

Agriculture in Australia

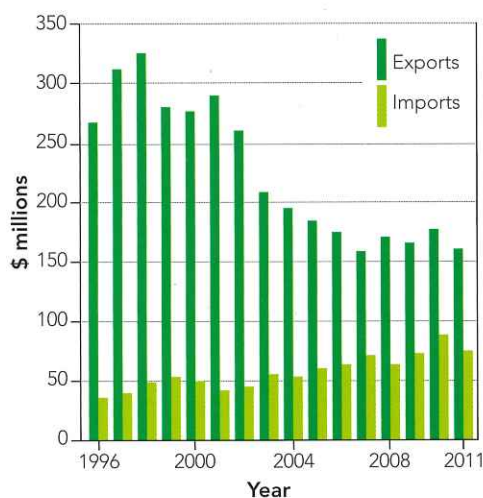
Much of Australia is used to grow crops and to raise animals for human consumption. The type of farming undertaken is mainly determined by climate and the availability of water. In arid areas where vegetation is sparse, extensive grazing takes place, with an average of one beast per 100 hectares. In high rainfall areas where pastures are good there is an average of one beast to every four hectares of land. This is known as intensive grazing.

How is food production in Australia changing?

Australia is largely a food secure nation – around 93 per cent of the food (by value) consumed in Australia is produced locally. However, food production faces great challenges due to population growth, climate change, reduced water supplies, soil degradation, and labour costs and shortages.

Our expanding cities are sprawling into productive farmland on the rural-urban fringe. Sydney's vegetable farms now occupy less than half the 5000 hectares they covered a decade ago. These challenges occur not only in Australia but also in many places around the world.

AUSTRALIA: VALUE OF FRESH VEGETABLE EXPORTS AND IMPORTS

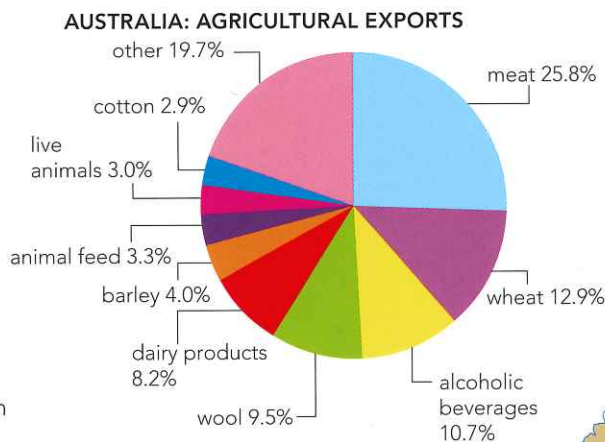


▲ A farmer near Melbourne tends to his broccoli crop. Vegetable farms on the rural-urban fringe are under pressure from expanding cities.

Rural industries and governments in Australia are working to raise farm productivity. Through the use of new technologies and better production and management methods, fertility of the land, water supplies and biodiversity can be improved.



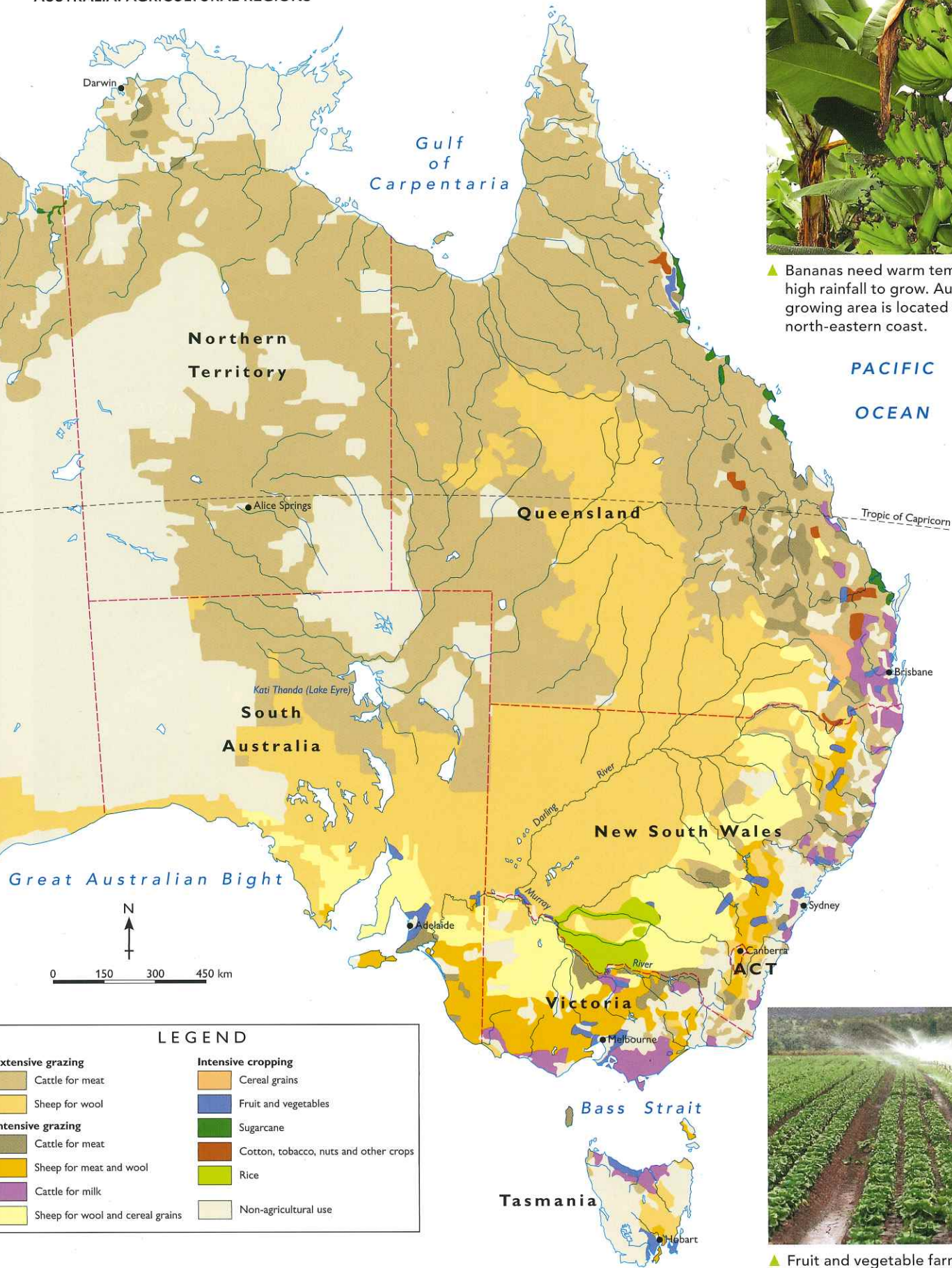
▲ Research has shown that wheat yields increase when rotation crops such as canola are planted. Canola gives the soil a nitrogen boost and provides an income for farmers.



▲ The area cropped in Australia has more than doubled over the last 40 years. Half of the cropland is sown with wheat.



AUSTRALIA: AGRICULTURAL REGIONS



▲ Bananas need warm temperatures and high rainfall to grow. Australia's banana-growing area is located along the country's north-eastern coast.

PACIFIC OCEAN



▲ Fruit and vegetable farms are often located near major cities to ensure a fresh supply.