
- New South Wales Office of Water, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water: [www.water.nsw.gov.au/Home/default.aspx](http://www.water.nsw.gov.au/Home/default.aspx)
- Available water determinations register: [www.wix.nsw.gov.au/wma/DeterminationSearch.jsp?selectedRegister=Determination](http://www.wix.nsw.gov.au/wma/DeterminationSearch.jsp?selectedRegister=Determination)
- Snowy Hydro: [www.snowyhydro.com.au/lakeLevels.asp?pageID=47&parentID=61&grandParentID=4](http://www.snowyhydro.com.au/lakeLevels.asp?pageID=47&parentID=61&grandParentID=4)

#### Queensland

- Sunwater: [www.sunwater.com.au](http://www.sunwater.com.au)
- seqwater: <http://seqwater.com.au>

#### South Australia

- SA Water: [www.sawater.com.au/SAWater/Environment/TheRiverMurray/River+Murray+Levels.htm](http://www.sawater.com.au/SAWater/Environment/TheRiverMurray/River+Murray+Levels.htm)
- South Australian Department of Water: [www.waterforgood.sa.gov.au/](http://www.waterforgood.sa.gov.au/)

#### Victoria

- Goulburn–Murray Water: [www.g-mwater.com.au](http://www.g-mwater.com.au)

#### Water trading

- Waterexchange: [www.waterexchange.com.au](http://www.waterexchange.com.au)

### Commodities

#### Fruit and vegetables

- Datafresh: [www.datafresh.com.au](http://www.datafresh.com.au)

#### Mutton, lambs, wheat, barley and grain sorghum

- The Land: hardcopy or online at <http://theland.farmonline.com.au/markets.aspx>

#### Cattle, mutton, lambs and pigs

- Meat and Livestock Australia: [www.mla.com.au/Prices-and-markets](http://www.mla.com.au/Prices-and-markets)

#### Canola

- Weekly Times: hardcopy