



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 - 1 April 1998

SOI (a) AVERAGES / PHASE		
January 98	*	-22.1
February 98	*	-22.2
March 98	*	-26.1

Last 30 days		-27.1
Last 90 days (b)		-24.0

SOI trend (b) during February - March 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'

The April - June period is the critical time when the Southern Oscillation can lock into an El Niño, or flip out of it. The trend in the SOI during autumn indicates the establishment of climatic patterns which are likely to persist for the remainder of the year.

Use of the AUSTRALIAN RAINMAN package indicates that the probabilities of exceeding median rainfall during the April-June period are mostly around 50% in the eastern States. However, probabilities are about 65% in parts of: central Queensland, far central-western Queensland, western NSW and northern Victoria. That is, in years when the SOI trend was similar to the present one, at least median rainfall was received in about 2-in-3 years depending on location. However, probabilities are only about 35% (i.e. one year in three years) in part of the north coast of NSW, coastal areas around the NSW - Victoria border and in parts of northern Tasmania.

Although the El Niño pattern has weakened a little, sea-surface temperatures remain warmer than normal in a large area of the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. 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 this period are quite high in south-eastern and northern Queensland.

The chances of rain damaging summer crops prior to harvest during autumn are slightly above average. Therefore we suggest that farmers adopt appropriate risk reduction strategies for harvesting crops such as peanuts and cotton.

The next passage of the 30- to 50-day Oscillation is expected in the second or third week of 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 -27.1. The probabilities of exceeding median rainfall for the total April to June period range from about 50% to 70% over most of Queensland. 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:
8th April 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