

# Vegetable Industry Report for IREC Annual Report 2007

The current drought and low water allocations are having much less of an impact on vegetable production than all other annual crops in the Riverina. Vegetables in the Riverina are grown on a mix of general and high security river water as well as bore water. Some vegetable growers with little to no general security allocations are temporarily moving their operations to other properties in the Riverina with access to bore water.

Approximately 7,500 ha of vegetables were grown in the Riverina during 2006/07 with an estimated farm gate value of 93 million dollars. The area sown is slightly down from the previous year and a further reduction is expected for next year. With the small reduction in area sown to vegetables has come a general increase in commodity prices. An estimate of 6,900 ha of vegetables will be grown in the Riverina during 2007/08 season.

## **Main vegetables grown in the Riverina**

### ***Lettuce***

370ha of lettuce are normally grown at Hay each year from February to early November. Due to water restrictions the 2007 crop was down by 30% to 270ha. Even with the reduced area sown, it was a good year for lettuce growers with excellent prices for winter cut lettuce.

### ***Processing Tomato***

The area sown to processing tomatoes has declined over the last few years with processors dropping contracts with Griffith and Whitton growers after the 2005/06 season. Due to the severe water shortages in other valleys, the area sown in the MIA has increased again for the 2007/08 season. Up to 1000ha of processing tomatoes will be sown in the Riverina in the coming season.

### ***Processing Sweet Corn***

The area sown to processing sweet corn has also declined over the last few years with processors dropping contracts with Whitton growers after the 2005/06 season. One factory still contracts 250ha each year in the Hillston district which is grown on bore water.

### ***Potatoes***

About 2700ha of potatoes are grown in the Riverina each year for processing and the fresh market. Due to water shortages, the crop will be down by 30% to 1900ha this season. Most of the cutbacks will be in Southern Riverina (around Berrigan) and Central Riverina (around Narrandera) districts. There will be no change in potato production at Hillston as all the crop is grown on bore water.

### ***Onions***

Riverina normally grows about 95% of the NSW onion crop each year. The average annual Riverina crop is about 600ha with a 15% drop in production expected in 2007/08 (about 500ha). A large portion of the 2007/08 crop has temporarily moved to neighbouring land with bore water.

### ***Carrots***

Approximately 600ha of carrots were grown in 2006 with only 300ha grown in 2007 due to the drought. Carrots are mainly grown around Griffith and Hillston with 70% grown for the processing market and 30% grown for the fresh market. The reduction has mainly been with the processing carrots. Some carrot production this season is also moving to land with bore water.

### ***Cucurbits***

About 900ha of rockmelons and watermelons are grown annually each year in the Riverina with most coming from the Griffith, Hillston and Hay districts. Production is expected to be down only marginally as many growers have access to high security and bore water.

### ***Pumpkins***

About 1200ha of pumpkins were grown last year in the Riverina with just as many expected to be sown this season. Large areas of pumpkins are temporarily moving to new areas with bore water. The price for Jarrahdale's was very good last year which is encouraging new growers for this season.

### **Current vegetable research based at NSW DPI includes:**

IPM of lettuce – Dr Sandra McDougall

Review of IPM systems in Australian vegetable industry – Dr Sandra McDougall

Thrips management in Onions – Dr Jainhua Mo

Root diseases of green beans and snow peas – Andrew Watson

Vegetable and soil health project – Andrew Watson

Processing tomato evaluation – Tony Napier

IPM of sweet corn – Tony Napier

Pumpkin variety evaluation – Tony Napier

Cucurbit pest and disease identification guide – Tony Napier

Beetroot variety evaluation – Alan Boulton

Tools for irrigation profitability and longevity – Rob Hoogers

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