



*If you are participating in the presentations this year, please provide a written report and a copy of your final report presentation by 31 October.
If not, please provide a written report by 30 September.*

Part 1 - Summary Details

Please use your TAB key to complete Parts 1 & 2.

CRDC Project Number: CGA1204

Project Title: Encouraging Cotton by Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association

Project Commencement Date: July 2011 **Project Completion Date:** June 2012

CRDC Program: Human Capacity

Part 2 – Contact Details

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Organisation:

Postal Address:

Ph: **Fax:** **E-mail:**

Signature of Research Provider Representative:



Part 2 – Final Report Executive Summary

The Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association (CGA) committee identified the need and the opportunities to extend our information and industry advocacy services to a broader audience of growers and the community. This included the need to educate new growers and re-educate growers returning to the industry following a hiatus. There was also the opportunity to enhance our industry awareness programme within the broader community.

The project enabled the Gwydir Valley CGA to formalise a partnership with the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association staff and committee, which became the foundation and driver for the project's implementation, allowing for broader collaboration between industry groups, growers, agribusiness and advisors and ensuring the project remain relevant due to the grower-led focus.

The project aimed to:

1. Engage with new growers and returning growers;
2. Establish conduits for extension material and information on the industry, focussing on improvements;
3. Improve collaboration with other industry projects in the region and form partnerships; and
4. Host industry awareness events.

Resulting in the:

- Establishment and facilitation of five grower networks for information sharing and communication with growers, agronomists and researchers;
- Coordination of a 'Considering Cotton' workshop with NSW DPI for growers wanting to know the basic principles of growing cotton with more than 40 in attendance;
- Organisation of the 'Innovation in Irrigation' field day, promoting innovative irrigation technologies in the Gwydir with a predominately grower audience of 90;
- Planning and implementation of two 'Evening with Cotton' events that tour cotton farms and a working cotton gin with 100 non-cotton industry people attending;
- Development of information packs for all events, including each grower group meeting (containing, myBMP information, cotton production guides, beneficial insects, local trial results, flood recovery ideas, how to grow a pair of jeans booklets etc.); and
- Maintenance of the Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association website for media and promotional material for activities.

The project was highly successful with growers receiving relevant and up-to-date information on issues they considered important and the broader community having a greater understanding and appreciation of the cotton industry's advancements and achievements.



The legacy of the project will be the establishment the grower groups in the region and the formation of the partnership with the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association, which will continue to facilitate these groups into the future.

Part 3 – Final Report Guide (due 31 October)

Background

Following the breaking of the drought and above average cotton prices there was a subsequent revival in the cotton industry. The Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association (CGA) committee identified the need and the opportunities to extend our services to a broader audience of growers and the community. This included the need to educate new growers and re-educate growers returning to the industry following a hiatus. There was also the opportunity to enhance our industry awareness programme within the broader community.

Objectives

The objectives were broadly to:

1. Engage with new growers and returning growers;
2. Establish conduits for extension material and information on the industry, focussing on improvements;
3. Improve collaboration with other industry projects in the region and form partnerships; and
4. Host industry awareness events.

The objectives were achieved through the partnership developed with the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association and the Regional Landcare Facilitator hosted with that organisation.

This partnership helped to meet the objectives by:

- Establishing and facilitating five grower networks for information sharing and communication with growers, agronomists and researchers;
- Organising grower field days including, ‘Considering Cotton’ with NSW DPI and the ‘Irrigation in Innovation’ with a predominately grower audience of nearly 130;
- Organising two ‘Evening with Cotton’ events with 100 non-cotton industry people in attendance in total;
- Developing and providing of information packs for all events, including each grower group meeting (containing, myBMP information, cotton production guides, beneficial insects, local trial results, flood recovery ideas, how to grow a pair of jeans booklets etc.); and
- Maintaining the Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association website, developing media and promotional material for the CGA’s activities.

Methods

The project encouraged the development of a partnership between the staff and committee of the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association. This resulted in broad collaboration on cotton



industry issues and greater local collaboration with growers, agribusiness and agronomists. This partnership was the foundation for many of the activities to occur throughout the project term by providing committed personnel to the project.

Feedback and direction for the project was provided from both the Gwydir Valley CGA and the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association committees. These committees of volunteers identified the industry needs and supported events. Staff from the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association with the support of committee members implemented the ideas.

Results

The project can be viewed as a success, with the objectives clearly met and the outputs in many instances exceeded.

The Gwydir Valley CGA committee were grateful for the assistance provided which allowed them to continue to service existing and engage with new growers in the region. The activities were widely supported by growers and the community as evidenced by the attendance at field days and membership (grower and associated member) return rate, which increased during the project term.

The formation of a partnership with the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association will be continued following the success of implementation of this project.

However, the legacy of the project will be the establishment of five grower groups in the region, with additional groups being established throughout the growing region. These groups meet infrequently and will continue to be facilitated by the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association and are a fantastic opportunity to industry to extend research, seek grower feedback and support grower needs.

While the project didn't produce new extension material, the development of multiple information packs for field days and grower group meetings meant that information on the issues at-hand were collated as required. This ensured the information was relevant to the needs of the audience at the time.

Outcomes

The Outcomes of the project were:

- The Economic Benefits will be:
 - Improved agronomic practices will result in increased profits and production.

- The Environmental Benefits will be:
 - Increased sustainability of growers within the region, adoption of best management principles.
 - Improved understanding of new industry initiatives to promote improved production and best management principles.



- The Social Benefits will be:
 - Greater understanding within the community of the cotton industry.
 - Improved networking and information sharing between growers.

Industry awareness events were broad-ranging, including the ‘Considering Cotton’ workshop aimed to engage new growers with the basic principles of cotton growing, the ‘Evening with Cotton’ tours and the Medical Scholarship program and placement. Each event aimed to improve community perceptions and the understanding of the industry by engaging with community members and promoting industry advancements.

The ‘Evening with Cotton’ tours were highly successful events that involved nearly 100 non-cotton industry who enjoyed a fun, hands-on experience of visiting a cotton farm and working cotton gin and received a booklet on how to grow a pair of jeans. All attendees indicated that they had a greater understanding of the industry and a positive response to the industry following the event, with many having either negative or neutral industry perceptions prior. The success of the event was a surprise to the organising team, which decided to run the event over two nights with the buses each night booked to capacity.

As outlined earlier in results, the legacy of the project will be the establishment of five grower groups in the region, with additional groups being established as required. These infrequent group meetings are a fantastic opportunity for the extension of current research, seeking grower feedback and supporting grower needs. The information and discussion at these meetings contributes to each of the project outcomes. The significance of these networks are highlighted by the fact the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association will continue facilitation of these as supported by the Gwydir Valley CGA.

Throughout the project term, growers were provided relevant information (as guided by each of the committees) in informal and formal formats; either grower group meetings or field days. This ensured that the information was presented in a manner that would be received by the audience. Information supplied included myBMP information, cotton production guides, beneficial insect guides, local trial results, flood recovery ideas, how to grow a pair of jeans booklets etc. All of which contributed to each of the outcomes.

Conclusion

This project allowed for the Gwydir Valley CGA to engage and service the needs of growers within the region, while promoting the industry more broadly within the community. The formation of a partnership with the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association and the grower-led focus of both Associations ensured that the project remained relevant to growers and their needs.

Extension Opportunities

The Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association with the support of the Gwydir Valley CGA will continue to facilitate the grower groups established as part of this project.



A. List the publications arising from the research project and/or a publication plan.

- Evening with Cotton Flier
- Media Release: Local Cotton industry opens the gate to all
- Media Release: Tour enjoys the wonders of cotton
- Considering Cotton flier
- Media Release: To grow or not to grow?
- Media Release: Cotton morning uncovered key messages for new growers
- Spotlight article: Worthwhile tour opens eyes – Winter 2012

B. Have you developed any online resources and what is the website?

All fliers and media are available online.

www.gwydircotton.com.au



Gwydir Valley
Cotton Grower's Association Inc.

An Evening with Cotton

**Thursday, 12 April 2012
3pm—8pm**

and/or

**Thursday, 19 April 2012
3pm—8pm**

For more information, or to book a seat, please contact Tourism Moree on 02 6757 3350

or

Zara Lowien from the Gwydir Valley Cotton Grower Association on 02 6752 1399

**To ensure your place on the bus
please RSVP no later than the
Wednesday before the tour.**

*Bring your partner, your
holiday guests or a friend*

An initiative of:
Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association

PO Box 824
MOREE, NSW, 2400

Phone: (02) 67521399
Fax: (02) 67521499

With thanks to the Small Capacity
Building grant supplied by:



Australian Government
Cotton Research and
Development Corporation

Whether you are new to Moree, or just curious to get a close up look at the Gwydir Valley Cotton Industry, please join us on an evening tour of the industry hosted by the Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association .

What is an 'Evening with Cotton'?

Travel by bus and take a look around a large working cotton farm, see picking and tour a gin.

At the end of the evening enjoy a barbeque, and then return to Moree by bus.

Two nights are proposed for each Thursday of the NSW school holidays, so choose which evening suits you, the family or your holiday guests the best. Availability of both nights are subject to RSVPs, so get in early.

Highlights

- Visit a working cotton farm
- See picking in action
- Tour a Gin
- Learn about the industry
- Meet new people
- Enjoy drinks and barbeque

**AND ITS
ALL FOR
FREE!**



GWYDIR VALLEY COTTON GROWERS ASSOCIATION

ABN 93 442 174 064

PO BOX 824, MOREE NSW 2400

Telephone 02 6752 1399 Facsimile 02 6752 1499

gwydircotton@gwydircotton.com.au

MEDIA RELEASE – MEDIA RELEASE – MEDIA RELEASE

Local Cotton industry opens the gate to all

Cotton growing is what our region is known for but have you ever been on a cotton farm or toured a cotton gin? Would you like to learn more about the Australian Cotton industry? Then you need to join the Gwydir Valley's Evening of Cotton Tour during these school holidays.

The Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association (CGA) hosts the annual Evening of Cotton which has become part of the local industry calendar. This year is its seventh event and on the back of last year's successful tour, it is proposed over two afternoons, for each Thursday of the school holidays, the 12th and 19th April.

Zara Lowien is the secretary/treasurer of Gwydir Valley CGA and one of the organisers of the tour said that "the evening of cotton is a must-do for anyone who lives or is visiting the area"

"You learn so much and get a real appreciation of the depth of the industry, and the lengths it has gone to ensure a sustainable future"

"The CGA sees this tour as a great way of showing off the industry and our region, to new people to town, long term residents and visitors; the feedback we have had from previous tours has been outstanding" she said.

The tour will leave the Moree Tourist Information Centre at around 3pm. Weather permitting, the tour will include an opportunity to view cotton picking in action and tour a working cotton gin. The evening concludes with a casual barbeque dinner out on farm and return back to Moree at 8pm.

Mrs Lowien said "we put on the bus, the tour guides and a great dinner, all a participant has to do is show up with a hat and covered footwear, and we will look after the rest"

"All too often the cotton industry has been portrayed in a negative light, we see this tour as a way of letting people see for themselves and make up their own minds." said Mrs Lowien.

Because of the need to arrange catering and bus transport it is essential that participants book either through the Moree Tourist Information Centre on 02) 6757 3350 before Wednesday prior to the tour. Both tours are subject to RSVPs so get in early.

For more information please contact Zara Lowien – 02) 6752 1399

GWYDIR VALLEY COTTON GROWERS ASSOCIATION

ABN 93 442 174 064

PO BOX 824, MOREE NSW 2400

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MEDIA RELEASE – MEDIA RELEASE – MEDIA RELEASE

Tour enjoys the wonders of Cotton

The Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association (CGA) has wrapped up their annual 'Evening with Cotton' nights, with the last held on Thursday, 19 April.

This year the tour was held over both Thursday's during the NSW school holidays, to maximise the opportunity for locals and visitors to attend.

The Gwydir Valley CGA secretary Zara Lowien was overwhelmed by the interest in the event with more than 100 in attendance over the two nights.

"We couldn't have had better weather, cotton or guests on the tour"

"Both evenings were just a great success" She said.

There was a good mix of locals and visitors, with everyone, regardless of their knowledge of the industry prior to event, taking home some new knowledge and an appreciation of the industry.

Many even received cotton as a souvenir and all received the information pack on 'How to Grow a Pair of Jeans' – a story about the cotton industry from paddock to product.

"The CGA hosts the event to allow people to better appreciate the depth of the industry, and the lengths it has gone to ensure a sustainable future"

"This year we focussed on the resilience and innovations within the industry, following the industry's bounce back after the drought and recent flooding" Mrs Lowien said.

The tours provide an overview of the industry, what's involved and how it has changed since cotton was first grown in Moree in the 1970s.

The tour also includes visits to working cotton farms where attendees can see cotton picking in action. Followed by the rare opportunity to visit a working cotton gin, which is a highlight for most.

Zara said she is "expecting there to be a few school projects next term on cotton, with this year highly attended by school-age children"

With a recent survey of year six students by the Primary Industries Education Foundation¹ revealing that more than 75 percent of students believed that cotton grows on an animal.

“We couldn’t have asked for a better outcome, for those children attending this local event, to go back to their school in Sydney, Tamworth or even Moree and inform another 30 or so of their classmates about cotton”

“It’s just another reason why the event is so important to the industry” she said.

The Gwydir Valley CGA believes that industry nights like the evening with cotton, are essential to informing our youth and the wider-community about where our food and fibre comes from and the great work of our farmers do to grow and deliver it.

The tours are hosted by the Gwydir Valley CGA with local growers volunteering their time to welcome guests on to their farms and into their businesses for the afternoon.

They have been in operation locally since 2006 and have become part of the local industry calendar.

With only positive feedback received again this year, about the tour and the cotton industry as a whole, there will be no doubt the ‘Evening with Cotton’ tour will remain a key event by the Gwydir Valley CGA.

Ends....

For more information please contact Zara Lowien – 0427 521 399

Three photos attached:

Evening of Cotton 2012_Norwood – Hearing about picking cotton and looking at a round bale cotton picker.

¹ <http://www.primaryindustrieseducation.com.au/resources/reports/foodfibrefuture.pdf>



Evening of Cotton 2012_Norwood2 – Getting into the paddock and looking at the cotton crop.



Evening of Cotton 2012_Leurella – Getting up and close to a round bale.





Primary Industries

Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association Inc.

458 Frome St, P.O. Box 1451, Moree NSW 2400



Gwydir Valley
Cotton Grower's Association Inc.



COTTON
AUSTRALIA



Cotton Catchment Communities CRC



Regional Landcare Facilitator

Hosted by New England North West Landcare Network Chairs Inc.
for the Border Rivers - Gwydir region

ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT GROWING COTTON?
ARE YOU NEW TO THE INDUSTRY OR RECENTLY RETURNED?
HAVE YOU BEEN GROWING COTTON FOR A WHILE AND LIKE TO KEEP UPDATED?

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND AN INFORMATION MORNING

SHARING COTTON KNOWLEDGE FROM THIS SEASON TO THE NEXT

THURSDAY 28 JULY 2011
8AM SHARP – 12PM
MAX FUNCTION CENTRE, MOREE

- BACKGROUND OF THE INDUSTRY – JAMES HOULAHAN, FIELD POLICY MANAGER COTTON AUSTRALIA
 - COTTON: A FIRST TIME GROWERS' PERSPECTIVE – HUGH BALL, 'OODNADATTA'
 - COTTON: A LONG TERM GROWERS' PERSPECTIVE – TONY BAILEY, 'MILO'
 - AGRONOMICS FROM AN ADVISOR – CHRIS MAUNDER, B&W RURAL, MOREE
 - GROSS MARGINS OF COTTON IN MOREE DISTRICT – JAMES QUINN, CSD
 - MARKETING COTTON – PETE JOHNSON, PRIVATE MARKETER

OTHER TOPICS INCLUDE: INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT, FURTHER TRAINING & EDUCATION OPTIONS

MORNING TEA AND LIGHT LUNCH PROVIDED

RSVP BEFORE MONDAY 25TH JULY

ZARA FARRELL – EXECUTIVE OFFICER GVIA
0427 521 399
gvia@gvia.org.au

SALLY DICKINSON – REGIONAL LANDCARE FACILITATOR
0427 521 498
sally.dickinson@gvia.org.au

REBECCA BYRNE – DISTRICT AGRONOMIST, NSW DPI
0428 692 984
rebecca.byrne@industry.nsw.gov.au

Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association Inc.

458 Frome St, PO Box 1451, Moree NSW 2400

MEDIA RELEASE

To grow or not to grow?

The organizers of an information morning in Moree on Thursday 28th July hope to give farmers in the region the opportunity to make an informed decision about the benefits and challenges of growing cotton this upcoming season.

The information session addresses key areas in the cotton supply chain, from seed purchase to picking and product marketing, and aims to provide an unbiased, current account of the core aspects that all growers should consider when growing cotton.

The morning also includes a grower forum, that allows attendees to hear a 'warts and all' account from new and long-term growers in the area. The forum will be chaired by Tony Bailey, from 'Milo' in Moree who said "the local cotton growers association wanted a frank and open discussion on the dos and don'ts of growing cotton but we wanted to use the wealth of knowledge and experience within our own region, to learn from each other"

The forum will allow for questions from the floor and should create some really interesting discussion to assist with decision making.

Speakers include Tony Bailey who will be a part of a forum offering a long term growers perspective, whereas Hugh Ball "Oonadatta" will share his recent experience as being new to the industry. James Quinn, CSD will present information on the gross margins of cotton in the Moree district and Pete Johnson from Left Field Solutions will provide an overview to marketing.

"It is important to note that the morning doesn't exclude those who have been growing cotton for some time, as it will be an opportunity for all to gain some up-to-date information" Tony said

The information morning will be held at the Max Function Centre, Moree. A full agenda is planned with proceedings starting at 8am sharp, morning tea is included and will finish at 12pm, where people can leave or stay around for a light lunch and chat.

The information session is hosted the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association Inc and Department of Primary Industries with the generous support of the Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association and Cotton Australia.

If anyone would like further information regarding the information morning or would like to RSVP, please contact Zara Farrell GVIA 0427 521 399, or Rebecca Byrne NSW DPI 0428 692 984 or Sally Dickinson, Regional Landcare Facilitator Moree on 0427 521 498.

Release Ends

Contact: Zara Farrell, Executive Officer GVIA, 0427 521 399

Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association Inc.

458 Frome St, PO Box 1451, Moree NSW 2400

MEDIA RELEASE

Cotton morning uncovered key messages for new growers

More than 40 growers, advisors and finance managers attended a cotton information morning on Thursday 28th July in Moree. The morning aimed to give farmers and their advisors the opportunity to make an informed decision about the benefits and challenges of growing cotton this upcoming season.

There were a number of key messages throughout the day in the warts and all approach to cotton growing. Hugh Ball from "Oonadata", Moree started the grower session with a presentation on the lessons learnt since his return to the industry following almost 5-years of not including cotton in his dry land cropping rotations. Hugh stressed the need for stubble cover and budgeting to do the job right in terms of crop nutrition, weed and pest management. But also raised a number of issues about the costs and effort post-picking saying "most costs occur at the tail-end of the season, with picking, transport, ginning and pupae control, these all add up, and represent a large proportion of your budget to grow the crop"

Hugh's concerns were reinforced throughout the day with a number of the speakers reminding attendees of the importance of managing the cotton plant post-picking and how essential this is to the future of the industry. Tony Bailey, "Milo" Moree and Chair of the Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association said that "there are real risks associated with not properly managing rogue cotton and ratoons, as disease and pests are harbored until future seasons, which could cripple the industry".

The workshop focused on the expansion of dry-land cotton being planted last season and the potential for a record planting this coming season, which is tipped to be greater than 4 million bales in total.

The information session also addressed key areas in the cotton supply chain, from seed purchase to picking and product marketing, and provided an unbiased, current account of the core aspects that all growers should consider when growing cotton.

The information session was hosted by the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association Inc and Department of Primary Industries with the generous support of the Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation and Cotton Australia.

Release Ends

Contact: Zara Farrell, Executive Officer GVIA, 0427 521 399

WORTHWHILE TOUR OPENS EYES

OVER TWO AFTERNOONS, 100 NON-COTTON INDUSTRY PEOPLE BOARDED BUSES FOR AN “EVENING WITH COTTON” FARM AND GIN TOUR THANKS TO GWYDIR VALLEY COTTON GROWERS ASSOCIATION

The groups were made up of locals and tourists, young and old, all with an interest in ‘having a look around’ and learning more about the cotton industry. Held during the recent school holidays, both tours were booked out in advance and many people were turned away.

Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association (GVCGA) Secretary Zara Lowien said most pleasing was every person said they learned something and most were amazed at what the industry had achieved and contributed economically to the region and the economy in general.

“This great feedback means we fulfilled the aim of the initiative, which was to broaden people’s views and educate,” Zara said.

The tour involves a farm visit to see cotton picking, with talks from the farm owner and picker driver.

Participants can walk through the fields and touch the cotton, something many people never have the opportunity to do. At the gin participants go inside the control room to see the workings.

The CGA’s tours started six years ago with one tour per year. This year, GVCGA capitalised on feedback from Tourism Moree, who had received many enquiries from travellers who were ‘looking for things to do and see locally. The Small Capacity Building Grants offered to CGAs by CRDC made the second bus tour a reality.

“The tours were initially started to give local people who were unfamiliar with the industry a first-hand look at what growing cotton does and does not involve,” Zara said.

“The CGA thought that by educating the local community as to the myths and truths about the industry and give them an appreciation of the work that goes into growing this crop.

“This has now grown to talking about the industry nationally and adding more topics to the tour. This year an environmental aspect was added, with linkages to a local business initiative that is recycling the plastic wrap on round bales (modules). Technological, research and development advancements over the last five to 10 years are also outlined.

Each participant was given the Cotton Australia “How to grow a pair of jeans” pack, which were very popular, showing the route cotton takes from paddock to a final product.

“We talked about cotton in the context of a pair of jeans throughout the whole tour, and people respond well to that, we hope they spread the message,” Zara said.

Zara said the groups were made of approximately 25-30 percent locals and the rest were visitors to the valley and the groups were 80/20 adults and children.

“We were surprised at the large number of tourists,” she said, “it was really encouraging though, because we know our positive messages will be taken and spread far and wide that way.

“Now this funding is available to CGAs, it would be really helpful to get together representatives from other CGAs who have also undertaken projects, to hear how they have used their grants, ideas and what has been working for them.

“For a long time GVCGA has been operating on our own, working ‘in isolation’ and I think the opportunity is now to work with other CGAs and industry bodies to utilise the resources already available to improve our initiatives.”

Zara Lowien 02 67521399/0427 521399
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Follow them on Twitter: @gwydirvalley

email t

Locals and tourists alike jumped at the chance to be part of an educational tour of a cotton farm and gin in the Gwydir Valley. The group is pictured at Peter Glennie’s “Norwood” learning about cotton picking and the new round bale picker from the driver.

