



Wincott 2nd Natural Resource Management Survey 2012/13 Feedback Report

Compiled by
Helen Wheels Consultancy
October 2013



Table of Contents

Background	3
Overview	3
Comparisons to Previous survey:.....	4
Social Benefits	4
Principal findings	4
Suggestions from Focus Groups:.....	7
Recommendations:.....	9
Survey Results	10
Additional Comments from surveys:.....	18
Focus Group discussion: St George	20
Focus Group discussion: Upper Namoi.....	22
Focus Group discussion: Macquarie Valley	22
Focus Group discussion: Merah North.....	27
Acknowledgements:.....	29

Background

The Women's Industry Network, Cotton (Wincott) received a research grant from the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) in 2010 to develop a survey to canvass rural women's opinions on natural resource management (NRM) issues and, subsequently, their ideas on the cotton industry's new *myBMP* program. The first survey was initiated at the Wincott Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Australian Cotton Conference in August 2010.

The second survey, conducted in 2012, was initiated at the Wincott AGM at the 2012 Australian Cotton Conference, with 54 attendees completing the survey using 'Turning Point', (an instant PowerPoint survey). The survey was subsequently sent out to the women on the Wincott database, with 78 hard copy and 19 on-line survey responses received, making a total of 151 responses. The survey was followed up with four focus group meetings, with 54 attendees in total.

The drought had been over for two years at the time of the 2012 survey; however, quite a number of cotton-growing regions had significant flood events in that time. There have also been issues of labour availability since the drought broke and many farm staff have not been replaced. This has resulted in either more family members taking up more farm-work and/or inexperienced back-packers filling the gaps. It has also meant that initiatives on the farm considered to be 'extras', that is, not core production issues, have not been implemented. The net result is that labour-saving innovations have almost been forced upon some farms.

Overview

This report summarises the findings of the 2012 survey and associated focus groups. Its purpose is to determine which, if any, NRM measures were implemented in the two years following the first survey and whether NRM attitudes had changed. It is intended as a tool to help determine what women are doing or can do for the industry and what the industry can do for them.

Focus group discussions were held in four different cotton-growing regions in winter of 2013, to enrich the information obtained through the other survey methods. Many relevant NRM and related issues were raised and explored at these meetings. (Refer to pages 7& 20-28). Three of the four focus group meetings also had a Workplace Health and Safety speaker, courtesy of Cotton Australia. Combining the two issues, rather than holding two separate meetings, suited many of the women.

It is pleasing to note that as a result of the previous survey, and increasing awareness of the value of an organisation like Wincott, more industry organisations are interested in the opinions of women on farms and how they can benefit mutually. This is evidenced by more representatives from various organisations attending Wincott functions and seeking the results of these surveys.

It was notable that all respondents to the second survey chose their answers selectively where they believed they had something to say, which implies that a good deal of thought had been given to their responses. This appears to have clear implications for the reliability of the survey.

Comparisons to Previous survey:

The most notable change was a greater emphasis on energy costs. Other issues that featured more strongly were the labour issues mentioned above (both quality and shortage), mental health issues and water use (especially in the Macquarie valley). When asked about their awareness of 'BMP' in the first survey, a higher proportion had heard of it, however in this survey, they were asked about 'myBMP', which is the newer version, and a slightly lower proportion had heard of this.

Social Benefits

Although recognition of the role women play in the cotton industry has increased in recent years, the focus groups showed that women still find 'women-centred' workshops and meetings valuable: they are more comfortable asking questions and explaining what they do on their farms and in their businesses. The focus groups also provide an opportunity for them to network, learn about aspects of the industry new to them and air any concerns they may have.

'I wanted to thank you so much for organising "A Day in the Garden". I really enjoyed the day, and found it all very interesting and very informative. I felt we all benefited from sitting informally and sharing our thoughts together.'

'Thank you so much for the lunch and workshop last week. My friend and I not only had a good time but found it very informative. I'm so much more aware of things around the farm that I had previously taken for granted.'

'Thank you again for organising the lunch – sometimes it is good to stop and try to change things and not just adapt to those which are forced upon us.'

Principal findings:

The most pressing concerns of respondents were on-farm input costs, followed by markets and pricing of cotton.

NRM issues

It emerged that all participants considered the environmental issues as a normal part of daily farm work, with control of introduced pests and weeds, water use efficiency (WUE), minimum till soil management and tree planting as major activities. Reducing fertiliser use and fuel savings were other major environmentally sustainable practices that were considered part of everyday farm life. Energy savings were raised at most of the focus groups: not only the cost saving implications but also the reduction in carbon emissions.

Feral Animals

Control of feral animals, especially pigs, was signalled as a widespread problem.

Water Issues

Water supply stability and regulation, along with efficient use, were raised a number of times and were a major concern in the Macquarie Valley focus group.

Managing Resistance

The management of resistance to Bollgard technology was raised at two of the focus groups. Significant concerns were expressed about the protection of the GM technology crops, with the problem of neighbours not managing their refuges properly an aspect mentioned. The problems being experienced in Brazil were raised, and participants were concerned to know whether the industry could enforce Resistance Management Plans.

Best Management Practices (BMP)

The survey results indicated that 12 per cent of respondents, who indicated that they were engaged in the industry, were not aware of the new *myBMP* system; however, when this issue was raised in the focus groups, only 8 per cent were not aware of it. Reasons given for not undertaking BMP were mainly that it was seen as 'too time-consuming' and/or 'too hard'. Another major theme was the argument that there was 'no compelling reason' to undertake formal BMP accreditation. After discussion and explanation of the greater ease of *myBMP* compared to the old paper-based BMP system, all the focus group attendees expressed interest in having another workshop to be shown how easy the on-line version of BMP is to use. The benefits were discussed amongst the groups: how convenient it was to download templates, access research information, store information etc.

The main result/comment was that they thought that the main benefits of *myBMP* were to improve production efficiency and identify legal requirements of growing cotton, with many comments along the lines of: '[It is a] means for industry to demonstrate environmental responsibility.'

(Individual quotes reflecting majority opinions, backed up in the Focus groups, can be found on pages 17, 18 & 19)

Information Sources

Industry magazines (*The Australian Cottongrower* and CRDC's *Spotlight*) were listed as good sources of information, along with personal contact with consultants and neighbours. Workshops and conferences were highly regarded sources of information. The internet was also rated as most useful (with internet connectivity less of an issue than in the previous survey).

Carbon Emissions:

The 'carbon footprint' of agriculture is becoming increasingly significant with regard to the Kyoto Protocol and subsequent Carbon Farming Initiative. Respondents were asked: *"In your own words, how important is the management of carbon emissions, through energy use efficiency, organic carbon retention etc. to your enterprise or the enterprises you work with? Perhaps comment on measures taken or planned to abate carbon emissions, your level of understanding of 'carbon footprint' and the potential of better carbon management for the future of the industry".*

Table 1: Individual Responses regarding Carbon Emission

Fuel efficiency - irrigation motors and farming machinery
We do not ever burn wheat stubble.
We are involved in a CMA crop carbon project. This is a long term activity; more information and research needs to be done on what really works and the benefits to land owners.
I believe that organic carbon retention is very important and is under-recognised in its importance of cotton systems (with respect to water holding capacity of soils, soil quality etc). While growers are continuing to increase yields and stay profitable, I believe there are few reasons for them to lower their carbon footprint. Growers will always question - what is the financial gain/premium? - Organic carbon benefits are too indirect and long term to be properly considered. Again, energy use efficiency will be considered on a financial basis. If it looks like there will be financial costs involved with low energy use efficiency or carbon emissions - then change will occur.
Our carbon footprint, its impact on the environment and associated costs will be adapted to as a factor of farming just like the weather or other past policies. At this stage we have not taken any measures to abate emissions. We are aware of its peripheral presence and will act accordingly when required. The management of carbon emissions is as important as other inputs and costs associated with our enterprise.

We are always looking at reducing workings and running pumps as efficiently as possible, it saves dollars
High priority & we have done energy audits, change of ground operations to reduce the number of tractor passes etc
Understanding the carbon cycling on farm and through emissions is critical for the industry to be prepared for future imposts of carbon management on the agricultural sector
Agricultural industry need to have wide understanding of carbon footprint notwithstanding beliefs on climate change.
It is difficult to understand all the talk
"Carbon footprint" is very important but people seem to have a negative view and it is difficult to explain the positives from it but there are many ways to save money and the environment by becoming more efficient with management.
Carbon farming is a new buzz word and should be treated with caution. Farmers have always tried to maintain and improve soil carbon so the concept is not new, it just has a new name. Sequestering and keeping carbon in Australian soils is almost impossible due to the types of soils and the temperatures. It is important to manage carbon emissions through management practices and reduced inputs. However, the constantly increasing costs of inputs, low prices and increasing red tape is severely impacting on the viability of Australian farming. It won't be long before only large corporations will be able to own farms. Smaller family owned farms are fast becoming an endangered species.
Use less energy/fuel etc. Look after soil carbon. Use less fertiliser
The industry is managing its carbon footprint but this is not reflected in government policy. The lack of knowledge within policy making leads to inappropriate decisions by government and makes on farm implementation awkward.
I find the carbon debate complex. I think a simple first step for the cotton industry is to benchmark on-farm energy use and GHG emissions so growers know where they currently sit and it also enables comparisons with other farms to encourage more efficient energy use and reduction in emissions.
Use less carbon as carbon usage costs money
I am not sure that carbon management is on the top of farmers list of important things to think about at present. Perhaps if there was more availability of methodology determinations available to broadacre farming and in particular the specifics to the cotton industry & the guidelines under which we must grow certain crop technology then it may become more of an important aspect.
We are currently in the process of calculating our carbon footprint and working closely with Francois Visser

Suggestions from Focus Groups*:

** Please Note: The comments below are from participants, and are not the author's opinions, and no responsibility for accuracy of the statements is taken.*

Lower Namoi:

The first response, overwhelmingly was 'Keep Bob Kellow' for IR advice. Many attendees ring NSW Farmers Federation for information: 'is cotton industry keeping NSW FF up-to-date?'

Attendees appreciated the face-to-face meetings and lunch, and agreed that having more than one topic on the day is more likely to get people to come along. Mental health and *myBMP*, were suggested for the next face-to-face lunch day.

Other comments:

- Monsanto licence fee: can anything be done to lower it?
- Industry sponsorship to good causes, to increase goodwill in the community.
- More government support for farmers, to compete with overseas farmers who get subsidised.
- Value-adding to the industry's potential: ie, create other cotton opportunities.
- When cotton has a premium, then will engage in BMP.
- Rhiannon Smith's work on carbon, and trees. People would like to hear about her work, or see a report.

Macquarie Valley:

- Amalgamate all the services, and information sources, as there is too much to sift through and read.
- CMA requirements are too burdensome, so some farmers do not bother applying for CMA grants. Would be good if someone in the cotton industry could summarise all the grants that are available as farmers are not aware of all the possible grants.
- 'All tax-payers are owed an explanation on how environmental water is used.
- The facebook blog – 'Tales of a cotton wife' is very well-regarded. Can this be kept up?
- Water – knowledge of how environmental areas are given water, just more information – who and how decisions are made without doing a degree! Changes in flood plain harvesting only really affects a few, therefore don't feel anyone is providing enough information or management.
- The environmental flows down the river are our main concern – the lack of water availability for the growers on the Macquarie river.
- RMPs (resistance management plans) – need to be more stringent, worried about build-up of resistance to GM technology

Upper Namoi:

- Handy if other agricultural industries could use a similar version or parts of *myBMP*.
- Growers need to be on the front-foot of industry issues.
- Carbon trading information.

St George:

- 'Premium for cotton !!!'
- Have an industry calendar App.
- Carbon trading Information is needed
- Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) – provides a base level of Best Practices in the world for retailers to compare.

- Need to 'value-add' to a *myBMP* workshop: ie, hold another topic on the same day to encourage more people to attend (eg, staff management, social media, carbon trading).
- Reduce Monsanto's licence fee.
- Industry needs to be on the front foot of good news: eg, use social media. Workshop on social media and computers so that people in the industry can respond quickly to any negative news stories, or to inform people of the true situation.



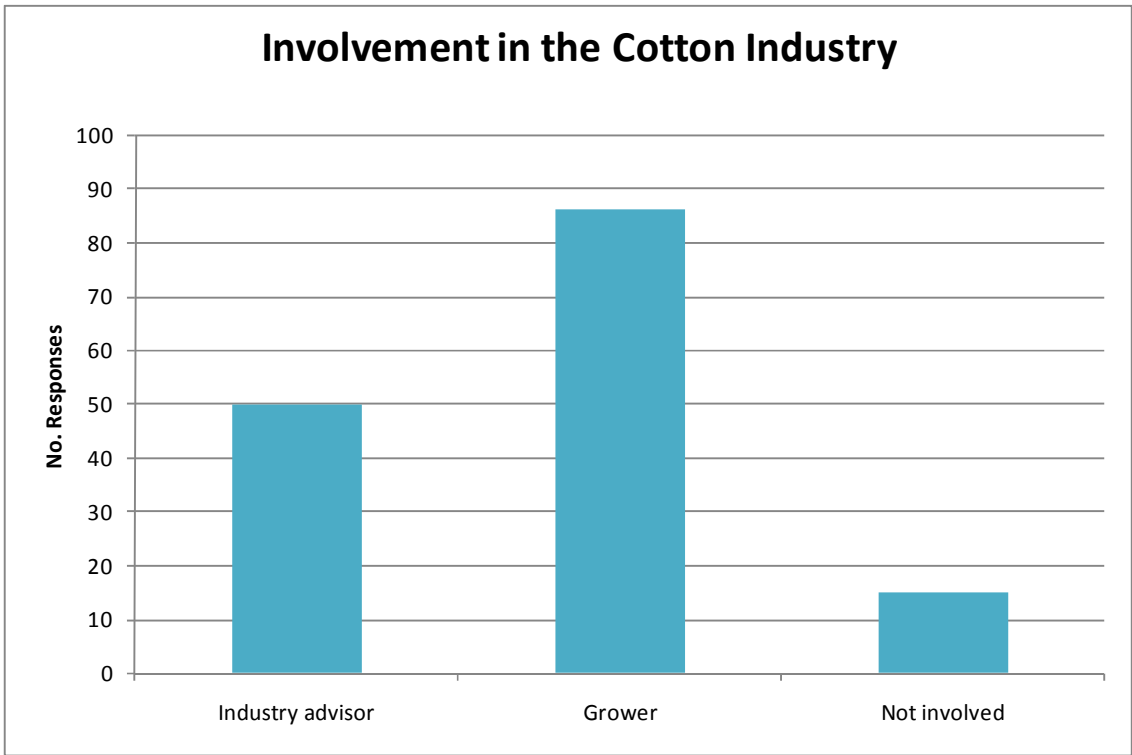
Recommendations:

1. Workshops that are women-focused and value-added: e.g. 'Getting started with a new season'. Have more than one topic, to encourage/give more reason to attend. Topics suggested were: *myBMP*; mental health; climate change; social media, water policy issues.
2. Positive publicity and Information disseminated about the industry and *myBMP*, in a coordinated approach.
3. Workplace Health and Safety and backpacker information and support. (although not exactly an environmental issue). Safe work practices can impact on farm activities, eg. chemical usage etc.
4. "Premium for cotton", will encourage more uptake of Best Practices on-farm.
5. Policy advocacy on water issues. Improved communications to farmers about these issues.
6. Resistance management: advice on how to deal with people who are putting this at risk.
7. Information/advice on fuel saving practices
8. Feral pig control: raise this issue with state government departments

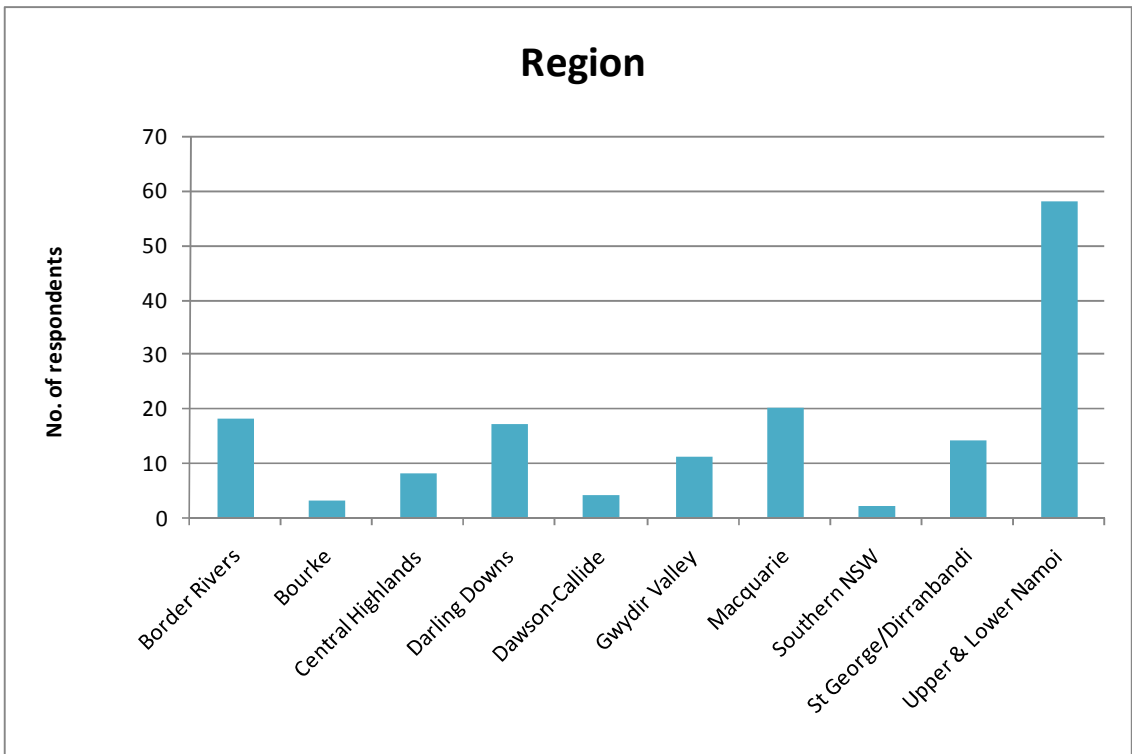
Note: Some of these suggestions from participants may already be in place, however the participants may not be aware of them.

Survey Results

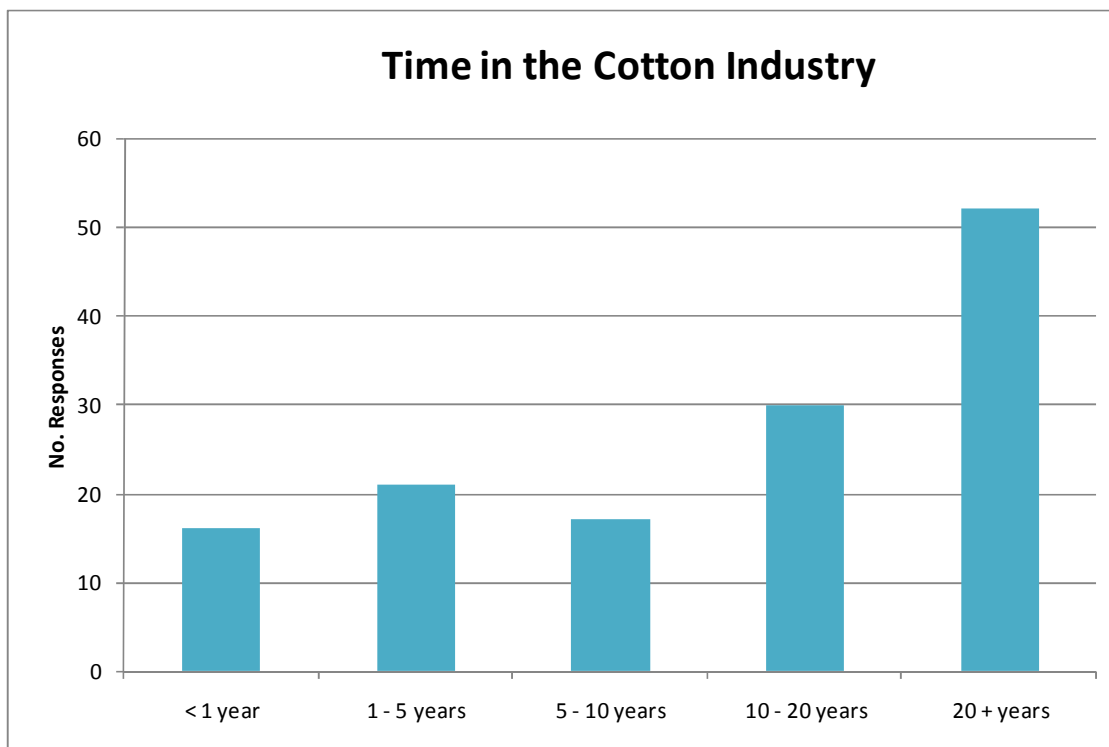
Q1. What is your involvement in the Cotton Industry?



Q2. In which region are you based?

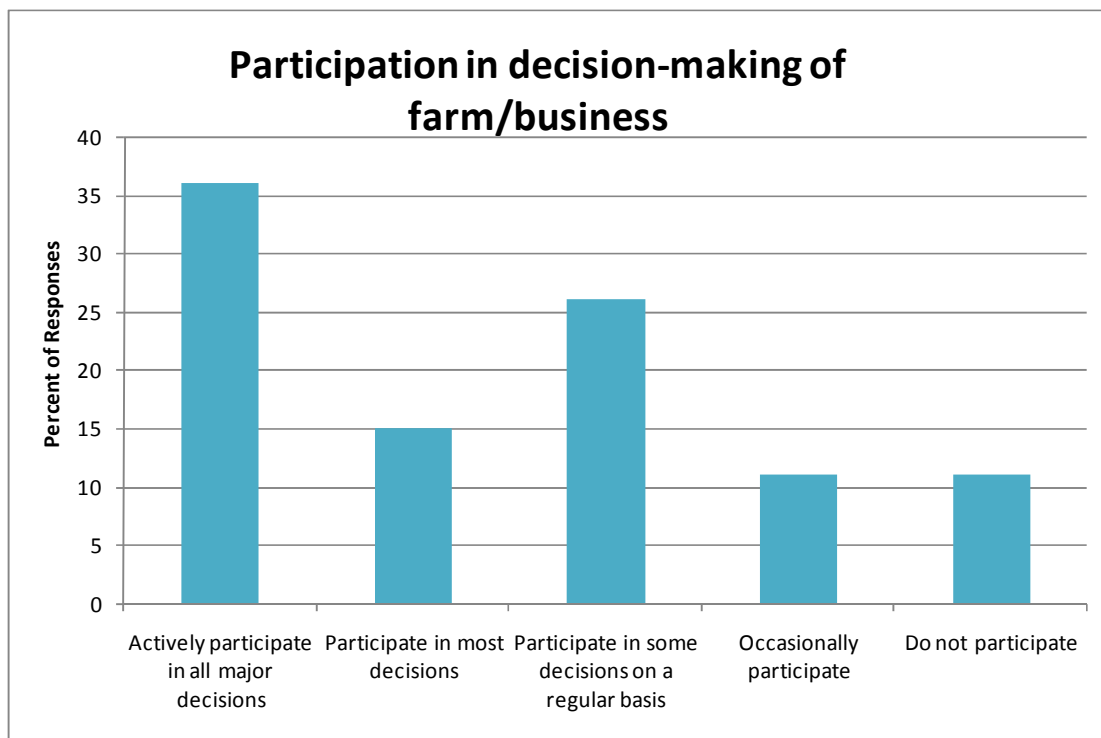


Q3. How long have you been involved in the cotton industry?



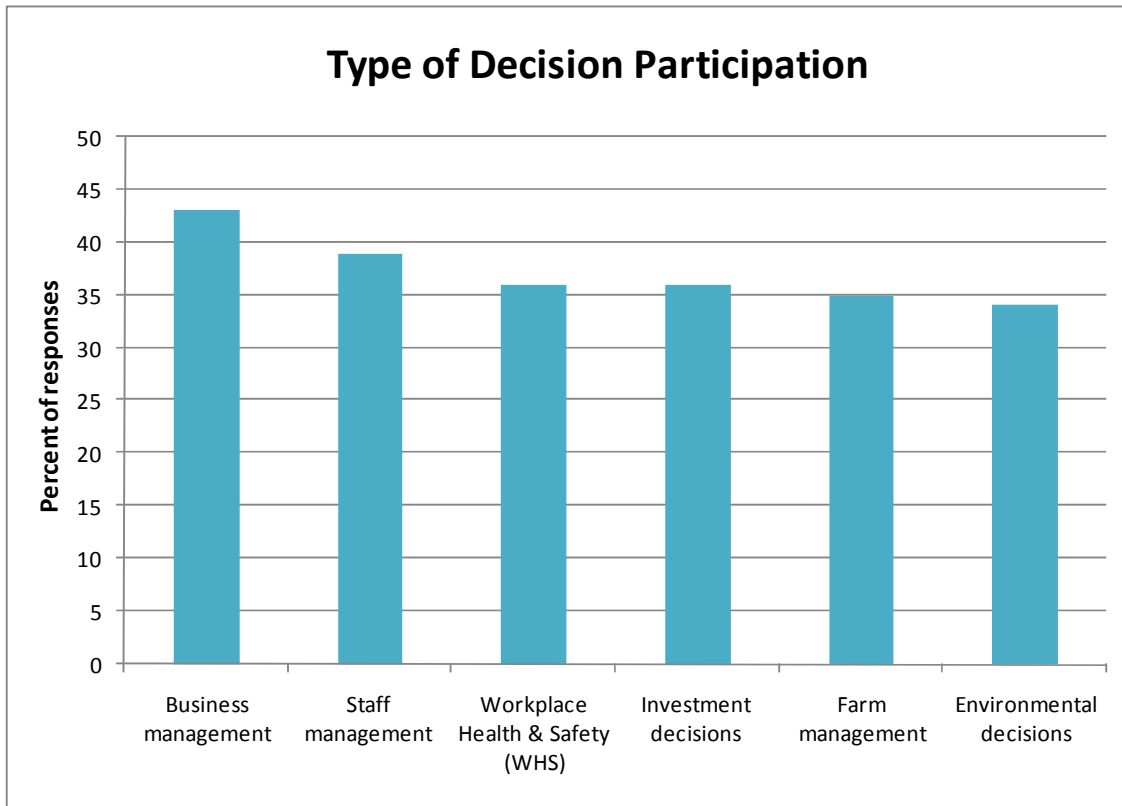
Note: 65% of respondents have been in the industry since before the introduction of GM crops.

Q4. Do you participate in the decision-making process of your enterprise?



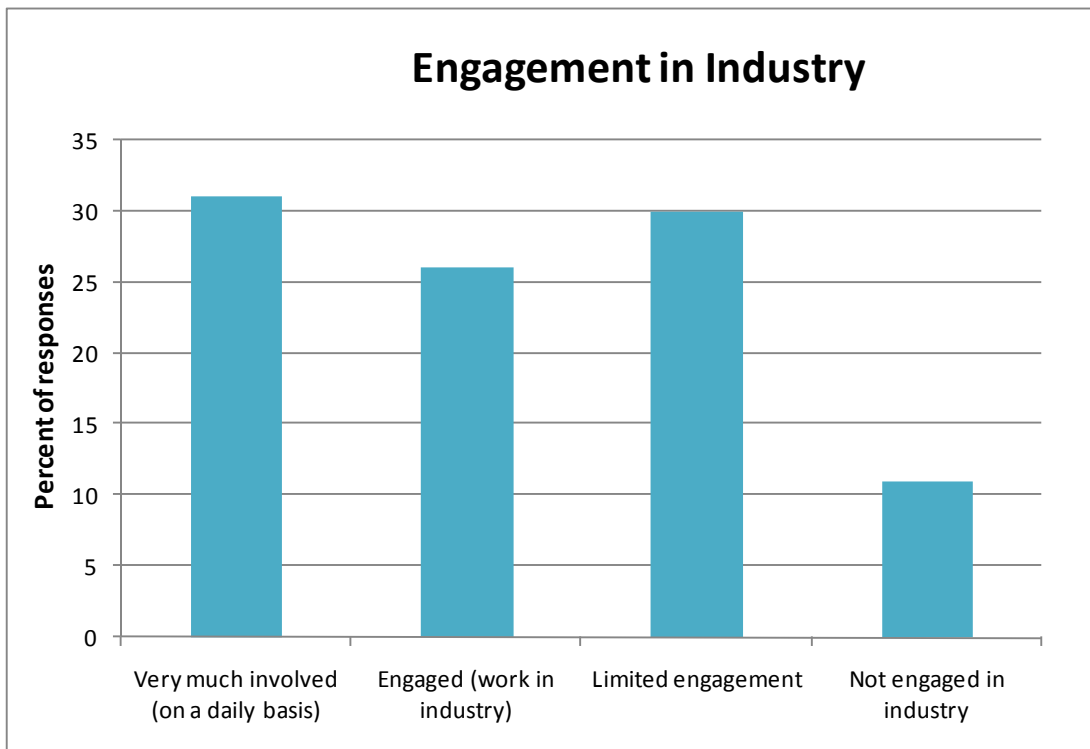
NB: Of the 86 respondents who identified as being on-farm, only 7 said they do not participate in any farm activities.

Q5. Types of decision-making:

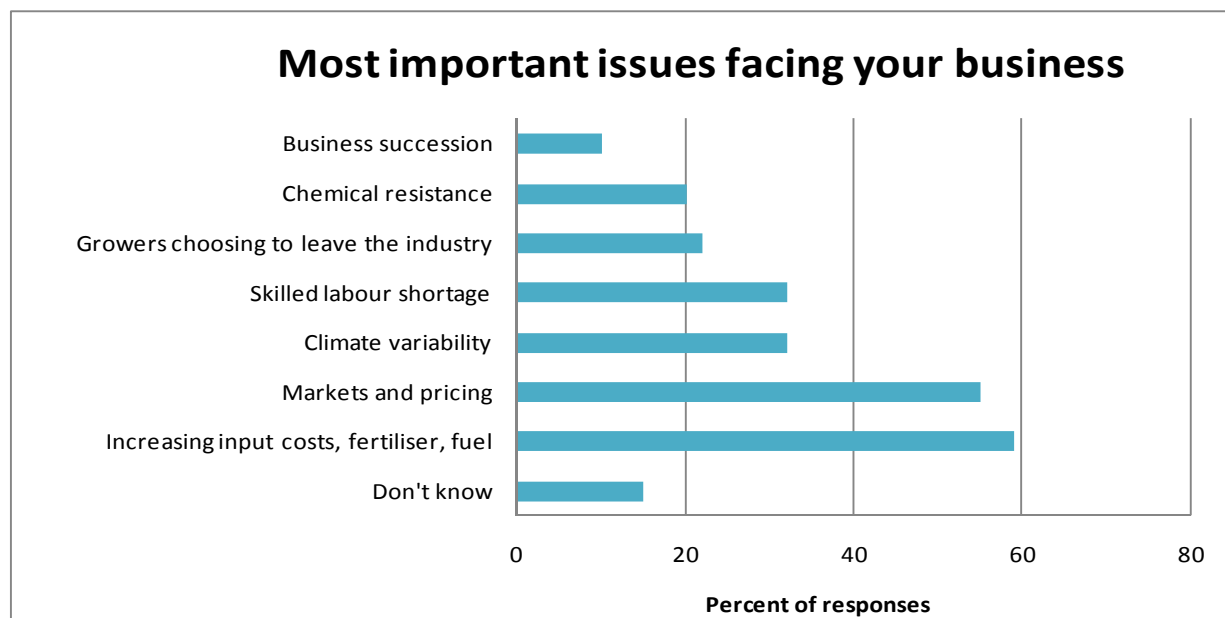


NB: respondents could tick more than one answer.

Q6. How do you rate your level of engagement in the industry?



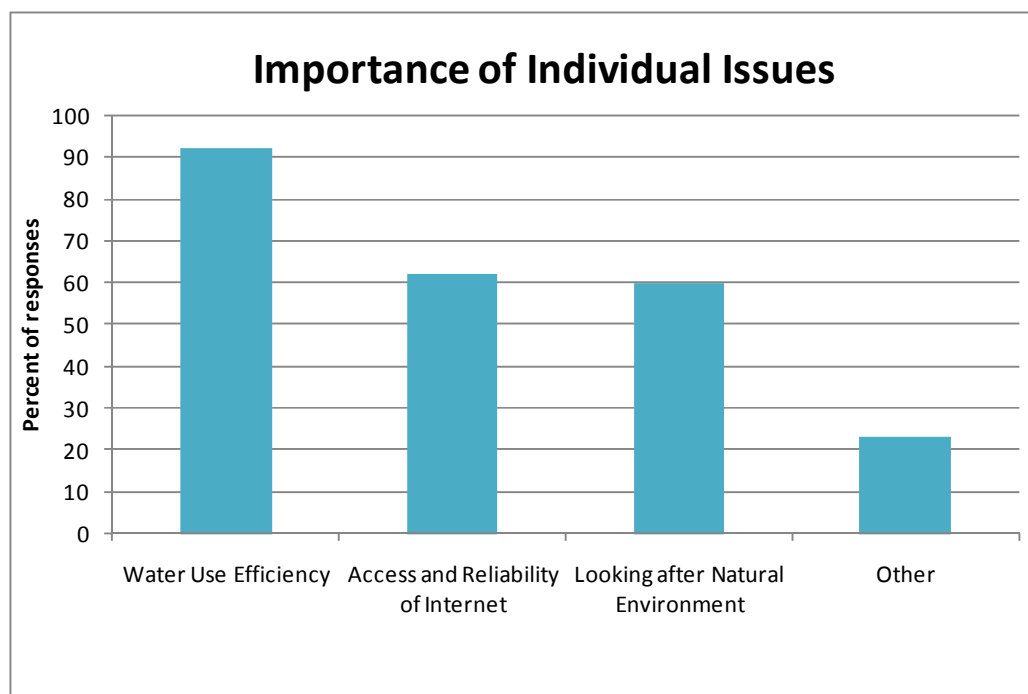
Q7. What do you consider to be the most important issues currently facing your business?



These issues were rated 'important or very important' by respondents.

Notes: 'Other' – includes: Water; staff quality; weather forecasts; work/family balance; Concern over buy up of arable lands by foreign investment companies

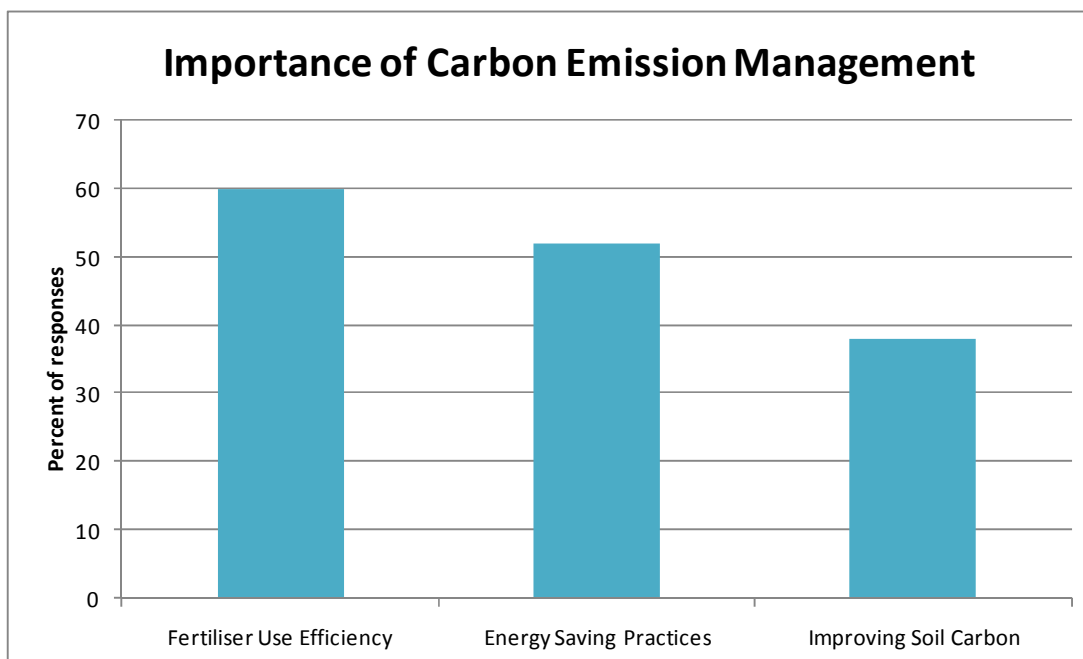
Q8. How important are the following issues to your enterprise?



NB: These issues were rated as being 'important' to 'very important'.

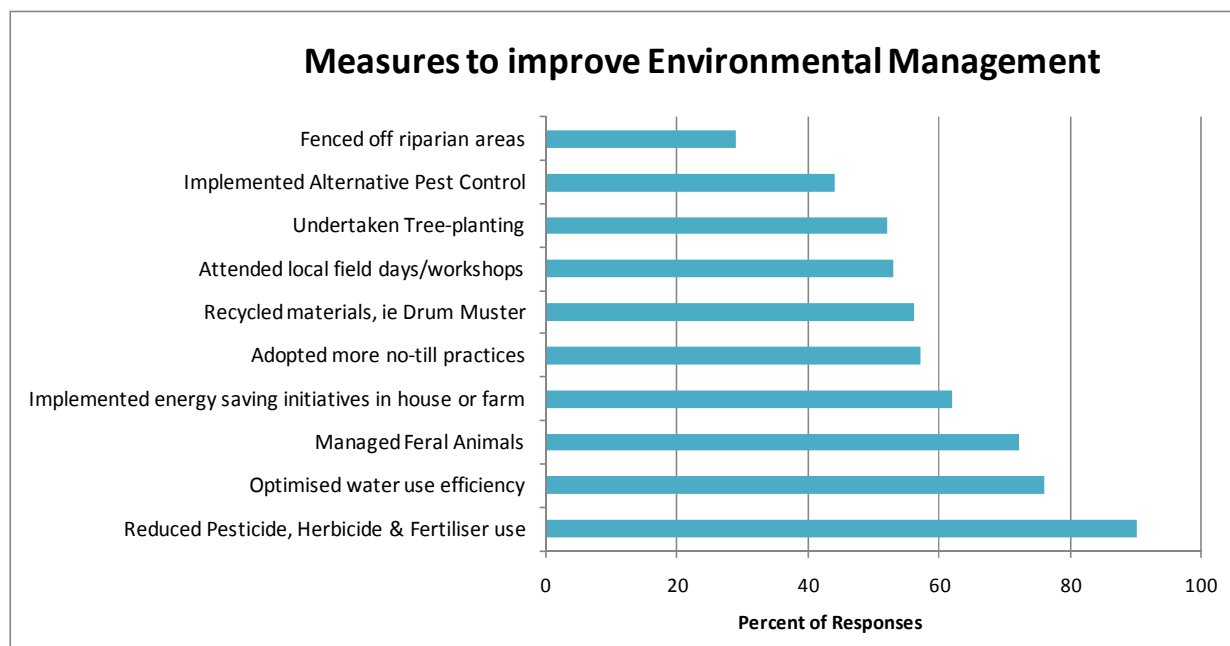
Notes: Access and reliability of internet did not seem to be as important issue compared to the previous survey, while WUE is still a major concern. "Other" issues included: water security; mobile phone reception; flood recovery; mining; quality of roads; research;

Q9. How important is the management of carbon emissions to your enterprise?



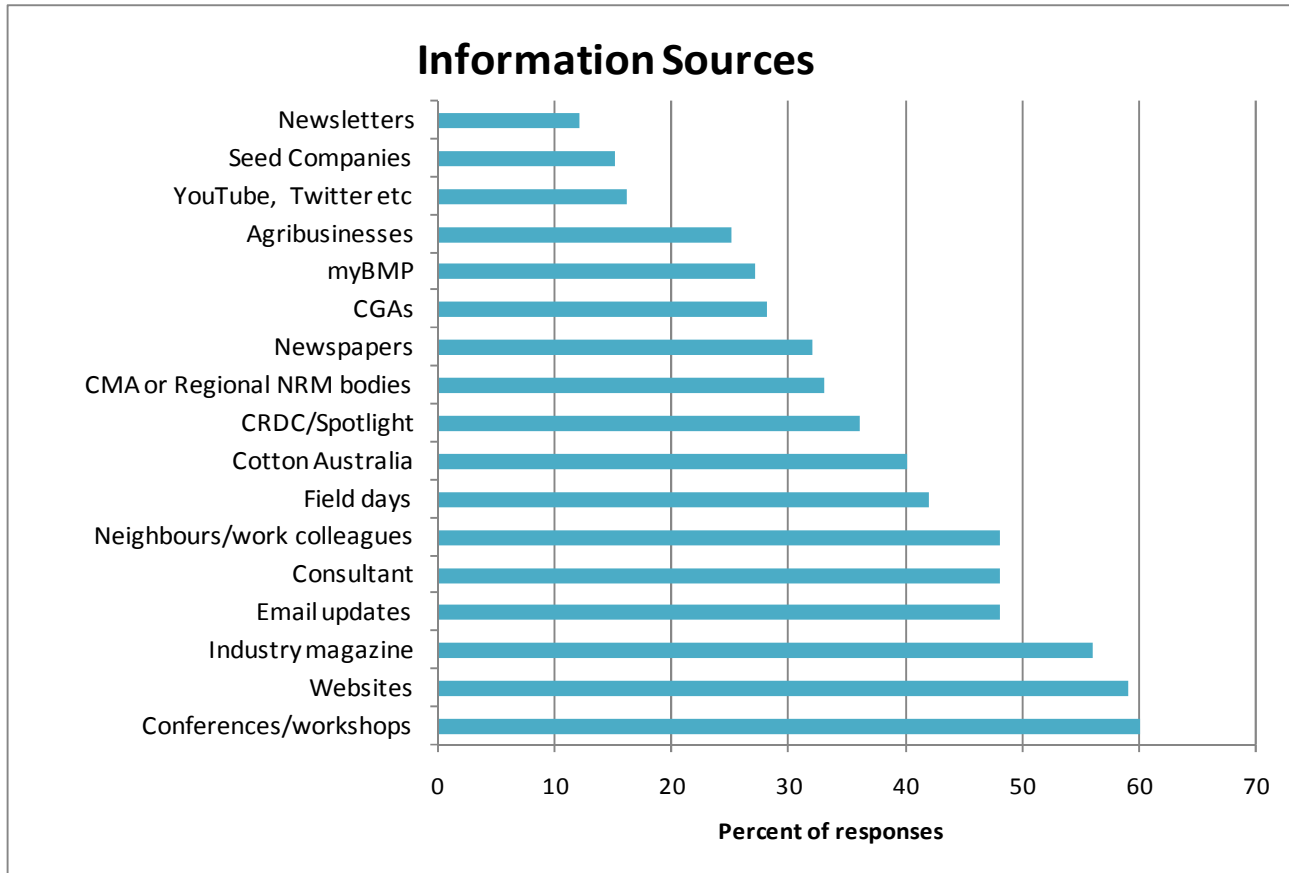
Notes: Importance of fertiliser and energy issues seem to be more to do with reducing costs, with an added benefit of reducing emissions. Many comments were made about ways to reduce energy costs e.g. Install solar systems, have more efficient pumps etc.

Q10. Have you undertaken any measures within your enterprise to improve environmental management?

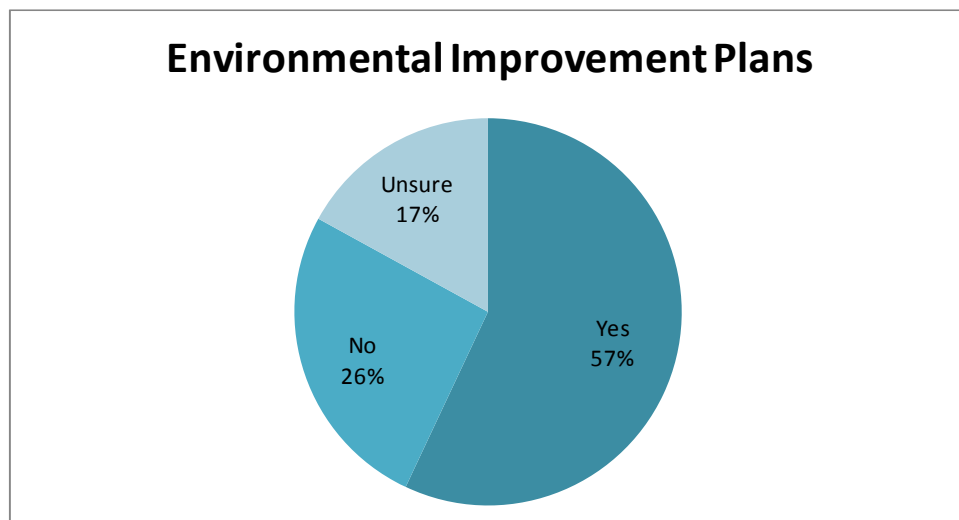


NB: Respondents could tick more than one option

Q11. Where do you seek information to help you manage environmental issues?



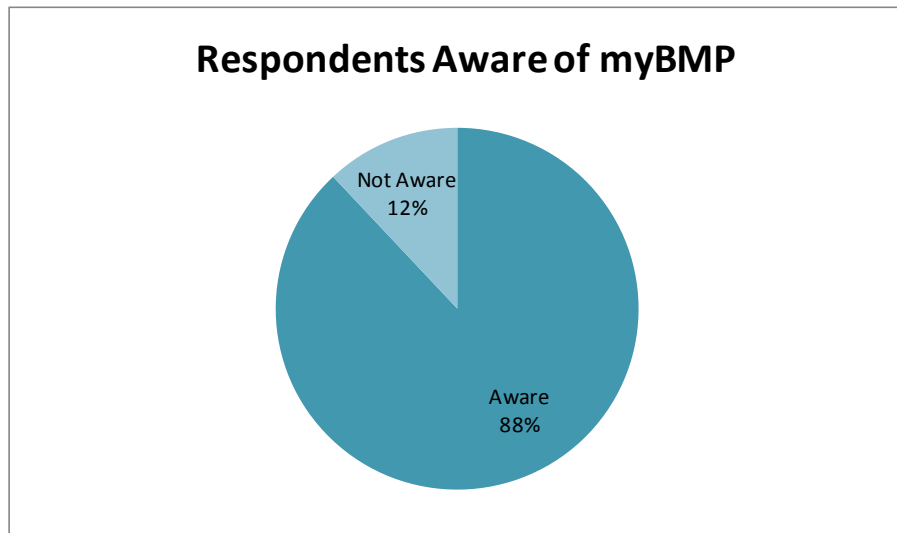
Q12. Do you have any plans to implement any environmental improvements in the next 12 months?



Note: Plans mentioned include: Improve WUE; install solar system; decrease weeds; fence off lagoon area; decrease feral pigs; tree-planting; improve soils

NB: Out of the respondents who said they were 'engaged' in the industry, 9 said "No" and 3 said 'Not sure'.

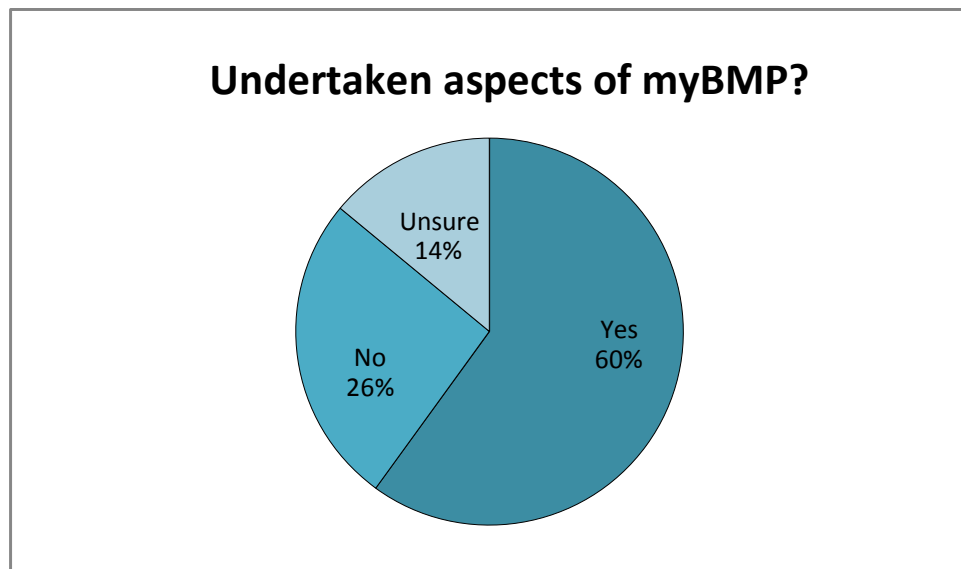
Q13. If you are involved in the cotton industry, are you aware of myBMP?



Note: This question collates responses from those who have indicated involvement in the industry.

When this question was followed up in the focus groups, only a few people had not heard of the new myBMP system (ie. about 8% of attendees)

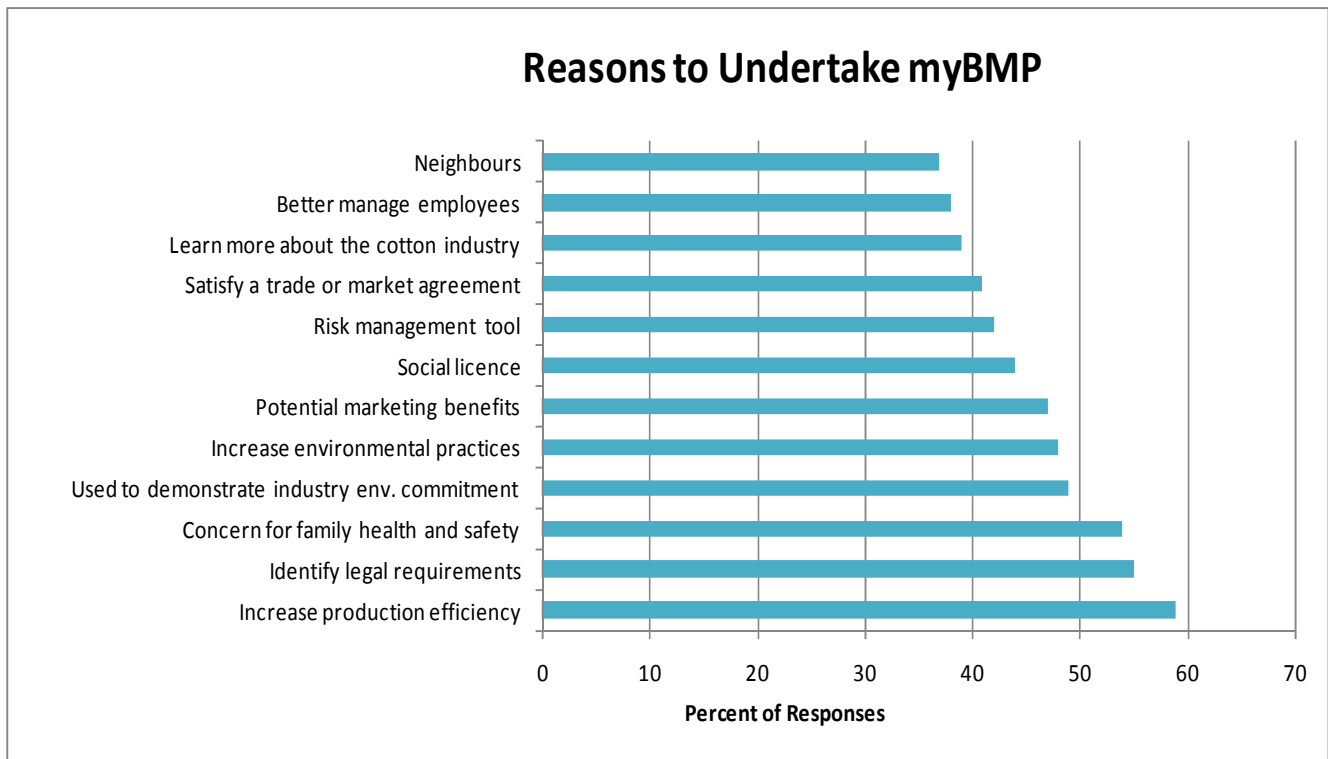
Q14. Have you undertaken any aspects of myBMP? Of those respondents involved with farming:



Some of the comments from people who are not using myBMP include:

- Too time-consuming (most common reason cited);
- Lack of resources
- "Feel confident my business is operating well enough".
- "The consultant takes care of BMP";
- "No compelling reason to do BMP";
- "We already do it anyway";
- "Yes, but not officially";
- "Not sure, we have done the WH&S though"

Q15. What measures would encourage you to take-up myBMP?

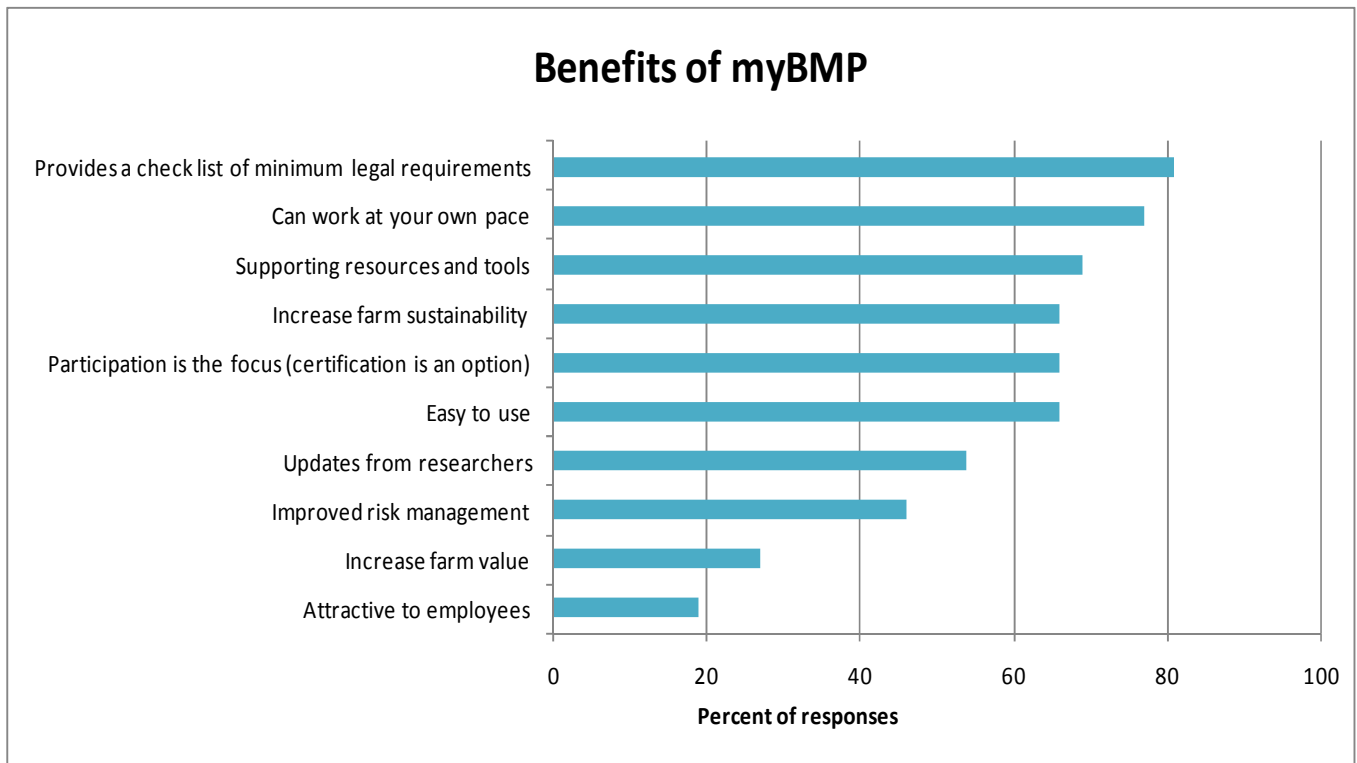


Q15b. Do you have another reason for involvement in myBMP?

Table 2: Comments from survey

It is on my 'to do' list, I think we are mostly on the way to being audit ready.
An information source for 'how to's'
I was in the original pilot program, there is no doubt in my mind it has dragged the industry up, however it is losing its momentum a bit, despite being online, it is an exhaustive and time consuming process , and unless I see some tangible benefits I will not go through an audit again. I think if it gets further streamlined the name should be changed, just because of the association with the BMP name
It is an agricultural leader in improving industry performance
I think one of the most important reasons people become involved is so they can see if they are meeting the minimum known legal requirements. I also feel that such programs will become compulsory across all ag industries over the next 10-20 years. Also, it is easy to forget why BMP was started in the first place as we have had no real issues for quite a number of years, but WHEN (and I stress when, not if) we get another potential negative industry issue we will have the program in place to prove our case.
In order to assist in marketing our premium cotton

Q16. What are the benefits of myBMP?



Q17. If you would like to receive more information about BMP, how would you like to receive it?

Majority of the comments from the written surveys, and endorsed by the focus groups, about receiving myBMP information, were that they would prefer: **email updates; and face-to-face workshops.**

Additional Comments from surveys:

“It’s a great tool, which I look forward to exploring further”

“Excellent tool”

“Needs more publicity about its existence & benefits”

“When there is a premium for cotton, I will use it”

“Great new program”

“It’s a great update, a much more useful method of providing information to growers and identifying gaps in information delivery”.

“We do it anyway, without being BMP accredited”

“Every grower should be involved, even if at Level 1”

“Can’t wait for new system to be launched”

“Best Practice is Australian Cotton’s competitive advantage”

“We need the local RDO to spoon-feed us!”

“New to industry, it sounds great”

“What are the benefits to me? We already do this”

‘We use BMP for staff inductions, its great’

“Important to be pro-active”

“Need more BMP training”

“Have used it for Workplace H&S”

“Use BMP but not officially”

“We don’t necessarily disagree with BMP, it is just that there is so much other work to do that it is last on the priority list and we never seem to get there.”

“It is a lot of extra effort to extend into natural resource management, the most successful projects I have been involved in is where there has been funding and external support (CMA, volunteers for planting etc) and ownership from the landholder.”

“Have looked at the website and explored the categories, so have only started to transition from BMP to myBMP”

‘Maintain myBMP, as it is important to maintain vigilance against environmental activists (the ill-informed!) who do not understand what we do’

“I realize the difficulties, but to link NRM with \$\$ advantages will help adoption of NRM practices.”

“Simplify water allocation in our valley, and be able to get the message to growers”

“Excellent tool, not sure where we are with it!”

“BCI and market access is important for BMP uptake”

“Everyday BMP practitioner but not audited in current system though”

“I think myBMP is a good thing, but I already have too many things to deal with, so don’t really see an advantage to get involved with BMP as well.”

Have done initial BMP several years ago, not up-to-date now! Always seems to be something more pressing to do.”

“I still think there is a lot of work that needs to be done. Increasing growers awareness of NRM, most people still do not know what is native and what is not, & why that matters!”

“Best Practices happen automatically, so not referred to as such”

“Plant more corridor trees so that the public perception can see you making an effort.”

“Most farmers I know believe in long-term viable stewardship of their properties. More consultation at grass-roots level as in a partnership. Not only hear what we say, but listen to the practical wisdom.”

Focus Group discussion: St George - 24th July 2013

Attending: 14 growers and 4 industry consultants, in conjunction with Cotton Australia



Q. Have you undertaken any environmental improvements on your property in the last 2 years?

A. Yes, all had. Examples:

- Installed Solar panels, to decrease electricity costs
- Installed a chip in the cotton picker/Installed more fuel efficient motors
- Improved water channels to help increase WUE
- Joined a Healthy Headwaters project
- Farm office has become efficient with electricity

Q. What environmental issues are you concerned about? Please list/discuss:

A.

- Soil carbon content
- Perception of industry as not environmentally friendly – need more positive media
- Electricity costs
- Lack of testing of imported chemicals
- Water viability
- Contamination in cotton lint
- Coal Seam Gas
- Future of Farming
- Rise of polyester fibres
- Decrease in Government funding for research and training

Q. Where do you get information from? And where would you prefer to get your information?

A.

- Google
- myBMP
- Consultant

Q. Are you aware of the Cotton industry's myBMP system?

A. All were aware

- If not undertaking BMP, what are the reasons? Some thought it was "too hard"
- Other discussions around: "Improving all the time"
- "Useful for plucking documents off the website"
- "Useful for it's links"
- "User-friendly"
- "It is good that you can work through it slowly"

Q. What would encourage people to participate?

A.

- Good for Identifying legal requirements
- One-on-One with growers, then move onto groups or work on their own.
- Good for future markets of cotton
- Easy to find things
- Better relationship with neighbours
- Good for staff management, especially for RPL record keeping.

Q. What would you like to see Cotton Industry Organisations do next?

A.

- Have an Industry Calendar App.
- Premium for Cotton !!!
- Carbon trading Information
- BCI – provides a base level of Best Practices in the world for retailers to compare
- Need to 'value-add' to a myBMP workshop. I.e. hold another topic on the same day, to encourage more people to attend. Eg. Staff management, social media, carbon trading
- Reduce Monsanto's licence fee
- Conventional cotton will make a comeback
- Industry needs to be on the front foot of good news, eg, use social media
- Workshop on social media and computers. So that people in the industry can respond quickly to any negative news stories, or to inform people of the true situation

Focus Group discussion: Upper Namoi - 15th Aug 2013

Attending: 10 growers and 2 industry consultants, in conjunction with CA & Namoi CMA

Q. Have you undertaken any environmental improvements on your property in the last 2 years?

A. Yes, all had. Examples: Improved WUE

- Covered water channels to reduce evaporation and decrease water wastage
- Installed overhead irrigation to improve WUE
- Increased Native Vegetation
- Cleared river of carp
- Reduced electricity use – night pumping, off-peak useage
- Installed solar panels
- Audited electrical use
- Fenced riparian areas
- Reduced fertiliser use

Q. What environmental issues are you concerned about?

A.

- Mines, Coal Seam gas – discussion ensued about CA information and newsletters
- Chemical drift inversions
- Cost of power

Q. Where do you get information from? where do you prefer to get your information?

A.

- Local newspapers
- The Land (covers all ag industries)
- Consultant
- Cotton Matters
- Spotlight (although some attendees did not receive this)
- CMA
- Fax
- Email
- Posted letters (many preferred the written material)

Q. Are you aware of the Cotton industry's myBMP system?

A. Quite a few had not heard of it, mainly because they have been out of cotton-growing for a few years.

Q. If not undertaking BMP, what are the reasons?

A.

- Seen as too hard ie. previous versions of old BMP system.
- Been out of industry for a few years

- Identify legal requirements
- Ease of use
- The fact that you don't need to become certified

- Handy if other ag industries could use a similar version or parts of myBMP
- Growers need to be on the front-foot of industry issues
- Carbon trading information

Focus Group discussion : Macquarie Valley - 6th Sept 2013

Attending: 7 growers and 1 industry consultant

Q. Have you undertaken any environmental improvements on your property in the last 2 years?

A. Yes, all had. Examples:

- Controlled, feral pests (esp pigs); weeds; fenced riparian areas; planted trees; installed solar panels; installed centre pivots; lined irrigation channels'
- Used grants through CMA, particularly for fencing, (although involved lots of red tape)
- Noticed increased bird life around water areas
- "If everything is fair, everyone wins", ie referring to rules and regulations particularly around water issues

Q. What environmental issues are you concerned about?

A.

Water

- Availability
- Environmental flows
- "buy backs" – who is making the decisions? Are they well-informed?
- Flooding is occurring and ruining fences, wasting water leading to a shortage of water, is there any compensation? For damage? And who is making these decisions?
- Need an enquiry into – water regulations
- Water charges
- "We would like to see an enquiry into and accountability of the environmental water usage". Is it best for environmental water to be used in dry times rather than mimicking what is happening in nature? Why is so much environmental water pushed through the marshes for use of high flow pumpers downstream?"

IPM – Stewardship of technology;

- ie Brazil example of resistance;
- How to monitor pupae busting;
- Need a hotline to 'dob-in' people who do the wrong thing

Q. Where do you get information from? And where would you prefer to get your information?

A. All sources, plus other farmers

"Actually there is too much choice, too confusing when you are 'time-poor'".

Q. Are you aware of the Cotton industry's myBMP system?

A. Yes, all were aware of myBMP.

Q. If not undertaking BMP, what are the reasons?

A. Main reason for not undertaking myBMP, was 'time'

"In the past, growers had to pay for auditing, which has deterred them somewhat this time."

"No 'burning issue' or need to undertake BMP, as in chemical issues etc."

Q. What is your perception of myBMP?

A. Some people said that they were not aware of how useful the items in myBMP are.

Other comments included:

- Great, useful, easy to use, good resources, everything in one place
- Good, staff-related issues are handy
- Always get good information from myBMP
- Good links
- Good information for Workcover

Q. What would encourage people to participate?

A.

- Identify legal requirements
- Hold workshops "Getting Started" for Women – pre-season, pre-irrigation and maybe pre-picking
- Maybe some one-on-one meetings
- Include some awareness of back packer training, ie language, past training, skills, certificates, experience, safety issues

Q. What would you like to see Cotton Industry Organisations do next about myBMP or about Environmental management, etc?

A.

- "Amalgamate all the services, and information sources"
- CMA requirements are too burdensome, so some farmers do not bother applying for CMA grants
- Would be good if someone in Cotton Industry could summarise all the grants that are available. Farmers are not aware of possible grants.
- "All Tax-payers are owed an explanation on how environmental water is used"
- The facebook blog – "Tales of the cotton-growers wife" is very well-regarded. Can this be kept up?

Email response:

"just in the last week there have been burn offs in the marsh areas so that when the environmental water comes down it will flow through and grow nice new feed for the cattle- why hasn't the government bought the marsh areas if they are so important instead of them being owned by cattle graziers who are having a ball, all that water is going to privately owned land.

Personally I think the cattle farmers are just opportunistic – if everyone wants to throw water at the problem so they are seen to be doing the right thing and helping the greenies and the environment why not take advantage of it – can't blame them really but it is not helping anyone else or the environment – we seem to have lost the balance.

Thank you again for organising the lunch – sometimes it is good to stop and try to change things and not just adapt to those which are forced upon us."



Forum held for women in cotton

A small group of ladies, all cotton growers, from Warren, Trangie and Narrabri attended a luncheon meeting at Ten Doors (pubs bar in Dubbo last Friday 6th September, facilitated by consultant Helen Dugdale on behalf of Winentz and the Cotton Research Development Centre.



• Sophie O'Brien, Sally Douglas (Trangie) and Jennifer Macgregor (Macgregor Valley Cotton Development Officers).

The focus for the meeting was "Women contributing to Environmental Change" and aimed to address community perceptions regarding the cotton industry whilst creating an opportunity for the women to share ideas and experiences in relation to their farms' environmental impact. Best Management

Practice (BMP), an initiative to enhance efficiency and ethical stewardship was also an area of discussion.

The forum was the follow up to a similar session held in 2011 and similar gatherings were organised in the Nether and Gwydir valleys.



• Cotton industry forum participants Susanough Tick (Narrabri), Helen Dugdale, consultant Helen Dugdale, and another woman.

Focus Group discussion: Merah North - 20th September 2013

Attending: 16 growers, plus 3 industry reps. In conjunction with CA

Q. Have you undertaken any environmental improvements on your property in the last 2 years?

A. Yes, all had. Examples:

- Applying chook manure;
- Installing larger water storage to capture more run-off;
- Solar panels for farm use
- Planting a 'beneficials bank' of trees
- Improving WUE – cells in dams; improving irrigation techniques, double siphons, improve timing; install moisture probes;
- Installed cameras on pumps to improve access to information, especially if can't get to pumps to check them,
- Monitoring birds on farms
- Eradicating feral animals, and weeds (ie boxthorns)

Q. What environmental issues are you concerned about?

A.

- Feral animals especially pigs
- Carp – is there a value-added opportunity?
- Cotton trash – what can be done with it? Is there a value-added opportunity?
- Drought tolerant cotton?
- Lippia

Q. Where do you get information from? And where would you prefer to get your information?

A.

- Google
- Workshops
- Mail
- Face-to-face meetings
- Emails
- Industry newsletters, eg Snapshots are the best
- Only a few people used Apps.

Q. Are you aware of the Cotton industry's myBMP system? 4 said they weren't aware of it.

If not undertaking BMP, what are the reasons?

A.

- "Needs better publicity"
- "No premium for cotton, no advantage price-wise"

Q. What is your perception of myBMP?

A.

- Great, useful, easy to use, good resources, everything in one place
- Previous versions of old BMP system had put some people off
- Seen as time-consuming
- Thought they had to be audited

Q. What would encourage people to participate? Eg. Identify legal requirements

A.

- “the fact that you don’t actually need an auditor”
- can be used as a useful tool to store information
- have face-to-face workshops
- good for risk assessment guidelines
- “can it be used as a case to obtain a premium for cotton?”

Q. What would you like to see Cotton Industry Organisations do next about myBMP or about Environmental management, etc?

A.

- First response, overwhelmingly was “Keep Bob Kellow” for IR advice.
- Many attendees ring NSW Farmers for information, “is Cotton industry keeping NSW FF up-to-date?”
- Monsanto licence fee – can anything be done?
- Industry sponsorship to good causes, to increase goodwill in the community
- More government support for farmers, to compete with overseas farmers who get subsidised
- Value-adding to the industry’s potential, ie create other cotton opportunities
- Rhiannon Smith’s work on carbon, and trees was mentioned. People would like to hear about her work, or see a report.
- Attendees appreciated the face-to-face meetings and lunch, and agreed that having more than one topic on the day is more likely to get people to come along. ie. Mental Health topic as well as myBMP was suggested for the next face-t-face lunch day.

Email responses:

“I wanted to thank you so much for organising “A Day in the Garden” I really enjoyed the day, and found it all very interesting and very informative. Sally’s garden was a perfect setting, and I felt we all benefitted from sitting informally and sharing our thoughts together.”

“thank you so much for the lunch and workshop last week. My friend and I not only had a good time but found it very informative. I'm so much more aware of things around the farm that I had previously taken for granted.”



Acknowledgements:

Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC)

Jane Hill, CA

Jim Wark, CA

Sandy Young, CA

Amanda Thomas, CRDC

Stacey Vogel, Namoi CMA

Georgie Carrigan, Upper Namoi Grower

Elizabeth Tout, Weemalah Writeability

Mary MacIntosh, St George Grower

Sally Knight, Merah North Grower

Emily Southwell, EcoAustralia

[Helen Wheels Consultancy](#)

[2 Violet St](#)

[Narrabri, 2390](#)

[0417064507](#)

Helen@helenwheels.com.au