

# The Cotton Wrap- The July Edition



Welcome to the 1st edition of the Cotton Wrap!! (I didn't like the last name)

I hope this is a good way for you all to keep up to date with what has been happening and what's coming up.

## Dryland Cotton

There has been some interest in the formation of a Dryland cotton grower group to look specifically at Dryland cotton issues. I can tell you that it is happening and any growers or consultants who have an interest in driving research or solving issues in this area need to get involved. Numbers and ideas will drive the priorities.

The group has met several times and at present has representation from Narrabri through to Croppa Creek with the aim of furthering the interests of Dryland growers in all areas.

The focus though initially is research and getting some projects started is the key priority so that the group is seen to be relevant and effective. To that end, through the Lower Namoi CGA the group have just been successful in receiving a Grassroots Grant from CRDC to investigate planting equipment. Growers with innovative adaptations or modifications will be contacted so we can start to paint a picture of what is out there being used and what restrictions or shortcomings in planting equipment we still have. At the same time they will be looking at what equipment is available off the shelf domestically or overseas which may be applicable to our planting conditions here in Australia.

The second project is now before CRDC and was developed through direct consultation between Mike Bange from CSIRO and the new Dryland group. It is a systems trial which will look in depth at a host of different Dryland systems on farm throughout the growing area and will run for 3 years. It also involves a detailed look at a number of different hormones

which can be sprayed on crops to control growth and fruit set. This will be done on a small scale at ACRI. You can support this project through lobbying your local Rep on the Cotton Australia Panels.

The group is looking at some cover cropping options also, around Edgeroi to look at ways to deal with compaction but also for better groundcover and water infiltration. These will be planted shortly.

I will start to provide regular updates on the progress of the Group through "The Cotton Wrap" so I encourage you all to get involved and provide some feedback; pass it on to any new entrants who may be interested.

I think Nick Champion from Croppa Creek sums it up when he says "Dryland Cotton is vital to my business and getting the plant out of the ground in a short window with hotter temperatures is much more challenging than establishing a winter crop and so the right planter is crucial". This is the first issue we will tackle but there are many others. Is there the possibility of Elite seed? What are the new Dryland varieties being developed? Can we develop better seed treatments? Pupae busting along the plant line? Is this possible? I don't know but we need to find out.

There is a whole section at the Cotton Conference dedicated to Dryland Cotton so if you are going it will be on **Wednesday from 2pm.**

## BG III and Verticillium

We had a good talk from Stephen Allen on Verticillium in July. A new strain has been discovered in the Upper Namoi Valley and it was quite devastating to the crop it affected. It is a different type to the one we already know about but it is still a non-defoliating strain, which is good as this family can be quite devastating. There were widespread issues with Vert this season and Stephen put a lot of that down to a cool November which builds up the spores in the plant so

CottonInfo is a joint-venture of CRDC, CSD and Cotton Australia



For further information contact  
Geoff Hunter on 0458 142 777



# The Cotton Wrap- The July Edition



when the heat hit in January the stress tipped the plant over, so to speak. Vert generally has been decreasing in incidence with new varieties with better resistance although for some reason this has not held true for the Namoi Valley. So be vigilant and if you suspect you may have a different strain, get it tested to make sure.

Greg Kauter, Kristen Knight and Sally Ceeney talked about BG III and what the new Resistance Management Plan (RMP) might look like. The new plan has a reduced Refuge and possibly an extended planting window to 8 weeks. This will all impact on the time resistance will take to occur so it is about a trade off between less cost or shorter length of the technology. I asked the question about the added cost of using BG III but was met with a very straight bat. I do not imagine it will come for free. It looks like some may be grown in small CSD trials this season with possibly some limited release for the 2015 season pending regular approvals.

## **Managing Carbon in a Cotton based Farming System**

A project recently released by Nilantha Hulugalle and funded by CRDC made for some interesting reading. The report has a lot of information over 10 years on a number of different rotations. It looked at financial analysis of different systems as well as Carbon implications. Interestingly, some very good results came from rotations with corn. It seems that corn roots are able to proliferate in wetter oxygen-poor subsoils because of a type of tissue in corn roots. The following cotton crop can follow these same paths and so these plants had much bigger root systems than the control. The project also found that although yields declined in back to back cotton systems it still came out on top in regards to financial returns.

## **GRDC Update**

There was a good update from GRDC yesterday at Burren Junction. One interesting point was that

Phosphorus, not being very mobile is getting stuck in the top 10cm of soil which is not great as roots spend very little time up there. It is even worse for Cotton where it needs to be below 30cm. Mike Bell suggested we take 2 samples in the topsoil, 0-15cm and 0- 30cm. At present we take just one usually at 0-30cm and although P levels may be good, the majority could be stored in the top 10cm which will often not be available to the plant roots.

## **Quick Tips**

If you suspect earwigs or wireworms; buy a bag of potatoes and put them in the field (mark where they are). If you do have these little critters they will feed on the potatoes and you will have an idea of numbers.

## **Reminders**

Don't forget the end of season reviews in the Namoi. Please fill out the survey and we will get together in August.

Siphon Burning session at Gary Easons in September to look at his bankless systems.

A few growers from Liverpool Plains are coming to have a look at Paul and Matt Swansbra's 30 inch rows and setup. Let me know if you want to come along.

Dryland trip to John Cameron's property at Bongeen, QLD in early September via Croppa Crk looking at planting machinery.

## **Welshy's Weather**

The month of August looks grim with high temperatures and below average rain predicted.

In the spring, it looks as though the El Niño will disappear and we will remain in a neutral phase. In these years it's difficult to plan for anything on lead times greater than 7-10 days.

CottonInfo is a joint-venture of CRDC, CSD and Cotton Australia



For further information contact  
Geoff Hunter on 0458 142 777



# The Cotton Wrap- The July Edition



When moisture levels in the Tropical Pacific Ocean are average, we need to watch the atmospheric conditions to see if it can activate and deliver the moisture available.

Monitoring the SOI and Southern Annular Mode is a good plan (both need to be positive), as computer guidance will likely be erratic again this spring, similar to 2013.

## Trivia

The common equation;

Income- Expenses = Profit

why not try.....

Income - Profit = Expense

*Cheers*

*Geoff*

*See you at the Cotton Conference*

CottonInfo is a joint-venture of CRDC, CSD and Cotton Australia



For further information contact  
Geoff Hunter on 0458 142 777

