

# Farmlands in crisis

Record-low rainfall in some regions and successive seasons of above-average temperatures have blighted vast tracts of Australia's grazing and crop land. While the weather has improved in parts of Western Australia, winter rain has gone missing across much of the country's east, leaving farmers praying for rain after planting seeds in dry soil or culling cattle and sheep they can no longer afford to feed.

## UNDER THE SURFACE

Plant seeds rely not only on rainfall but also on moisture already in the soil, which carries nutrients for plant growth and regulates soil temperature. The drought has devastated large swathes of eastern Australia's crop land, which supplies about a third of the nation's wheat.

JULY 2018

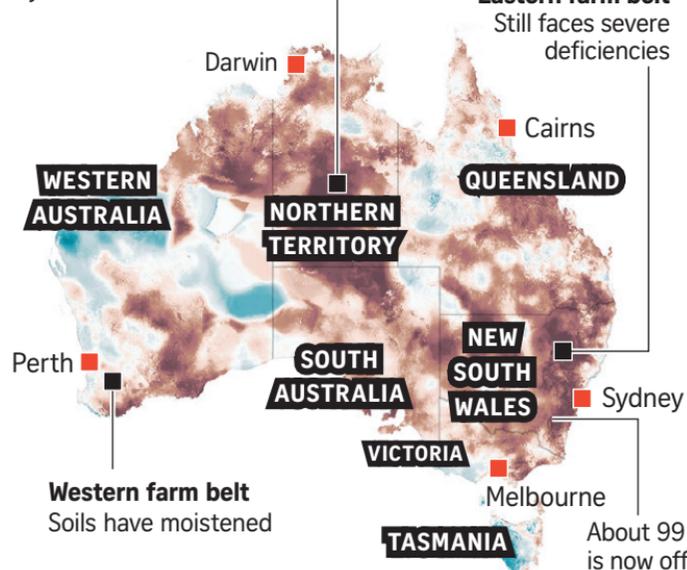
YEAR TO JULY 2018

Drier

Drier

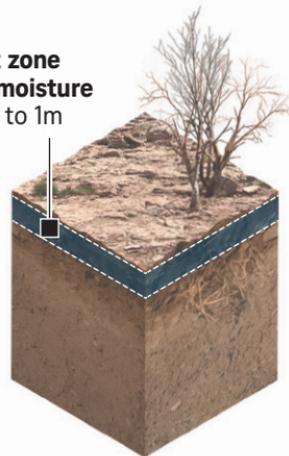


Way below average\* but mostly desert and shrubs



**Eastern farm belt**  
Still faces severe deficiencies

**Root zone soil moisture**  
0.1m to 1m



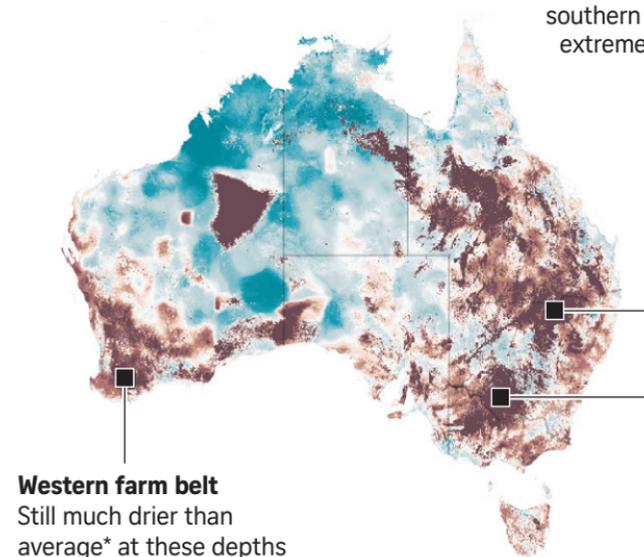
Shallow rooted vegetation such as crops draw on water available at soil levels close to the surface.



**Deep soil moisture**  
1m to 6m

NOTE: \* Long-term average for soil moisture data and rainfall maps covers 1911-2016.

**Eastern farm belt**  
Northern and southern areas extremely dry



**Western farm belt**  
Still much drier than average\* at these depths

Normal

Wetter