

# TOOWOOMBA REGION AGRICULTURE PROFILE

2022



## MAJOR DRIVER OF JOBS AND ECONOMY

The Toowoomba region has had a strong background in agriculture since the early days of settlement. Despite the economic growth and diversification into other industries over the years, the Agriculture industry today remains a major generator of economic value and jobs in the region. In 2020/21, the Agriculture industry supported 4,444 jobs or more than 1 in 20 jobs in the region, 50% higher than the state average. In the same year, the industry contributed \$504 million in Gross Regional Product and accounted for 5.9% of the total output in Toowoomba. The industry also has major flow-on impacts on the rest of the Toowoomba Region's economy, supporting furthermore jobs through supply-chain linkages.

## TOOWOOMBA'S AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY IN 2020/21



**VALUE  
ADDED  
\$504M**



**EMPLOYMENT  
4,444 JOBS**



**EXPORT  
\$489M**



Image courtesy of Boomaroo

## STRONG REBOUND FROM DROUGHT IMPACTS

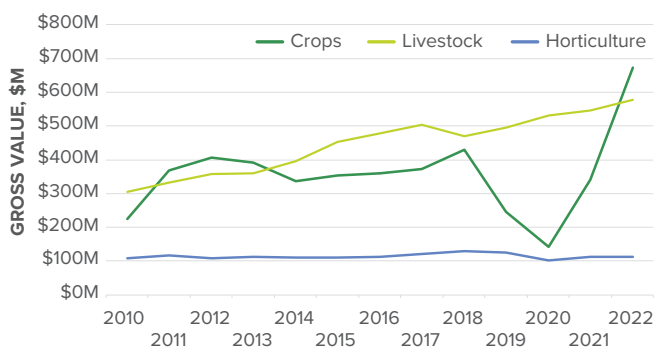
Over the period from 2018/19 and 2019/20, the Agriculture industry had a significant fall in output as a result of the prolonged drought. The gross value of the Toowoomba Region's summer crop production decreased by \$286 million, or -67%, in 2019/20 compared to 2017/18. Of the fall, 84% was from the decrease in Cotton and Grain sorghum production.

Agricultural production staged a strong recovery in 2021 driven by the favourable growing conditions and higher commodity prices. Particularly, the gross value of total crop production recorded \$340 million in 2021, an increase of around \$200 million compared to 2020.

The value of agricultural production in 2022 is forecast to be even stronger despite the flood damage. The total gross value of agricultural commodities is forecast to be \$1,362 million in 2022, about 33% higher than the previous peak of \$1,027 million in 2018.

### STRONG RECOVERY IN CROP PRODUCTION SINCE THE DROUGHT

GROSS VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES \$M, TOOWOOMBA, 2010/11 TO 2021/22\*



SOURCE: Queensland Government, Data farm and AgTrends forecast data 2008 - 2022, Australia, 2022. Compiled and presented by .id (informed decisions).

\*2021/22 values are forecast data.

## BOOST REGION'S RECOVERY FROM COVID-19

COVID-19 has had a minimal impact on Toowoomba's Agricultural Industry where the increase in domestic demand for agricultural products offset the decrease in international export demand. Rather, the agriculture industry provided a boost to the region's economic recovery from COVID-19 through the increase in agricultural production and flow-on supply-chain benefits to the wider economy.

### WIDE RANGE OF PRODUCTS

The Agriculture industry produces a wide range of agricultural commodities including eggs, beef, cotton, horticultural products, poultry, grain and dairy products. Its importance in the Queensland economy is highlighted by its large share of Queensland production across a number of commodities. In 2020/21, the industry accounted for 5.1% of the state's total value added. Some of the high value commodities in 2020/21 are:

- Eggs: \$232 million – 82% of Queensland production
- Cattle and calves: \$147 million – 2.5% of Queensland production
- Cotton: \$119 million – 22% of Queensland production
- Horticulture: \$111 million – 4.7% of Queensland production
  - Nurseries: \$64 million – 6.0% of Queensland production
  - Avocados: \$21 million – 7.9% of Queensland production
  - Lettuce: \$5.9 million – 23% of Queensland production
  - Cut flowers: \$2 million – 9.0% of Queensland production
  - Onions: \$0.8 million – 5.2% of Queensland production

- Poultry: \$101 million – 17% of Queensland production
- Grain sorghum: \$91 million  
– 31% of Queensland production
- Milk: \$45 million – 21% of Queensland production
- Wheat: \$27 million – 7.9% of Queensland production
- Maize: \$23 million – 40% of Queensland production
- Pigs: \$19 million – 5.3% of Queensland production

## SIGNIFICANT BEYOND THE REGION

The Agriculture industry has a strong connection to the markets outside the region. In 2020/21, the industry exported \$489 million, or 36% of the total industry output. The majority of the exports head to the domestic market, with over 86% of the total exports, or 31% of the total industry output exported domestically in 2020/21.

TSBE Food Leaders Australia is driving economic diversity in the region through the Southern Queensland Innovation in Export Hub (SQ Export Hub). The program is providing the local Food and Agribusiness sector with support to develop their capability and enter new global export markets.

## WEALTH OF TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURES

Toowoomba has a wealth of road, rail and air transport infrastructures. The infrastructures provide the Agriculture industry with access to domestic and international markets, supporting the long term growth of the industry beyond the boundaries of the region. A strong pipeline of future transport infrastructures will further strengthen the region's place as a major freight hub.

**Toowoomba Wellcamp Airport** – a jet-capable airport offering charter flights, fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) and regular passenger and air freight services, embedding the region's higher order economic status. The international freight service is opening up new export markets for the region's agricultural industry.

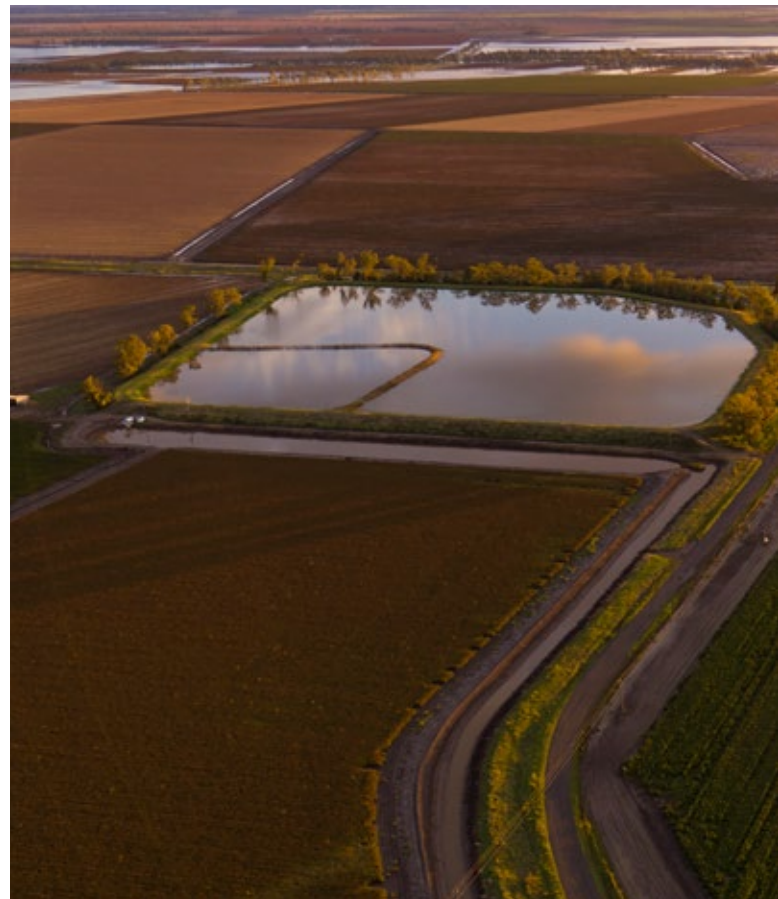
**The Toowoomba Wellcamp Trade Distribution Centre** – Officially opened in July 2021. The \$18 million Centre aims to boost rapid access to international markets for agricultural producers. The new facility will be used to consolidate and distribute premium export goods including beef, dairy products, fresh fruit and vegetables, pork and packaged nuts.

**Interlink SQ** – an intermodal terminal linking rail, road, air and sea in South East Queensland. The facility comprises a master planned premium transport, logistics, warehousing and industrial estate and will ultimately offer a daily freight shuttle service to the Port of Brisbane. In November 2021, the Queensland state government provided a \$12.6 million loan to help start the construction of the hub.

**AATLIS** – an industry-led solutions precinct incorporating four distinct sub-precincts: Agrifood, Advanced manufacturing and logistics, Energy and Innovation and Technology. Spanning 760ha, the precinct is currently occupied by various industries, such as Pulse Data Centre, manufacturing businesses (Boral, iPlex and Vinidex), logistics provider (Qube) and oil and gas company (Spiecapag).

**Toowoomba Bypass** – Opened in 2019, the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing is a stretch of 41.3 km dual carriageway bypassing the Toowoomba CBD. The new route has significant economic and social benefits, including: reduced travel time, safety and vehicle operation costs, decrease in emissions, and improve freight efficiency. The bypass will have a significant benefit to the Agriculture sector by enhancing the supply-chain linkages, improving the productivity and efficiency of the transport and logistics industry, and better linking Brisbane, the Darling Downs and the Surat Basin on the road freight network.

**Inland Rail project** – will enable freight to be delivered from Melbourne to Brisbane in less than 24 hours and save around \$80 per ton in freight costs between Toowoomba and Brisbane. This new/upgraded line will also provide improved access to Sydney and Melbourne. It will also increase the volume capacity of freight, with trains able to carry the equivalent of 108 B Doubles. In March 2022, the Australian Rail Track Corporation awarded a contract to Regionerate Rail to construct the section between Gowrie to Kagaru.





## PROVIDING SUPPLY CHAIN BENEFITS

The Agriculture industry has significant supply-chain implications for the rest of the Toowoomba Region's economy. The industry provides clean, green and safe agricultural raw materials as an input to the food processing industry, heavily influencing the growth in local agricultural machine manufacturing and driving demand for freight and logistics industries. The Agriculture industry has helped generate Toowoomba's unique local economy that is diverse and competitive.

The agriculture supply chain is being enhanced by major investment in research and innovation. This includes:

- **TSBE Food Leaders Australia** is helping food producers and food processors in the Toowoomba Region access international markets and grow their business capabilities. This hub brings together growers, manufacturers and researchers to create a more efficient industry and new, value-added products.
- The University of Southern Queensland's (USQ) **Agricultural Science and Engineering Precinct** was opened in 2019, co-funded by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC). The precinct will be utilised primarily for GRDC-supported, USQ-led research, conducted for the benefit of Australian grain growers.
- **The Rural Economies Centre of Excellence** is an applied research consortium that is strengthening the economic resilience of Queensland's rural communities. Led by USQ, founding partners include the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, the University of Queensland, Central Queensland University, and James Cook University.
- **The Rural Centre of Excellence**, is part of a multi-million-dollar campus redevelopment at TAFE Queensland's Toowoomba campus. The centre provides the region with future agricultural skills requirements, industry-led vocational, and non-accredited learning opportunities for all aspects of the region's agricultural industries.
- **The Centre for Engineering in Agriculture** at USQ was established in 1994 to specialise in developing solutions for a sustainable and efficient rural sector. The centre is focused on delivering applied, practical and profitable research solutions that strengthen agricultural productivity and address environmental management challenges in Australia and overseas.
- USQ's **Centre for Applied Climate Sciences** is a leader in the provision of climate science research and development from sub-seasonal to seasonal scales and in climate change research, relevant for industry and government, internationally and throughout Queensland and Australia.
- **The Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Systems** at USQ conducts research and engagement that enhances the management of agricultural enterprises, maximising production and conservation outcomes.
- USQ's **Centre for Crop Health** delivers research ensuring healthy crops for improved food security and on-farm profitability. The centre leads focused research into sustainable crop disease management in the summer cropping regions of northern Australia.
- **DIT Technologies** is one local driver of agtech solutions, including water supplementation and remote monitoring technologies, partnering with local innovators to focus on the future export of farming technology solutions globally.

### SOURCES:

Economic and employment data - National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) ©2022

Queensland Government, Queensland AgTrends Forecast 2020-2022, Australia, <https://www.data.qld.gov.au/dataset/agtrends-data>