



SOI FAX HOTLINES

(Southern Oscillation Index)

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this page is updated each Wednesday, usually by 5pm

PLEASE NOTE THE NEW FAX NUMBER !!



SOI MESSAGE - 6 May 1998

| SOI (a) AVERAGES / PHASE | | |
|--|---|-------|
| February 98 | * | -22.2 |
| March 98 | * | -26.1 |
| April 98 | * | -22.5 |
| ----- | | |
| Last 30 days | | -16.5 |
| Last 90 days (b) | | -21.5 |
| ----- | | |
| SOI trend (b) during March - April 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

The April-June period is the critical time when the SOI can dramatically change its pattern. Use of the AUSTRALIAN RAINMAN package indicates that the probabilities of exceeding median rainfall during the May-July period are mostly around 50% in the eastern States. However, probabilities are about 35% in parts of the Darling Downs, Western Downs and South Burnett in Queensland. That is, in years when the SOI trend was similar to the present one, at least median rainfall was received in about 1-in-3 years depending on location. In much of the wheat-growing areas of NSW and Victoria, the probabilities are about 65% (i.e. two years in three years).

It is important to note that sea-surface temperatures have continued to cool around the International Dateline. However, although the El Niño pattern has weakened, waters remain warmer than normal in the far eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.

Extremely high April rainfall over much of Queensland has produced high probabilities of above average pasture growth during the May to July period. In such areas, temperature is likely to be the main limitation to pasture growth.

The chances of rain damaging 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 about the third week of May.

An updated assessment of the probability of late frosts will be made towards the end of May. Use of the SOI Phase during January-February indicates only a slight chance of frosts that are a little later than normal.

The 'Average SOI over the previous 30 days' has resumed its upward movement with the current value being -16.5 . The probabilities of exceeding median rainfall for the May - July period remain reasonable, and are about 50% for most of Queensland.

THE BOTTOM LINE

We advise regular monitoring of the SOI, sea-surface temperature patterns and published seasonal climate outlooks over the next two months.

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:
13th May 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,
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