



Australian Government

Cotton Research and
Development Corporation

FINAL REPORT 2014/2015

Part 1 - Summary Details

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

CRDC Project Number: CRDC1511

Project Title: "Consultancy Agreement: CottonInfo monitoring and evaluation support system"

Project Commencement Date: 1/7/14 **Project Completion Date:** 30/6/15

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.

The Cotton Info team undertakes extension and communication for the cotton industry. Those in the team are from different organisations and are geographically spread. Information about activities was captured via phone meetings but was not being systematically captured or recorded. This limited the capacity to report, review and evaluate the full activities and impact of the group.

The YourDATA M&E platform is a web-based application that provides a central data collection point for projects. It allows team members to input raw data, view real-time graphical reports, and export collated data to spreadsheets, at any time and from anywhere (<http://dev.couttsjr.com.au/yourdata/>). It can be particularly tailored to collect and collate M&E data across regions, individuals and projects to allow reporting against milestones and strategic objectives.

The platform was seen as a way of better capturing the monitoring and evaluation of the cotton info team and this initial phase was to trial its value and effectiveness.

Objectives

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

The objectives of the project were to:

- Develop an understanding of the monitoring, evaluation and reporting needs of the Cotton Info Team;
- Establish a YourData internet based M&E platform for capturing and collating activity, output and impact data;
- Provide support to the team as they sought to use the platform and the information generated.

All objectives were achieved with a fully operating platform in use by the Cotton Info team providing the information required for reporting.

Methods

3. Detail the methodology and justify the methodology used. Include any discoveries in methods that may benefit other related projects.

Coutts J&R provides the technical and logistics support to this platform to ensure that data collection and analysis best meets project needs over the life of the project. Note this is a unique platform and support service.

Activity	Details	Timing
Establishing the platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing input into developing the MER plan• Establishing the platform with appropriate logos and explanation and help sections• Developing the categories and data collection input forms• Developing the output tables and reports• Testing and modifying• One day face to face MER training and training in use of the platform• Follow up support through email, phone and/or webinar in getting started/using the platform.	July-Dec 2014 Completed on time
Operating and supporting the platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full access to use of platform – including input forms, help information, updated reports and spreadsheets• Assistance with design and uploading of event feedback forms and other data inputs• Modifications to reports as needed• Technical issues support	July 2014 - June 2015 Completed on time

Outcomes

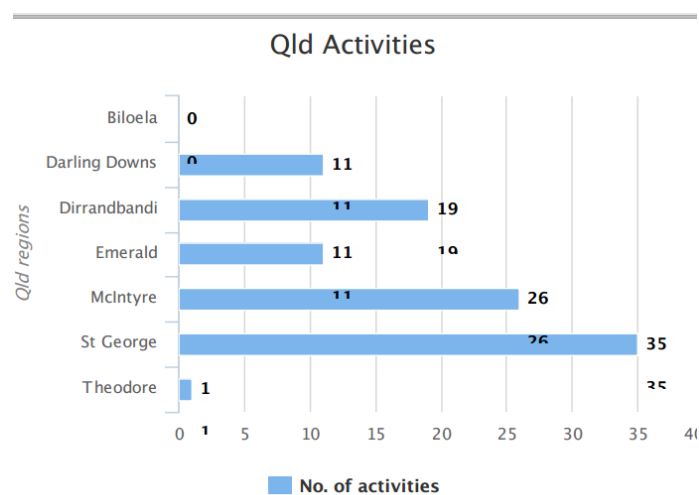
4. Describe how the project's outputs will contribute to the planned outcomes identified in the project application. Describe the planned outcomes achieved to date.

The outputs of the project are being used to capture and collate activity, output and outcome data from the Cotton Info Team. The platform itself is an output of the project. The following screen shots show something of the data being captured and collated by the platform.

Activity/Outputs report choices

The screenshot shows the 'YourDATA' web application interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: 'Welcome', 'Admin Dashboard', 'My Dashboard', 'Add Activity', 'Add Output', 'Add PD', and 'Add Impact/Narrative'. A user is logged in as 'Jeff Courts'. Below this is a 'Report & Export' section with a search bar for 'Activity/Outputs Reports'. There are several filter buttons: 'Total Activity/Output Numbers', 'Activities - By Type', 'Activities - By Region', 'Activities - By Stakeholders', 'Activities - By Participants', and 'Activities - By Practice Area'. A 'View All Records' link is also present. Below the filters, there is a note: 'To export all data for use in a spreadsheet, select the data area below you wish to export and then on the following page select 'export' and choose 'Commas (csv)'. There are buttons for 'Group Engagement Activities', 'Outputs', 'Professional Development Activities', and 'Impacts/Narratives'. At the bottom, there is a 'Recent Records' section.

Example of a Dashboard 'quick look' at statistics



Participants by activity type:

Activity Name	Date	Participants	Enterprises represented	ha - Irrigated	ha - Dryland
Crop walk					
Wallara District Field Day	15/12/2014	13	6		60ha
Bolton III Field Walk	18/02/2015	40	12		
Crop publication meeting	02/12/2014	57			
New irrigator group	29/01/2015	15			
Emerald Field walk	13/01/2015	22	8	4,000ha	
Crop Competition	09/03/2015	7	6	5,000ha	50,000ha
Emerald Crop Talk	12/11/2014	16	8	5,000ha	5,000ha
Emerald Grower Meeting	12/11/2014	10	5		
Pickering trial	09/04/2015	2			
Pickering trial	15/05/2015	4	2	400ha	2,500ha
Field Day	17/04/2015	10			
Strengthening the Central Highlands Production System field walk	19/01/2015	0			
		Total - Crop walk	45	14,400ha	57,500ha
Farmer discussion/small group					
Dirrlandbandi project	22/01/2015	10	5		
Dirrlandbandi project	01/12/2014	7	4		
St George Emerald Discussion group	21/05/2015	7	7	2,320ha	
GRDC ACILS IN AN IRRIGATED ENVIRONMENT	13/01/2015	18	14	7,000ha	0ha
CottonInfo survey results 2013/14	03/09/2014	65		20,000ha	0ha
Wabgon Weather Stations	02/12/2014	14	8	4,000ha	100,000ha
Dryland Meetings	29/01/2015	15	5	1,000ha	15,000ha

The outputs have already provided a significant increase in the quantity and quality of information being captured from the activities and outputs of the cotton extension team and so providing a solid basis for monitoring, reviewing and reporting on their role and contribution to the RD&E effort in the industry.

5. 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

This is a means by which the Cotton Info team can capture and report their extension and communication activities and their evaluation of these activities. The use of the platform by the team and the value of it for team management, reporting and evaluation of the Cotton Info Team is the key form of evaluation. Feedback from activities are uploaded onto the platform.

To date 11 of the Cotton Info team have entered data on the system: all 7 of the Regional Development Officers and 4 of the Technical Specialists – as well as the Cotton Info Team Program Manager.

Feedback from the Program Manager on the platform was as follows:

- The system has worked well for the cotton info team. It was seen as a fairly seamless process with an initial overview and training session helping the team understand the rationale and value to them;
- The data recording process was seen as simple to use and straight forward – it was intuitive and easy to follow through;
- The activity feedback templates provided during training were being used and were very helpful in planning what information to collect;
- Having data from the geographically diverse team and across different programs in the one place, allowed the program manager to scan and be aware of the range of activities – including those outside of the larger projects (opportunistic or requested) – and to read the reflections/ comments on the different activities (monitoring/improving);
- Reporting to the Management Committee was seen as having been improved with having a full data set on activities and engagement by the team.
- Team members managing specific large projects (e.g. Climate; Irrigation) have been using the relevant data from the platform for reporting on their projects.

Further improvements suggested included:

- Being able to nominate which group initiated specific activities
- Amalgamating some of the activity categories.
- Being able to pull together reflection information over time
- Having activity feedback sheets on-line for data to be entered and collated
- Gaining more impact data – narratives, case studies and follow-up surveys

Budget

6. Describe how the project's budget was spent in comparison with the application budget. Outline any changes and provide justification.

The budget was spent as planned. There were no changes needed.

Conclusion

7. 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?

For the first time, engagement, activity, output and impact data from the Cotton Info Team has been able to be captured in real time and collated for on-going improvement and reporting purposes. This is a significant jump in being able to demonstrate the role and value of the cotton team activities and

clearly demonstrate the extent to which they are supporting the RD&E process and assisting industry to maximise the take up of new research, improved management practices and obtain productivity, profitability, environmental and social benefits.

This should provide cotton growers and other stakeholders with the confidence they need that their levies and funding being used for this purpose is an effective investment.

The process and system is flexible, easy to use and delivers timely information needed for decision-making about this significant development and extension delivery program to the cotton industry.