

# Water is gold at Cotton Trade Show

By Brian O'Connell

Travellers along the Newell Highway at Moree have been intrigued by the earthwork activity at the National Australian Cotton Trade Show site in recent weeks. The new active irrigation display area is being developed by Moree's BMC Partnership and Moree Engineering and Irrigation — and is believed to be the first of its kind at a major field day site.

According to BMC's Ross Munro, the irrigation display will feature working pump installations, channel checks and a wide range of irrigation technology and metering equipment.

"It gives us a great opportunity to showcase our equipment to a big cross section of the Australian cotton industry," says Ross. "I think growers will be interested in seeing the gear in something close to a working environment. At other times of the year, the installation will allow us to demonstrate equipment to prospective clients at a very convenient site. All we need now is enough water to fill the dam."

The active irrigation display is part of the overall "Water is Gold" theme of the 2002 National Australian Cotton Trade Show. Experts from NSW Agriculture and the Queensland Rural Water Use Efficiency program will be on hand to demonstrate the advantages and techniques of accurate on-farm water use measurement. One of the features will be the use of the mobile water use measurement equipment.

## WATER VISION

A continuation of the water theme and one of the highlights of the Trade Show will be the forum "Water: A Vision for the Future" on Wednesday, May 29. The forum will bring together some lateral thinkers to provide a vision for the best way to use our water resources in the future — and the steps we need to take to get there. It should be great discussion.

The forum on Thursday, May 30 will be "Maximising Profit" — featuring a number of



The earthworks for the new permanent irrigation display by BMC have created a lot of interest along the Newell Highway.



The water theme will be continued in the forum "Water: A Vision for the Future."



different industry benchmarking studies into the high profit-generating cotton enterprises in Australia. It will look at the attitudes and practices, from agronomy through to marketing, of our most successful growers.

Appropriately, the keynote speaker before the "Maximising Profit" forum will be Robert Norris, Senior Vice-President of the Calcot group in California — one of the largest cotton marketing organisations in the US. He will give his thoughts on the current state of the market, especially in the high quality sector dominated by Australia and California. He will also give some insights into the operation of the new US Farm Bill and the likely extent of US plantings.

## OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The new irrigation display is just one of a number of new developments at the Moree TAFE site.

The extended and fully equipped washdown bay features a new concrete pad and will have a high pressure cleaner and a supply of Farmcleanse available. The commitment to farm hygiene (especially Fusarium) will also extend to footbaths and plastic 'booties' for visitors where appropriate.

Once again the Trade Show organisers are looking forward to growers attending from cotton growing areas as far apart as Emerald in the north to Hillston and Tandou in the south.

"Its all here at the Moree TAFE Agricultural centre," says John. "This is a working cotton farm at the geographic centre of the industry, just a few kilometres outside a major service centre. We are able to accommodate over 200 cotton specific exhibitors with no site being more than 150 metres from the bar.

"Growers and other industry personnel are treating the Trade Show as their own," says John." It has quickly become a significant event on the industry calendar and we constantly seek feedback from these visitors and they continually urge us to maintain our focus. We are determined to do so."

The organisers of the National Australian Cotton Trade Show are unashamedly passionate about maintaining the cotton focus of this annual event. So at first glance, the invitation to Pulse Australia could be seen as a contradiction.



Most manufacturers have welcomed the chance to demonstrate in the field.

Not so, says organiser David Dowling. "Pulses, especially chickpeas are playing an increasing role in the cotton production system. We asked Pulse Australia to come to the Trade Show this year to provide all the information a cotton grower will need to grow a chickpea crop as a rotation or as a trap crop.

"At the moment, chickpeas seem to offer some economic benefits as well as the obvious agronomic advantages in a cotton rotation. They can be viewed as just another input into cotton production, but one which has the potential to add something to the bottom line."

Just in front of the Pulse Australia stand will be the "Photographic History of Australian Cotton," sponsored by Namoi Cotton but with a wide range of historic cotton photographs from all parts of the industry.

The ultimate aim is to develop an industry resource which can be added to over time. Part or all the collection could be made available to industry groups or companies to borrow and use for particular presentations. If you have any photos which may be suitable, please contact the organisers on (07) 4659 3555.

## RESPONSIVE FORMAT

With the Trade Show now in its fifth year and continuing to expand its exhibitor base, the format seems to be striking a responsive chord with the cotton industry both in Australia and abroad.

If a grower wants to look at say, spraying equipment, he will find that the five or six major manufacturers in the industry are all represented on-site; they are all within a few metres of each other; and, they are all happy to demonstrate their gear under field conditions.

"When we first put forward the idea of manufacturers going head to head displaying their gear and demonstrating in the field the organisers of other events warned us that no-one would be interested," says John Forrest. "But then we talked directly with the manufacturers and they were all very supportive. The most often repeated comment was that if you didn't have faith in your product you should not be selling it."

This attitude from manufacturers has been rewarded by strong grower attendances. They come from all parts of the country to compare

and contrast the goods and services on offer.  
And not just from this country.

“We have many visitors from cotton producing areas around the world,” explains John.  
“Growers from South Africa, Zimbabwe, US, Turkey and Argentina have attended and some overseas sales have been made. So high, and potentially lucrative, is the international interest that we have Austrade as a sponsor promoting the trade show abroad. It provides an ideal showcase for Australian manufacturers seeking export opportunities.”

The approach has been extended beyond the machinery sector to include other service providers. There is a dedicated industry services pavilion, a processing and marketing pavilion, a precision farming pavilion and a cotton products pavilion. Competitors are side by side, in professionally equipped booths, housed under the one roof differentiating and promoting the benefits they can deliver to the grower.

“The exclusively cotton focus is not about elitism but more about commonsense,” says John.  
“From the start we wanted to provide easy access to all the resources and service providers a grower needs to operate his business. And we wanted to do this in context — in a cotton production area.”