

Trends in dryland salinity across SA- Observations¹ Sept 2019

MDB

Mallee seeps continue to expand in sandy intensively cropped landscapes perched over Blanchetown clay, over 100 farms recording issues now, some trial of high water use options now implemented and being monitored with some success- eg lucerne, trees, soil modification, summer cropping of wet areas
Concern about spread of Magnesia patches in the mallee
Coomandook- considerable spread of traditional salinity in sandy landscapes perched over regional saline watertables, some areas cropped intensively others more mixed
Meningie- some spread of salt possible linked to loss of lucerne in the 2006-07 droughts, some good examples of messina being established

MLR

Reasonably stable, no new dryland issues raised, salinity issue in the western Northern Adelaide Plains has possibly become worse possibly due to more irrigation recharge and runoff in this region. Drainage schemes installed for part of the area affected.

NY

Bute- some expansions of seeps associated with sandy intensively cropped landscapes perched over Blanchetown clay, some higher water use options implemented, stable this year with drier conditions but still present

SE

USE- from Tinti to the west it is still an issue (linked to the MDB comments).
For the newer drained areas in the USE, the perception is that pasture growth has improved, and areas of dryland salinity and laying water have reduced. A series of wet years would test the drainage system and would flush more salt through the soil profiles. A few sections of the USE drainage system are prone to siltation potentially reducing their effectiveness.

Mid to lower SE – there are some areas of the landscape (plains) that are still poorly drained that are substantially affected by high EC. You don't get the characteristic scalds, but pasture productivity is reduced. There is also a general perception (confirmed in some cases) that the drainage network is not flowing at its optimum due to infilling – expect this to have a negative impact over time. Certainly, exploring the use of messina and trying to get more demo's in across the region. No currently funded program at this stage

EP

Verran- expansion of traditional salinity in sandy intensively cropped landscapes perched over saline watertables, some drainage attempted
'Mallee seeps' are showing up in many of the dune/swale landscapes of Eastern and Lower Eyre with particular reports around Darke Peake, Tuckey and Rudall on Eastern and Kapinnie and Karkoo in Lower Eyre Peninsula. Some growers are trialling summer forage crops to utilise some of the water prior to cropping in winter.
There have also been reports of expansion of traditional dryland salinity areas in the Cleve Hills and around Ungarra, Brooker and Butler. There was some interest in information regarding saltland pasture species at the Cleve Field Days.

KI

Reasonably stable. Some expansion following heavy rainfall events in 2013 and 2016 causing flooding in the Hds of Haines/MacGillivray. ie salt lagoons filled up and flooded out onto farm land where it remained until it evaporated some 12-18 mths later leaving salt behind

1. Collated by Brian Hughes PIRSA with input from Mel Fraser, Chris McDonough, Tony Randall, Tracey Strugnell, Brett Masters, Lyn Dohle and Sam Trengrove