

# District reports

---

## St George

The St George region's growers continue to wait anxiously for some rainfall before plant, and in the meantime are working away steadily with the odd wheat crop, or on ground prep for the coming cotton season. In some cases growers are choosing to sidedress instead of fertilising, due to the dry and difficult ground conditions. After speaking with most growers about their coming 2002–03 crop, the current expected area for planting is 7000 hectares.

Queensland Cotton's Beardmore Gin finished their season on July 23. Approximately 110,000 bales was the final tally, a considerably higher figure than what was originally estimated (this being due to increased yields across the board last season).

And finally — obviously a major issue in the area right now is Cubbie Station's future. Locals from both St George and Dirranbandi are all anxiously awaiting a final decision.

Shanna Rowlands  
July 26, 2002

---

## Mungindi

Like most areas, there still hasn't been substantial rain for a very long time now. There have been very cold conditions with continual frosts for the past three weeks.

The cotton area to be planted for the coming season will be down by at least 50 per cent at this stage.

Most people have completed ground preparation and gasing. Growers are now making decisions on seed for the limited area for this season. A few more people are showing interest in Roundup Ready technology this season.

The Cotton Growers Association Dinner Dance which was held on June 22 2002 was a great success. The majority of growers within the area attended and a good time was had by all.

Ginning is still in progress though it should be completed within a

month or so.

Bernadette Kelly

July 19, 2002

---

## Darling Downs

Continuing dry weather is impacting on crop prospects across the Downs.

Growers have targeted long fallowed fields to sow chickpeas as their main winter crop option to make the most of reasonable price opportunities currently being offered. Areas of double cropped cotton country, still holding adequate levels of soil moisture reserves have also been planted. It is estimated that upwards of 15,000 hectares of chickpeas have been sown. District reports indicate that only limited areas of cereal crop have been planted. Unfortunately, the planting window for this year's Downs winter crop is rapidly drawing to a close.

Cotton ginners report that the local ginning season will be completed during the second week of July, indicating the substantial drop in the area's 2001–02 cotton production. This will impact on employment opportunities for local communities, with the flow-on economic effects yet to be felt. Production of approximately 250,000 bales is estimated this season, a drop of some 100,000 bales from the district average. Short staple has been highlighted as the main quality downgrade, an issue this season for dryland production areas.

With limited water reserves in storages, the outlook for the next cotton season on the Darling Downs is at this stage, bleak. What a time for the price to be forecasted at \$500 a bale!

Greg Salmond

July 5, 2002

---

## Lower Namoi

Field preparation has been progressing uninterrupted as a result of the very dry weather, and most growers are now getting ready to apply pre-emergent herbicides. Pupae busting and tillage operations are generally complete and cold weather, in combination with successive heavy frosts, should ensure low levels of aphid survival and cotton plant regrowth. There has been almost no rain in May, June and July and this has assisted growers to establish rotation crops where irrigation water was available. But crop progress has been slowed by the cold conditions.

For 2002–03, water supplies are generally down for most irrigators. Growers will adjust planted areas closer to October but the cotton area should be similar to last season in the Lower

Namoi. Cuts to ground water allocations will have a significant impact over the next few years.

Lint prices for the coming season are better than last season and a significant amount of cotton has been sold over \$500 per bale. Prices at this level will help growers decide on crop areas and plant with some confidence. Dryland areas are likely to increase on last year's planting as a result of the higher prices and lower area of winter crop planted. But most growers will make their mind up closer to planting time.

A drive around most farm workshops makes it clear that planting time is not far away as planters receive a once over. Planting seems to come around more quickly every year.

Overall, prospects for the 2002–03 crop are good except for water concerns. After last season's bumper yields, growers expectations are high. I hope they won't be disappointed.

Robert Eveleigh  
July 28, 2002

---

## Macquarie

The season finished well in the Macquarie. The dry, warm weather enabled later crops to reach their potential. The dry weather carried on throughout picking with little down time owing to weather. Unfortunately now, 'this dry' is still hanging around.

Insect pressure was less than previous years with conventional cotton receiving seven to 10 sprays. Ingard performed well again this season. It averaged one to two sprays for heliothis with an additional spray for secondary pests.

Ginning is nearly complete. Generally grades have been base or above, with the very occasional discount for high micronaire or short length. There have been some high yielding crops and the district average will be around the 3.5 bales per acre (8.6 bales per hectare) mark.

Due to the dry conditions there's not a great deal of winter cropping going on, although some carryover water from last season is being used to irrigate wheat, canola and chickpeas. Around Narromine there are a few dryland winter crops in the ground.

Decisions in regard to acres planted for the coming season are water dependent. Currently there is no allocation for the coming season, so everyone's banking on good spring rain. Indications at this stage point to over 50 per cent use of Roundup Ready Cotton.

Penny van Dongen

July 16, 2002

---

## Southern NSW

Harvest was completed with minimal delays as the dry conditions persisted through the picking period. The ginning of the valley's crop is progressing well and should be completed by September. Grades have generally been good (base grade or better) apart from some minor issues with short fibre. Pima crops have had some classing of bales with grades ranging from '2's to '4's.

The dry spell has allowed for ground prep operations to progress well with pupae busting completed in a timely manner. Cotton trash has been slow to break down under dry conditions and may cause some problems with incorporation of residual herbicides.

Insect strategy meetings have been held with good numbers present, looking forward to the final version. Both seed companies have held their winter meetings, presenting local trial results and Ian Taylor gave a presentation on weed management.

The season ahead is one of frustration as we see a return to favourable prices along with a restriction on water allocations. Current allocations for the Lachlan have an 80 per cent probability of zero to 10 per cent, which will have a significant affect on those growers who rely solely on river water. Bore allocations will play a major role in supplying this season's crop needs and overall expect a reduction in cotton plantings of around 30 per cent.

Matthew Mitchell  
July 21, 2002