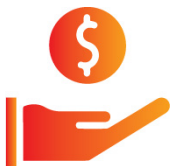


# Agriculture - Cropping -

## IN THE WESTERN DOWNS

Agriculture is the largest employer in the Western Downs Region comprising a total of 2,805 workers in 2021/2022

Image: Dan Proud



Broadacre cropping in the Western Downs contributes over \$600m Gross Value Product to the economy



Grain represents 25% of the region's total exports

Source: Department of Agriculture and Fisheries - Feb 2024

### Innovation in regional cropping

The cultivation of crops on the Western Downs embodies a holistic approach to sustainable innovation, integrating cutting-edge agricultural practices with respect for environmental stewardship and economic viability. Precision agriculture techniques, including remote sensing, GPS-guided machinery, and data analytics, optimise resource use by precisely matching inputs such as water, fertilizers, and pesticides to crop needs, thus minimising waste and environmental impacts. Genetic advancements in crop breeding, aim to develop cultivars with enhanced resilience to climate variability, pests,

and diseases. Embracing diversity in crop rotations fosters biodiversity, improves ecosystem services, and reduces reliance on external inputs. Overall, sustainable innovation in Western Downs agriculture reflects a commitment to responsible stewardship of natural resources, resilience to climate change, and the economic prosperity of farming communities.



Experience Western Downs

It's the people that make it.



Council is committed to diversifying and growing the regional economy, attracting new business and investment in emerging markets and maximising air, land and rail connectivity opportunities. To learn more, view the Economic Development Strategy 2023-2028 at [wdrc.gld.gov.au](http://wdrc.gld.gov.au).

Western Downs Regional Council Economic Development team supports new businesses looking to:

- Facilitate and promote business and industry events to enhance growth in key industries
- Support business development opportunities through collaboration with key strategic partners
- Refer businesses to government agencies and economic development organisations providing business support and funding opportunities
- Provide information on developments and investment within the Western Downs Region
- Provide economic impact modelling and statistics to support grant and funding applications



## Region's key cropping contributors

### Wheat

Wheat, a globally significant cereal crop, thrives in the Western Downs due to its adaptability to varied climates and soil types. Harnessing advancements in precision agriculture and genetic engineering holds promise for enhancing wheat's resilience and productivity in the face of climate change.

#### Key Facts and Figures

- Wheat is one of the most widely cultivated cereal crops worldwide and a staple food for billions of people.
- Varieties commonly grown include Prime Hard, Australian Hard, and Australian Premium White, each suited to different market requirements.
- Wheat is used for various purposes, including flour for baking, animal feed, and the production of breakfast cereals.

### Sorghum

Sorghum, renowned for its resilience to heat and drought stress flourishes in semi-arid regions like the Western Downs. Its genetic diversity offers a rich resource for breeding programs aimed at enhancing stress tolerance and yield potential. Production showcases the delicate balance between water availability and crop demand.

#### Key Facts and Figures

- The region contributes significantly to Australia's sorghum production, with yields varying depending on rainfall patterns and agronomic practices.

- Sorghum is used primarily as animal feed, but it also has human consumption applications, including in gluten-free flour and syrup production.

### Barley

Barley is a versatile cereal crop with applications ranging from malting to livestock feed. Embracing emerging technologies such as genomic-assisted breeding and digital agronomy offers avenues for enhancing barley's resilience and productivity while minimizing environmental impacts.

#### Key Facts and Figures

- The region produces both malting barley, used in the brewing industry, and feed barley, used primarily for livestock feed.
- Barley is often grown in rotation with other crops to improve soil health and break pest and disease cycles.

In 2021/2022 cereal crops such as barley, wheat and sorghum contributed to nearly

**30%**

of the regions agricultural production value

*(economy.id/westerndownsagriculture)*



## Cotton

Cotton, a cornerstone of the Western Downs' agricultural landscape, exemplifies the nexus between traditional farming practices and modern agronomic innovations. Collaborative research focusing on genomics and fibre quality look to further enhancing cotton's economic and environmental sustainability in the region.

### Key Facts and Figures

- The region produces both long-staple and medium-staple cotton varieties, with yields varying depending on factors such as water availability and pest pressure.
- Cotton farming in the Western Downs contributes to employment, export earnings, and the local economy.

## Corn

A versatile crop with diverse applications in food, feed, and industrial sectors. Cutting-edge genetic engineering techniques facilitate the development of traits such as drought tolerance and pest resistance, enhancing productivity and resilience.

### Key Facts and Figures

- The region produces both yellow and white corn varieties, with yields varying depending on agronomic practices and market demand
- Corn is used in various products, including breakfast cereals, cornflour, cornmeal, and as a feed ingredient for livestock and poultry.

## Pulse Crops

Pulse crops are vital components of sustainable cropping systems and showcase regional innovation in enhancing soil health and agricultural resilience.

### Key Facts and Figures

- Pulse crops are nitrogen-fixing legumes that play a crucial role in sustainable agriculture by improving soil fertility and reducing the need for synthetic fertilizers.
- Pulse crops like chickpeas, lentils, and field peas are grown in the Western Downs as part of crop rotation systems to break disease cycles and improve soil health.
- Pulse crops are not only valuable for their nutritional content but also for their ability to contribute to the sustainability of cropping systems.

## Oilseeds

Oilseeds, pivotal for food, fuel, and industrial applications, underscore innovation in crop diversification and value addition.

### Key Facts and Figures

- Oilseeds are crops grown primarily for their oil content, extracted for use in cooking, food processing, and biodiesel production.
- Canola and sunflower are the primary oilseed crops grown in the Region, with production influenced by factors such as soil type, climate, and market demand.
- Canola is particularly popular due to its versatility and high oil content, yields vary depending on rainfall and temperature.

## Lucerne

Lucerne, a perennial legume prized for its high protein content and nitrogen-fixing abilities, proves fruitful in the region and aids in soil health management.

### Key Facts and Figures

- Lucerne production in the Darling Downs is important for supporting the region's livestock industry, providing a nutritious feed source for cattle, sheep, and horses.
- Lucerne is often grown in rotation with other crops to improve soil health and break pest and disease cycles, contributing to the sustainability of farming systems in the region.



## REGIONAL PROFILE

Rich in natural resources, natural beauty and natural history, the Western Downs is the place to be. These natural strengths are supported by strong industry foundations across the agriculture, energy, manufacturing, and construction sectors. Together with significant and continuing investment in infrastructure and tourism, these have positioned the Western Downs as one of the highest performing local government areas in Queensland, and Australia.

Known as the Energy Capital of Queensland, the Western Downs is experiencing high economic growth, investment, consistently high employment and includes some 38,000km<sup>2</sup> of land. The region boasts an impressive \$4 billion worth of approved renewables, including \$2.4 billion under construction.

One of the greatest benefits of the location of the Western Downs is the connectivity and proximity to the supply chain and relevant markets.

Another is a connected labour pool resulting in good workforce relations and retention rates and a diversity of industries with high workforce attraction.

Western Downs Regional Council's Gross Regional Product was \$3.68 billion in the year ending June 2022, growing 12.4% since the previous year (economy.id)

Home to a growing population of more than 34,500 residents, the Western Downs offers contemporary technology and opportunities in a friendly regional location.

Modern facilities such as aquatic and fitness centres, art galleries, museums, cinemas and civic centres bring a metropolitan feeling to regional communities.

The region also offers residents accessibility to public and privately run medical and health care services including access to hospitals, medical centres, dental and other health care professionals.

The roll-out of the National Broadband Network (NBN) and increasing mobile and internet coverage has positively impacted the global connectivity of businesses, lifting productivity and profitability. Dalby is classified as 'Business Fibre Zone' providing business grade fibre at reduced wholesale prices.

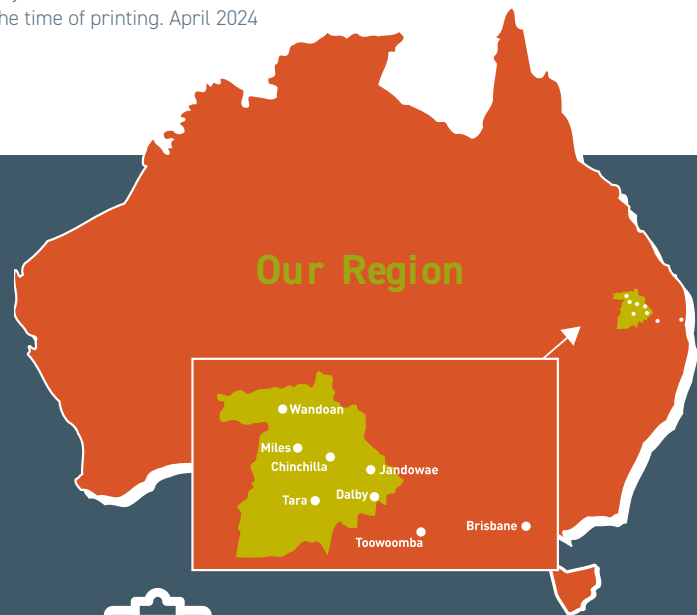
Residents enjoy a lower cost of living due to affordable housing (less than half of QLD average), ease of access to schools, work and retail outlets, with the NBN providing the network connectivity required for families and businesses to flourish.

It also offers a growing, diverse regional economy across agriculture, intensive agriculture, manufacturing, resources and renewable energy.

## INNOVATION

Digital technologies create opportunity for growth and transformation. Technology is a continually evolving field and the Western Downs offers local businesses contemporary communication solutions via NBN access to stay connected and current.

The information and statistics included in this document are reliant on the accuracy of sources as listed and were accurate as at the time of printing. April 2024



## A SNAPSHOT



UNEMPLOYMENT  
RATE TRENDING  
LOWER THAN QLD  
AVERAGE



A SKILLED AND  
EXPERIENCED  
WORKFORCE



GRP: DOUBLED OVER  
15 YEARS

Energy Capital of Queensland:  
Resources & Renewables



DEVELOPMENT & DEVELOPERS  
SUPPORTED AND WELCOMED  
WITH WDRC PLANNING SCHEME



COMPARATIVELY STRONG  
INDUSTRY SUPPLY CHAINS PER  
CAPITA OF POPULATION

# NBN

INNOVATION: NBN ROLLOUT =  
DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY &  
SPEED FOR YOUR BUSINESS

# \$\$\$

AVERAGE DISPOSABLE  
INCOME \$3K HIGHER  
THAN QLD AVERAGE

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