

Vegetable Industry Report for the Riverina

IREC Annual General Meeting - 2008

Growing conditions for vegetable cropping were very similar to the previous season with hot and very dry conditions. Irrigation allocations were again very low for general security licence holders for both the Murrumbidgee and Murray Valley. General security allocations for the Murrumbidgee Valley reached 3% by December while general security allocations for the Murray remained at zero for the entire season. The drought (and low water allocations) is continuing to have an impact on vegetable production in the Riverina with about a 15% reduction in area sown.

- Potato production is very difficult for growers in southern Riverina. Most growers are having to make severe cutbacks due to the lack of irrigation water.
- Processing tomato production in southern Riverina has also been hit hard with a few growers moving production to northern Riverina to get access to bore water.
- Vegetable production in northern Riverina has not been as difficult with many growers still being able to continue with high security allocations, temporary transfers and access to bore water.
- Onion growers reported the 2007/08 onion season as much better than the previous season. The area sown was similar to last year with good bulb size and yields in most paddocks and reasonable prices for much of the season.
- Pumpkin growers had a very disappointing season. The area sown was similar to last season, maybe slightly higher, but the price received was poor.
- Lettuce production also increased slightly from last year but the demand and price was down considerably from the excellent prices some growers received last year.

NSW DPI estimates show that about 240,000 tonnes of vegetables were grown in the Riverina during the last 12 months from about 6,500 ha. Approximately 60% of production (tonnes) was for the processing market while approximately 40% was grown for the fresh market.

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