



For growers in southern NSW, current conditions are in welcome contrast to recent seasons. After many had almost forgotten what rain was, 2010 has thankfully seen a return to a more traditional winter weather pattern. By the end of August most regions in southern NSW have already received their average annual rainfall, potentially setting crops up to achieve once in twenty year yields. There are even reports of water-logging in crops, a problem unheard of over the last decade. Most expect the benefits that the moisture brings will more than offset any impact, although some crops particularly sensitive to water-logging (such as chick peas) have been decimated in affected paddocks.

Of course the year is still a long way from being completed, with the obstacles that spring can bring still to be faced. If unseasonably hot and windy conditions eventuate it could prove stressful for the bulky crops we see building at the moment, but hopefully the current full moisture profile means they would withstand this situation better than in recent years. Another major concern at the moment is obviously the threat from grasshoppers, with the timing of their arrival set to have just as much effect as the total number that hatch. With both growers and government agencies poised ready to spray, along with plenty of non-crop green matter looking likely to be available for the grasshoppers to consume, expect every avenue to be covered to limit their impact. The arrival of warmer spring weather may also provide favourable conditions for the spread of rust, with early report indicating some wheat varieties that have shown good resistance in the past are now more susceptible to current rust strains. Again, many growers are well prepared with chemical on hand to combat the problem.

The concerns mentioned above appear to have limited forward selling, in spite of recent attractive prices. At the time of writing, contract bids for new crop canola averaged \$515/mt, with F1 barley \$250/mt, and APW1 multigrade wheat at \$290/mt (all bids based Pt Kembla, with freight costs to be deducted). Current prices combined with good available moisture have helped make a return on investment in sprays & top-dressings seem more likely. Growers are hopeful that these pricing levels remain available at harvest, with some commenting they believe production concerns in Western Australia and other parts of the world may lend some support.

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