

Vegetable Industry Report for the Riverina

IREC Annual General Meeting - 2009

It was a mixed year for vegetable growers in the Riverina. Some commodities did quite well while for others it was just an average year. Low irrigation allocations are still the biggest concern plus low commodity prices for some vegetables. Overall it was a good growing year with higher than average yields and relatively low pest and disease pressures. The very hot temperatures at the beginning of the year (late January and early February) did cause some problems with early harvested tomatoes plus problems with sunburnt onions and cucurbits.

Potato growers reported higher than average yields for their 2009 winter crop. Many potato growers recorded a 20 to 30 % yield increase with some paddocks yielding over 50 t/ha. Processing tomato growers also reported an excellent growing year. The entire Australian processing tomato industry of 270,000 t had an average yield of over 90 t/ha with total soluble solids averaging 5.32%. NSW produces about 30% of the crop with 80,000 t harvested in the Riverina. Riverina onion growers were happy for most of the season with a strong demand for local onions as harvesting commenced. The price for onions remained firm until the price dropped at the end of the season. It was a low pest and disease year for lettuce and cucurbit growers but poor prices and low water allocations resulted in less area being planted.

NSW DPI estimated that about 270,000 tonnes of vegetables were grown in the Riverina during the last 12 months from about 7,500 ha. Approximately 55% of production (tonnes) was for the processing market while approximately 45% was grown for the fresh market.

Current vegetable research based at NSW DPI includes:

IPM of lettuce – Dr Sandra McDougall
Thrips management in Onions – Dr Jainhua Mo
Powdery mildew of carrots – Andrew Watson
Root diseases of green beans and snow peas – Andrew Watson
Vegetable and soil health project – Andrew Watson
Processing tomato evaluation – Tony Napier
Cucurbit pest and disease identification guide – Tony Napier
Tools for irrigation profitability and longevity – Tony Napier
Beetroot variety evaluation – Dr Donald Irving

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6 November 2009