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Drought-affected areas shrink in NSW

21 April 2010 | 04:27:20 PM | Source: AAP

Drought conditions in NSW are at a nine-year low but farmers warn that without adequate follow-up rain, the big dry will return to marginal areas.

Almost one-third of NSW moved out of drought in March, down to 7.3 per cent, compared to 39.8 per cent in February and 81 per cent in January, the state government says.

The situation has been helped by torrential rain that deluged southern parts of Queensland in late February and early March, entering northern NSW.

There has also been significant rainfall in the state's central west.

Wagga Wagga in southern NSW, Lake Cargelligo in the central west and Menindee in the far west are among the areas that have recovered from drought conditions.

Dry conditions also subsided in Bathurst, Broken Hill and Wilcannia, bringing those areas down from marginal to satisfactory.

However, the New England region remains drought declared.

The NSW Farmers Association is pleased with the latest figures but is cautious.

"We are a long way off having a successful wheat crop," association president Charles Armstrong told AAP.

"That won't happen until November.

"Fifty per cent of the state is marginal, so we are very cautious as to whether we will make it through until then."

Mr Armstrong said the long-term rain forecast was looking promising but wasn't generally reliable.

"We need about 100ml in three months time and another 100ml in early spring for the crops," Mr Armstrong said.

NSW Primary Industries Minister Steve Whan also said the news was good for farmers but won't immediately translate to cheaper grocery prices.

"There won't be a sudden drop in food prices because the change in the drought situation in NSW," he said.

"We'll see better supply of crops in NSW over the next 12 months and that will certainly help prices.

"In the beef industry and meat industry overall we'll probably see some short term increases in prices while (farmers) actually restock."

Mr Whan says some former drought areas will no longer have access to fodder transport subsidies.

"We wait for a couple of months after rain has fallen to make sure there is fodder on the farm ... they don't need to truck it in any more," Mr Whan said.

But opposition agriculture spokesman Duncan Gay says the state government shouldn't jump the gun withdrawing assistance to struggling farmers.

"There's no use pulling vital assistance the minute drought figures drop," he said.

"Nine years is a long time to be in drought and it will take a long time for farmers to get back on their feet financially."

"I am sure there are some farmers out there worried today that these figures will spark a more relaxed approach from state Labor."

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