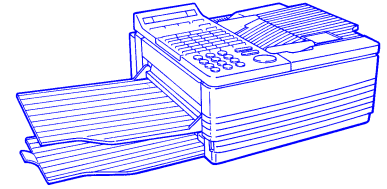




SEASONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION SERVICE
SOI FAX HOTLINES
 (Southern Oscillation Index)
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SOI MESSAGE - 19 FEBRUARY 1997

SOI (a) AVERAGES / PHASE		
November 96	*	- 0.8
December 1996	*	+7.3
January 97	*	+3.5

Last 30 days		+ 12.9
Last 90 days (b)		+ 6.9

SOI trend ^(b) during December - January was Phase 2 (i.e. positive ▲).		
NOTE : (a) SOI values calculated using mean barometric pressures from 1880 to 1992 - subject to revision by Bureau of Meteorology. * Preliminary value ** Revised value		
(b) See AUSTRALIAN RAINMAN for effects of SOI on rainfall at your location.		

However the current SST pattern suggests that the La Niña phase is on the wane, and that the rainfall outlook is becoming neutral.

Warmer-than-normal SST's have largely dissipated in the western Pacific. SSTs are warmer than normal in a large band across central and eastern parts of the southern Pacific Ocean, including the region adjacent to the Chilean coast.

An interesting feature, identified by Bureau of Meteorology Research Centre, is a region of warmer-than-normal water (at 150m depth) that appears to be slowly progressing eastwards into the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. It will be important to carefully monitor this sub-surface pattern over the next three months, for any further signs of deleterious effects on our climate patterns.

The average SOI over the previous 30 days has risen to +12.9 . Most climate forecasts continue to suggest a high probability of near average rainfall for most of Queensland during the February to April period.

THE BOTTOM LINE

REVIEW OF CLIMATIC FORECASTS AND INFORMATION

"PATCHY RAINFALL PROSPECTS"

While the updated climate forecasts identify some scattered areas in Queensland / New South Wales with a 60% to 80% probability of getting median rainfall, a careful appraisal of the latest Bureau of Meteorology & DPI / DNR climate forecast systems suggests a climate outlook near average for the February to April period.

In strict statistical terms, there is about a 50% chance of getting 'Average' or median rainfall for most of eastern Australia.

Pasture growth forecasts indicate that although average summer rainfall is the most likely outcome this year, this may not produce median pasture growth where grasses have been weakened by several years of drought; however, pasture quality and animal performance should be excellent.

Sea-surface temperatures (SSTs) continue to be cooler-than-normal in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.

The next passage of the important 30-to-50-day oscillation will be approximately within the period of 1 - 10 March.

To obtain more information for your location, we recommend combined use of the AUSTRALIAN RAINMAN package and the Bureau of Meteorology's Seasonal Climate Outlook. Also a lot of additional information is available on our Internet World Wide Web service, 'The Long Paddock', at URL - <http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/longpdk/>.

The next SOI MESSAGE update will be on the 26th of February (usually by 5pm).

Climate Impacts and Spatial Systems - Department of Primary Industries Compiled by Col Paull and Dr Roger Stone, QDPI.

*If you would like any further information, please contact Col Paull on (07) 389 69587, or one of the Climate Risk Co-Ordinators located at Longreach (076) 584 400, Charters Towers (077) 872 155, Emerald (079) 828 801, Kingaroy (071) 600 717 and Roma(076) 229 999
 Some information courtesy Bureau of Meteorology,
 CSIRO and National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, USA*