



CGA FINAL REPORT

Part 1 - Summary Details

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

CRDC Project Number: CGA 1907

CGA: Walgett Cotton Growers Association

Project Title: Improving Drought Resilience

Project Commencement Date: 15/01/19 **Project Completion Date:** 30/4/19

Part 2 – Contact Details

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Part 3 – Final Report

(The points below are to be used as a guideline when completing your final report.)

Background

1. Outline the background to the project.

Growers in the Walgett CGA have shown ongoing interest in ensuring that they are at the forefront of new technologies and ideas. They have become very good at managing their resources and utilising them to the fullest extent possible and are always challenging themselves to continue on this path. They wish to further investigate alternative irrigation layouts, infrastructure and other changes to their farm operations that will provide positive economic, social and environmental outcomes for their farms and the region

In addition, having suffered variable seasons in recent times they also need to be able to see and talk to other growers that may be able to assist them with coping better with these wild fluctuations.

Objectives

2. List the project objectives (from the application) and the extent to which these have been achieved.

Due to the current dry conditions and little or no cotton this summer in the Walgett CGA, the CGA has determined that to maintain interest by growers in the region that a trip to the Southern Valleys will provide them with new ideas/ technologies, increase the networking between growers and grow their skills and knowledge.

A field trip was organised to take growers south. Our first get together with the growers in the south was at a growers meeting at Southern Cotton and we were able to meet many growers and get an understanding of the issues that they face in particular in regard to water, soils and pest and disease issues. Of particular interest was how they had progressed from rice to cotton and how that now fitted into their rotations. They are very adaptive growers and are willing to look at many options. This provided us with insights into how we may have to look even further afield to help manage and make changes to our operations in the north.



At the Southern Cotton Growers Breakfast

We also toured the Commins farm looking at Bank less irrigation and terracing irrigation and how this may be more adaptable to the larger fields in the north. With longer runs the terracing irrigation may suit our machinery better. Another added advantage is the requirement for less labour through peak irrigation times.



Terracing Irrigation



Bankless Irrigation

Another important part of our tour of Commins farm was to look at other industries that may be applicable to us such as fish farming, forestry, biochar, malt making and in their case manufacturing of many different items used in their local area, such as wine vats and also the walkways and other requirements for fish farming. These other activities we saw on farm gave us great insight into the many other activities that can complement your existing farm. For example the nutrients from the fish ponds can be used on the farm to improve soil structure and productivity, Biochar can use cotton trash in its processing.

We also visited the Sunrice factory, and again found the way they operate and their innovation very interesting and motivating. Finding new ways to use rice in our diet and then to develop the technology and varieties to do so very successfully.

We also inspected Casella Wines and obtained an understanding that even from a regional area you can produce, package and export very large quantities of product to a world market. Their product Yellow tail wine is exported to many countries at the rate of over 30 Shipping Containers a day.





Inspecting Cotton Crop near Griffith

Outcomes

3. Describe how the project's outputs will contribute to the planned outcomes identified in the project application. Describe the planned outcomes achieved to date.

We identified that the outcomes we would like to see was new technologies and skills be acquired by the growers. The inspection of the Bank less irrigation and terracing irrigation was of great interest to the Growers. In particular the terracing irrigation which may be more applicable to the growers in the north with their longer runs.

Also, of importance was the diversity that was occurring on many of the farms, not just cotton in the summer and wheat in the winter but a variety of other activities, possibly opening opportunities not only on farm but also in the local community.



On Tour

4. Please report on any:-

- a) Feedback forms used and what the results were
- b) The highlights for participants or key learnings achieved
- c) The number of people participating and any comments on level of participation

The Walgett cotton growers who attended gained many valuable insights into the developing industry in the South, their new approaches to irrigation design being one.

Just as important was the stimulation they received and the broad range of industries that operate in the that region which are as a result of water. The growers in attendance really appreciated the opportunity to see the activity in the south as it provided them with the desire to continue to investigate new ideas and activities which may benefit their farms and community.

With half of the growers from the Walgett region in attendance it was a very worthwhile activity for them to undertake and they appreciated the trip very much.

Conclusion

5. Provide an assessment of the likely impact of the results and conclusions of the research project for the cotton industry. What are the take home messages?

The Walgett growers found the trip enlightening and very beneficial. They came away with a greater insight to the diversity and employment and business opportunities that can arise when water is more readily available.

The trip has and will keep the growers motivated to continue in the cotton industry as the long term economic, environmental and social benefits not only to their own farms but to strengthen their community they have been able to view first hand.

Extension Opportunities

6. Detail a plan for the activities or other steps that may be taken:

- (a) To tell other CGAs/growers/regions about your project.
- (b) To keep in touch with participants.
- (c) For future projects.

Valuable contacts were made between the Southern Growers and industry that the Walgett growers meet and discussed some of their issues with. The interaction will be ongoing as the development of cotton continues in the south, the experience of the Walgett growers with large areas has and will become more useful to the southern growers.

The growers on the visit are keen to hold a get together on one of their farms and ensure that all Walgett growers are in attendance and run through what they have learnt from this trip.

Please email your completed report to research@crdc.com.au