



SOI FAX HOTLINES

(Southern Oscillation Index)

this page = 1902 935 301

this page is updated each Wednesday, usually by 5pm

PLEASE NOTE THE NEW FAX NUMBER !!



SOI MESSAGE - 18 March 1998

SOI (a) AVERAGES / PHASE		
December 97	*	-10.8
January 98	*	-22.1
February 98	*	-22.2

Last 30 days		-18.3
Last 90 days (b)		-18.7

SOI trend (b) during January - February was Phase 1 (i.e. negative ▼).		
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.		

REVIEW OF CLIMATIC FORECASTS AND INFORMATION

'Mixed Rainfall Outlook'

Use of Australian Rainman shows the probabilities of obtaining median rainfall for the total March - May period are about 60% over much of Queensland and northern NSW. That is, in years when the SOI trend was similar to the present one, median rainfall was received in about 6-in-10 years.

The main exceptions in Queensland are parts of far north Qld, where probabilities are about 35% (i.e. one year in three years), and parts of south-west Queensland where probabilities are about 70%. However, in inland areas of NSW and most of Victoria the probabilities are 60-80% (that is median rainfall is exceeded in 6-in-10 to 8-in-10 years depending on location).

Sea-surface temperatures remain much warmer than normal in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, but this El Niño pattern has a reduced influence on our rainfall in the current situation. Surface waters are also warmer-than-normal in the Coral Sea, and around the Queensland and eastern Australian coastline.

A pasture growth model indicates that the chances of exceeding median pasture growth during the March - May period are about 30% in parts of central-western Queensland. However, the

probabilities of obtaining median pasture growth for the next three-month period are quite high in south-eastern and northern Queensland.

Increased probabilities of receiving median rainfall over southern Queensland may have implications for the harvest management of summer crops. In addition, a relatively wet, humid autumn would have implications for the management of ergot disease in grain sorghum.

The 30- to 50-day Oscillation has been weak over recent months. Its next passage is due about mid-April.

An initial assessment indicates that the probabilities of late frosts this year are slightly higher than normal. However, the probabilities regarding the date of first frost indicate no bias towards earlier or later than normal. This analysis will be updated at the end of May.

The average SOI over the last 30 days was -18.3. The probabilities of exceeding median rainfall for the total March to May period are about 60% in Queensland, except for the far north where they are about 35%. It is too early to say whether the El Niño will break down this autumn.

THE BOTTOM LINE

In view of the lack of rain over much of central Queensland and the south-eastern corner of the State, we continue to recommend caution when making property management decisions. We also advise regular monitoring of the SOI, sea-surface temperature patterns and published seasonal climate outlooks.

To obtain more detailed 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 SOI Fax Hotlines, our Internet World Wide Web service called 'The Long Paddock', and on BoM's fax and Internet information services.

NEXT UPDATE of the SOI MESSAGE:
25th March 1998

Climate Impacts and Grazing Systems - Department of Natural Resources

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) 584 418 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