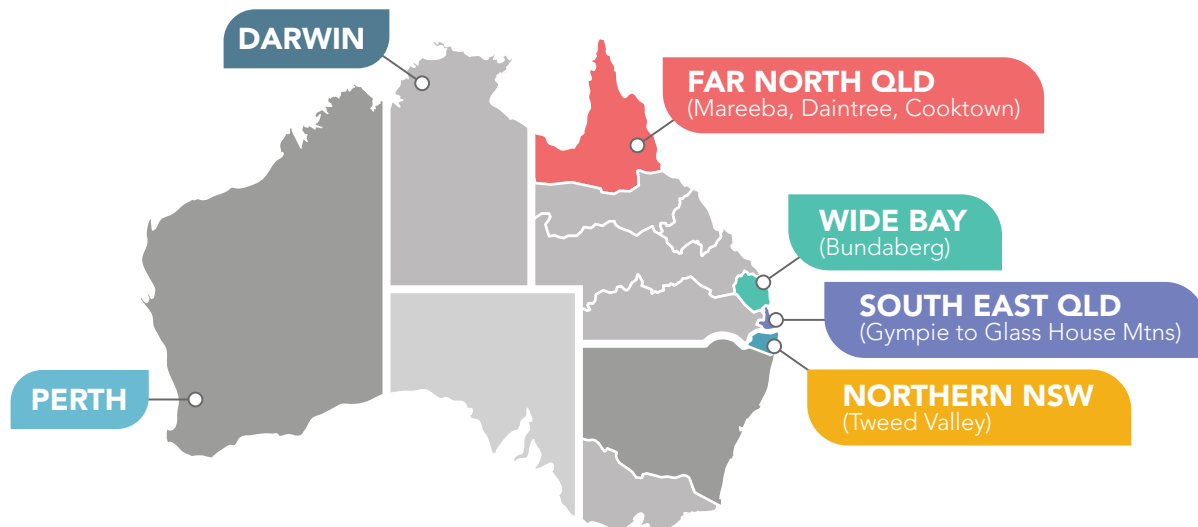


REGIONAL ROUND UP



WEATHER WATCH

DECEMBER

- Mean maximum temperatures for December were warmer than average for the west of Western Australia and for the east coast of Queensland
- Rainfall was very much above average for Australia overall; Australia's fourth-wettest December
- Rainfall for the month was above average in north-eastern New South Wales and northern and western Queensland

JANUARY

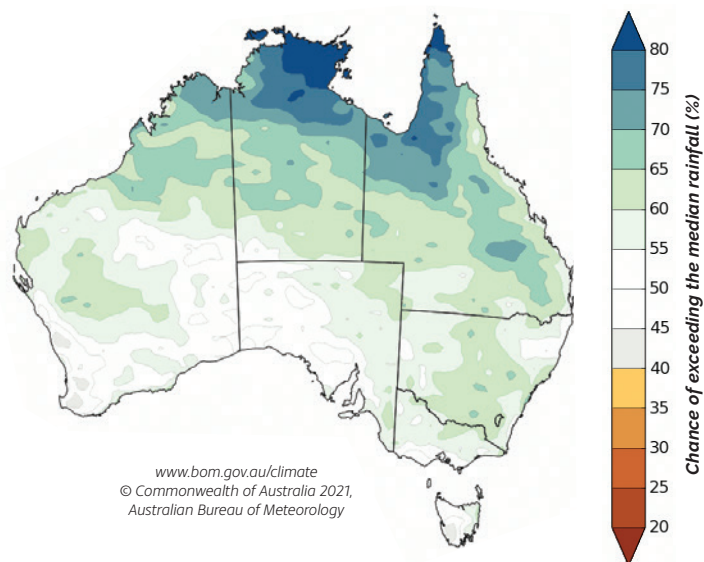
- Rainfall was below average for parts of Queensland's east coast between Fraser Island and Mackay
- TC Imogen formed in the south-east Gulf of Carpentaria on the 3rd, making it the first tropical cyclone of the 2020-21 season in the Australian Region
- Mean maximum temperatures were cooler than average in a band extending from Queensland's north tropical coast to inland of the ranges in south-east Queensland and into north-eastern New South Wales

FEBRUARY

- Mean maximum temperatures were cooler than average for large areas of mainland Australia, but warmer than average for much of the southern half of Queensland
- Rainfall was above average for Australia as a whole but and the driest February since 2017 in Queensland
- Moderate to heavy falls were reported in the northern tropics from the 16th and led to major flooding in the Murray River from the 18th to 19th, and the Herbert River from the 20th to the 23rd

RAINFALL OUTLOOK APRIL – JUNE 2021

CHANCE OF EXCEEDING THE MEDIAN RAINFALL



CLIMATE OUTLOOK OVERVIEW

(Issued 11 March 2021)

- Very likely to be wetter than average (chance of exceeding median is more than 70%) across the Gulf Country and Cape York Peninsula, and parts of inland Queensland
- Wetter than average conditions are also likely (chance of exceeding median is more than 60%) for much of NSW
- The fortnight of 15 to 28 March is very likely to be wetter than average (chance of exceeding median is greater than 80%) over the northern two-thirds of Australia
- Mean maximum temperatures are likely to be higher than average (greater than 60% chance) for the northern tropics & the east coast of Qld

LONG TERM AVERAGE RAINFALL (mm)

WEATHER STATIONS	APR	MAY	JUN
Mareeba	153.5	128.6	106.6
Bundaberg	55.9	66.8	50.2
Sunshine Coast Airport	153.8	154.9	120.5
Murwillumbah	153.5	128.6	106.6

GROWER REPORTS

FAR NORTH QLD

It is a wonderful privilege to bring you the Far North QLD Grower Report while Brian & Irene Westwood take a break. 2020 brought us many challenges, with what seemed to be a never-ending cycle of unfortunate events, unfavourable weather, and ever-increasing pest and disease pressure. Thankfully after we re-evaluated our farming practices and made some significant changes to the way we farm; we had a better finish to 2020 and a fresh new start for 2021.

We have seen some huge rainfalls here in the Mareeba area over the past few months with almost 600mm recorded in the first few weeks of January alone. We have also had TC Kimi and TC Niran threaten the Cairns coast in the last two months. Thankfully, most of our coastal growers did not have significant damage from the destructive winds, although we have had one grower slightly further south with significant vine losses. The bees remained active and we achieved a wonderful fruit set, possibly one of our largest yet. We can only hope that "COVID" restrictions remain low and families are able to celebrate Easter with plenty of fresh passionfruit.

Regrettably, it seems many growers in FNQ are dealing with the effects of the soil borne pathogen *Fusarium solani*. The infected vines have poor uptake of moisture and nutrients and eventually stem canker and death. Affected growers are seeing greater numbers of vine deaths each year with some growers reporting up to half of their vines affected. While we have no current treatment plans, growers are trialling different preventative and curative methods on their farms. SEE PAGE 12. On a positive note, I am looking forward to the upcoming regional networking dinner set for the 17th April in Mareeba. It will be wonderful to finally catch up with many of you over a drink in person. Good luck for the new season and Happy Easter.

Cynthia & Dale Barbagallo, Mareeba

BUNDABERG

Hello everyone. The anti-rain dome covering the Bundaberg region is still working well with my farm only receiving 120mm for the first two months of the year. Now in the second week of March favourable rain conditions are forecast, so fingers crossed. The dry conditions have been favourable for the insect population with a lot more attention and effort needed to keep them under control. The Pandora crop has been ticking along for about a month now with the purples just starting to colour up. Latest news on the Paradise Dam debacle after the Qld Government has released massive amounts of water and are hastily lowering the wall by 5m is that farmers reliant on the dam could be facing historically low water allocations with the possibility of the dam being empty by July 2021. After a meeting of 62 growers, \$400,000 was raised and a class action has been launched focusing on the alleged negligent management of Paradise Dam and misleading conduct by the Queensland Government. Hope it rains soon. Until next time. Thanks.

Peter & Sally Griffiths, Bundaberg

SUNSHINE COAST

The beginning of Autumn sees us busy picking on the Sunshine Coast. The Gympie area took off a little earlier and has been able to take advantage of the good prices, while the southern end has come on a little later. After the usual down period of February, it is a relief to have some income again. The weather has been reasonable for most of us. I haven't heard of any damaging storms of late and from what I have gathered, most of us have a good crop to come on over the next month or so. The rainfall has been very variable throughout the Sunshine Coast area. Some of us have had good regular showers while others have had very little in the past six weeks. We are fortunate that disease is not an issue at the moment, so we are expecting a good clean crop in the near future. "Touch wood." Hopefully, we can spend the next month or two concentrating on picking and packing now that the young vines are established. I am looking forward to a bit of cooler weather and cloudy days, avoiding the waste from sunburn. I hope everyone has a good Easter and the Autumn season goes well for you.

Jim & Jill Gordon, Yandina

TWEED AREA

It was a wet start and it's certainly been a wet end to Summer on the Northern Rivers. From 13th December Murwillumbah recorded 574mm in 5 days! We had very little fruit right throughout February and into March. Our 5-month-old vines are starting to produce some nice big fruit (Sweethearts) and our older vines have a good crop hanging which will see our first busy Easter in a couple of years. I'm due to start chopping out our third-year vines in the coming weeks which this year is around six months early. I plan to grow a brassica crop in the interim which should help with our fusarium issues. Our nursery cycle is about to start again which will see us potting out in a couple of weeks. Not much else to report from the Tweed so bye for now.

Nick & Nerida Hornery, Newrybar

THANK YOU ONCE AGAIN FOR YOUR REPORTS.

Figures in [] are long term historical averages. All weather data from www.bom.gov.au

FAR NORTH QLD

(Mareeba, Daintree, Cooktown)

Mareeba (station 031210)	DEC	JAN	FEB
 MEAN (mm)	87.0 [92.6]	393.2 [209.8]	143 [226.4]
 MEAN DAYS >1mm	9 [7.8]	16 [11.9]	9 [13.9]
 MEAN (MAX °C)	32.8 [32.2]	30.0 [31.2]	30.4 [30.8]
 MEAN (MIN °C)	21.7 [20.8]	21.8 [21.4]	21.6 [21.4]

WIDE BAY

(Bundaberg)

Bundaberg (station 039128)	DEC	JAN	FEB
 MEAN (mm)	131.4 [124.7]	41.8 [171]	39.2 [156.2]
 MEAN DAYS >1mm	8 [6.2]	10 [7.8]	5 [8]
 MEAN (MAX °C)	30.5 [29.7]	30.3 [30.4]	30.9 [30.1]
 MEAN (MIN °C)	22.0 [20.5]	20.8 [21.5]	21.0 [21.4]

SOUTH EAST QLD

(Gympie to Glass House Mtns)

Sunshine Coast Airport (station 040861)	DEC	JAN	FEB
 MEAN (mm)	341.4 [142.5]	144.0 [144.8]	161.8 [207.5]
 MEAN DAYS >1mm	9 [9.8]	13 [9.9]	9 [11.3]
 MEAN (MAX °C)	28.6 [28.4]	28.3 [29.1]	28.5 [28.9]
 MEAN (MIN °C)	21.4 [19.8]	20.9 [21.3]	20.9 [21.3]

NORTHERN NSW

(Tweed Valley)

Murwillumbah (station 058158)	DEC	JAN	FEB
 MEAN (mm)	638.7 [166.2]	173.7 [205.3]	299.4 [230.5]
 MEAN DAYS >1mm	11 [10.8]	17 [11.9]	13 [13]
 MEAN (MAX °C)	29.5 [29.2]	28.5 [29.7]	28.5 [29]
 MEAN (MIN °C)	21.1 [18.5]	19.5 [19.8]	20.1 [19.7]