



SUMMER CROPPING

Setting up for sorghum

A LACK of rainfall in the north in recent times appears to have not impacted on the prospects of planting sorghum for farmers too much.

Sorghum is generally found in the eastern slopes but according to McGregor Gourlay, Bellata agronomist Sam Gulliford, the plantations are slowly moving further and further west.

"In saying that, there's still a lot that's grown west of the Newell Highway too.

"Generally speaking it would be found in the Namoi Valley, the Gwydir Valley and the Macintyre Valley.

"It'll be chasing summer dominant rainfall as well."

Mr Gulliford said it was impossible to predict how the crops would compare to last year with the plantations proving to be volatile and variable from year to year.

"It's very difficult to judge how it's going to grow compared to last year, but the fallows do look pretty good to the east. "The fallows the sorghum will be planted into look very good.

"We just need a bit of planting rain to get them going before the soil temperatures start to warm up."

He was confident farmers would be able to start planting in the next few weeks, but said Heliosis was a pest which likes to feed on sorghum plantations.

"Heliosis do seem to like the sorghum, but it does vary from year to year.

"You'll always spray for Heliosis most years so that's always something to keep in mind."

In order to protect the crop from pest involvement, Mr

Gulliford said they normally sprayed the Heliosis with a biological insecticide called Nuclear Polyhedral Virus.

"It infects the Heliosis which is very good on the Integrated Pest Management strategy.

"We keep all our beneficials and get them to specifically target the Heliosis and helps to keep all your beneficials in the crop at the same time."

With most of western NSW in desperate need of quality rainfall, Mr Gulliford said he didn't think it hadn't impacted too much on the sorghum crops.

"Some of the fallows might start to dry out with this warmer weather but the fallows that are there are still pretty wet at the moment anyway.

"We're still sitting pretty well and we're still on track to start planting when those soil temps start to increase or when that soil temperature is right to plant.

"I still think some planting rain will get us going that's for sure."

Due to the unpredictable nature of the weather conditions on most crops, Mr Gulliford said it was difficult to place a value on the sorghum.

"The market has come up recently but it's difficult to get a price for how much it is.

"People will plant on seeing specific figures but the price at present isn't too bad.

"You just never know because it's so volatile and variable."



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