

Mallee Horticulture Crop Report 2024



Photos: Dry Grape Harvest, SuniTAFE Farm, Irymple, Victoria.

Crop Report 2024

Mallee Catchment Management Authority produces the Crop Report every three years, with addendums produced periodically. The 2024 Crop Report tracks irrigation development from 1997 to 2024. The study area for this report is the Victorian Mallee irrigation region, for irrigated horticulture along the Murray River from Woorinen to the South Australian border, and irrigation in the Murrayville Groundwater Management Area (Murrayville GMA). The data is presented as five pumped irrigation districts, six river reaches of Private Diversions and the Murrayville GMA.

Overview: 1997 to 2024

The irrigable area across the Mallee catchment has increased significantly by 117% (47,965ha), from 40,940ha in 1997 to 88,905ha in 2024. Of the total irrigable area in 2024, 79% is currently irrigated and 21% is vacant.

Crop type changes: 1997 to 2024

In 1997, the dominant crop type across the Mallee catchment was wine grapes (comprising 24% of all crops), followed by field crops (16%) and dried grapes (15%). Since then, most districts have experienced a change in dominant crop type from 1997 to 2024. The dominant crop type in Red Cliffs, Mildura and Merbein changed from

wine grapes and dried grapes (respectively) to table grapes. In Nyah, Boundary Bend and Wemen there was a significant change from seasonal crops (field and vegetable) to almonds. Colignan to Yatpool saw a change from wine grapes to citrus. In the Mildura Private Diversion district, the dominant crop changed from wine grapes to table grapes. Currently, the dominant crop type across the Mallee catchment are almonds (comprising 30% of all crops), followed by table grapes (13%) and wine grapes (8%).

Planting trends: Permanent plantings, seasonal crops and vacant areas

Irrigated permanent plantings have increased by 32,010ha since 1997, through expansion and redevelopment of vacant/non-irrigated areas. Irrigated seasonal cropping decreased by 945ha, and vacant areas have increased by 16,900ha from 1997 to 2024. Currently, permanent irrigated crops comprise 67% of the total irrigable area, with seasonal irrigated crops comprising 12% and vacant areas comprising 21%.

Irrigation development: New and retired areas 1997 to 2024

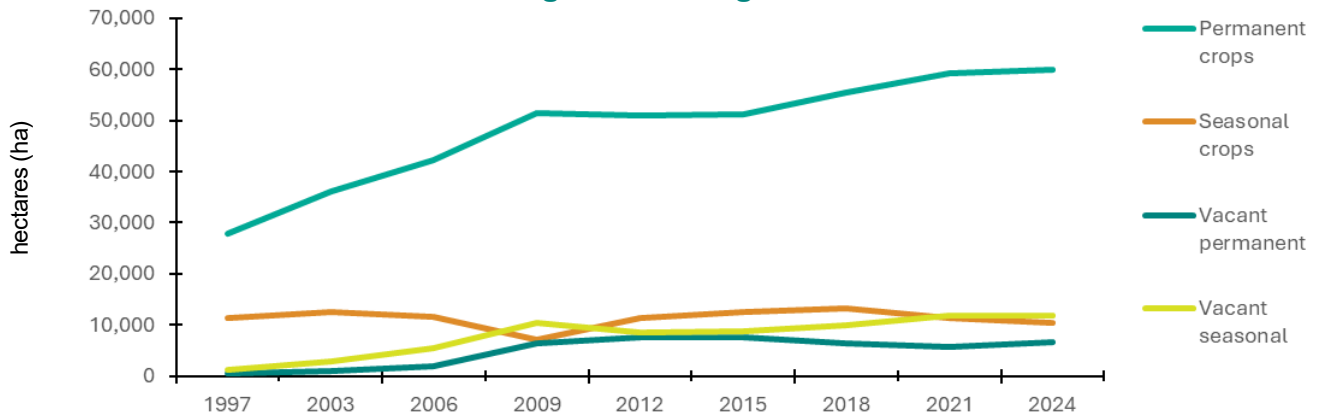
As mentioned previously, the irrigable area in the Mallee catchment has increased significantly from 1997 to 2024.

This expansion predominantly occurred in Private Diversion river reaches – specifically in Boundary Bend, Wemen, Nyah and Colignan. Currently, 73% of the total irrigable area in the Mallee catchment is made up of Private Diversion river reaches. The pumped irrigation districts have remained relatively stable since 1997.

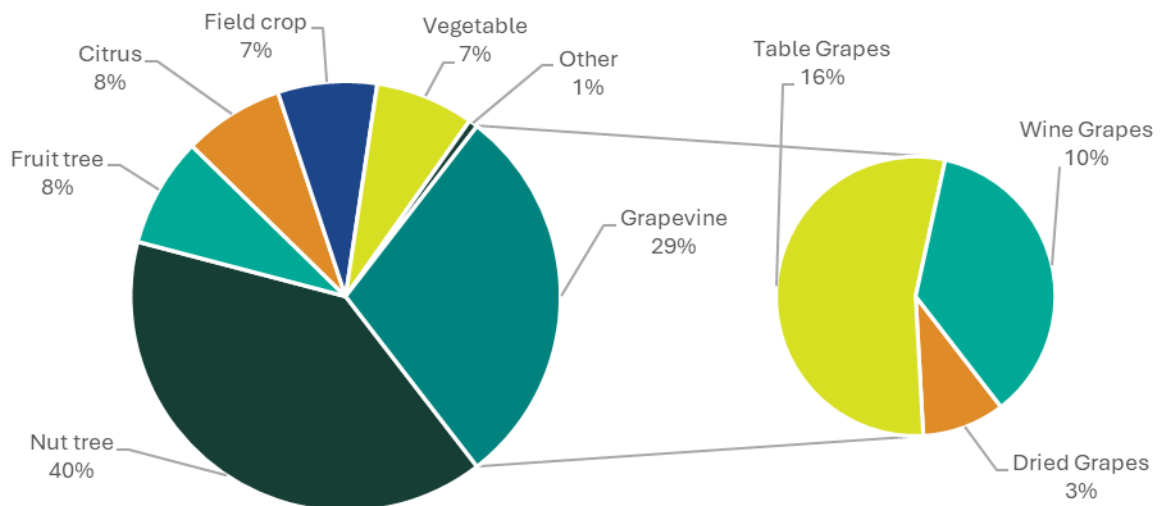
Key changes: 2021 to 2024

- Overall, minimal change has occurred from the last crop report in 2021
- Composition of crop types have remained stable
- Permanent plantings have increased by 795 ha, whereas seasonal crops have decreased by 980 ha
- This is the first of the triennial crop reports since 1997 that recorded a decrease in irrigated area from the previous report (185ha less than 2021)
- Despite this, expansion has still increased by 1,795 ha since 2021—this is because vacant areas have increased by 965 ha
- Permanent plantings less than 3 years old decreased by 1,700 ha and plantings over 3 years old have increased by 2,495 ha
- Drip irrigation increased by 1,950 ha whereas low level, overhead and furrow irrigation decreased by a total of 2,135 ha

Planting trends: Changes over time



Crop type: Composition of 2024



Note: Figure does not include vacant land, which comprises 21% of all irrigable land. This figure only includes the composition of irrigated crops.

Irrigation type: Changes over time

