



'Community Conversations'

Edition 3, November 2009

Produced by the Cotton Catchment Communities CRC

Keeping Young People in Agriculture

Introduction

National trends show the number of students studying science and agriculture at school and university is declining. To turn this trend around the Cotton CRC and CRDC have joined forces with the University of Tasmania which hosts the Primary Industry Centre for Science Education (PICSE). Together we will work to promote science, science careers and research to students and teachers in regions where cotton is grown.



Who is PICSE:

PICSE is a collaboration between universities, their regional communities and local primary industries. The aim of PICSE is to attract students into tertiary science and to increase the number of skilled professionals in agribusiness and research institutions.



Students choose their career pathways in their summer holidays

Twenty high school students from the New England and North West regions will be swapping their swimmers for microscopes and work boots during their summer holidays.



Each student will spend a week working in an industry that matches their interests and talents.

James Kirk from Moree will be one of the cotton industry's first students to work in the program. He will have his own research project and be monitored by researchers at the Australian Cotton Research Institute, Narrabri.

His project involves studying, sampling, analysing and recording information about the resistance to Bt Cotton between different refuge areas.

He hopes to get enough experience in the Science area and achieve a good understanding of what is involved to take it one step further to study Science at university when he finishes his HSC next year.



NSW UNE PICSE Science Investigation Awards' was held on Sept 14 2009



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Why the program is important for cotton

The Cotton CRC and CRDC have involved themselves in this program to see more students involved in agriculture and science. The cotton industry needs young enthusiastic scientists to be a viable and successful in the future. Rural communities also need successful agricultural industries and a skilled workforce.



A student testing the boundaries of Science and Agriculture.

A recent report by the Cotton CRC "The Socio-Economic Impact of the Australian Cotton Industry on Regional Communities in NSW and Queensland" highlighted the importance of agriculture.

For Example:

- In Narrabri alone agriculture accounts for 29% of the GRP and 70% of the exports from the region.
- In Dalby agriculture makes up 17.6% of GRP.
- In the Darling Downs agriculture contributes \$1.278m and employs 14,450.
- In Warren agriculture makes up 45% of the GRP

Clearly, to be sustainable and successful in the future both regional communities and agricultural industries need a skilled workforce.

The PICSE program and the cotton industry see young people as its future so a program such as this is vital for future success.

For Further Information
Contact Community Officer
Cotton Catchment Communities CRC.
Tel: 02 67992477
Email: kate.schwager@cottoncrc.org.au

New partnership, new opportunity

This new collaboration between the cotton industry and PICSE aims to address the current and predicted shortage of skilled agricultural science professionals in cotton regions by:

- Encouraging students to continue with school science and onto university science
- Informing students and teachers about the diversity of exciting and rewarding science careers that are available in primary industries
- Supporting science teachers with the relevant class activities, teaching resources and targeted professional learning.

The Cotton CRC's Education Officer, Trudy Staines, will contribute significantly to this project by acting in a part time role of Science Education Officer (SEO). This role involves conducting student placements within cotton industry organisations, producing cotton-specific teaching resources and resources targeted at professional learning. The SEO is responsible for developing lasting relationships with pre-tertiary students and teachers, during classroom and out-of-school activities.



Assoc Prof David Russell (National Director), Trudy Staines (CCRC EO, PICSE SEO), Lisa Reardon (USQ SEO)

If anyone would like more information about the PICSE Program please contact

Trudy Staines at the Cotton CRC
(02 6799 2478) or visit the web-site <http://www.picse.net>



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