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Wool production forecast revised up for 2004/05

Forecast Australian shorn wool production for the 2004/05 season has been revised up to 500 million kilograms (mkg) greasy from the 470mkg predicted in March 2004.

Similarly current season 2003/04 estimates have been increased from 450mkg (March estimate) to 480mkg in forecasts released by the Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) Production Forecasting Committee which met yesterday.

Committee Chairman Dr David James said the break in drought conditions in many regions and data to May from the Australian Wool Testing Authority (AWTA) showing increased wool received for testing were the main reasons behind the upward revision of the 2003/04 production forecasts.

The 2003/04 revised forecast of 480mkg is now just 3.8 per cent below the 2002/03 season production of 499mkg.

Dr James said the increase in the 2004/05 wool production estimates was also due to the better growing conditions, as well as grower optimism about the better seasonal conditions.

"While some areas of NSW - particularly the Monaro and south-west - and pockets of Victoria are still in drought, we expect production to recover as a result of the general improvement in the season," he said.

Production in the three largest wool production states - NSW, Western Australian and Victoria - is expected to recover strongly from next season. "The increase in wool production for 2004/05 will be influenced by growers' decisions to restock after the drought, higher lambing percentages and heavier fleeceweights as a result of the better season, and more sheep shorn than the previous season," Dr James said.

Destocking during the drought meant there was now a higher proportion of ewes in the flock and this would mean an increase in lamb numbers and an increase in the ratio of sheep in the national flock to be shorn, he said.

There is also expected to be a shift in the average micron of the clip in 2004/05, from fine and superfine microns to broader and mid-micron wool as the improved seasonal conditions lower the proportion of 'hunger fine' wool.

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