

# Benefits of monitoring available water

---

When water is tight, the benefits of monitoring the available water on-farm are significant.

Agrilink will be at the Cotton Conference this year showcasing its latest technology for soil moisture and water monitoring. Agrilink's Soil Station, which combines salinity and soil moisture sensors in one system, can be adapted with additional sensors to monitor water levels in channels and at pump sites, providing cotton growers with complete on-farm water monitoring. This will be critical during the coming season, when water is likely to be tight.

In the past season Agrilink has listened to what cotton growers want. As a result, product enhancements to Agrilink's C-Probe cable-free soil moisture monitoring probe include new software features, incorporating day degrees and gross water use calculations into the irrigation reports. This provides growers with the ability to ascertain bales/megalitre — an increasingly important calculation as water becomes a scarcer resource.

Using AgWISE, Agrilink's internet-based farm management system, growers and consultants can remotely download continuously updated data from the field. Crop, block or regional data from a range of monitoring devices and across multiple sites can be easily downloaded and interpreted. Demonstrations of this powerful tool will be provided at the Cotton Conference.

## Case study: Clyde Agriculture

In the 2000–01 season Clyde Agriculture used C-Probes for the first time on their three out-lying farms, primarily for the convenience of remote data access and continuous monitoring.

During last season water was extremely tight in the Bourke district. Clyde Ag began the season with less than three in-crop irrigations in storage and there was no run in the river and no in-crop rainfall during the season. This meant that some tough decisions were required through the growing season in order to maximise the return



When water is short, there are major benefits from managing soil moisture.

from the water they had on hand.

The farm had previously used neutron probes for their soil moisture monitoring, Mitch Abbo, Senior Agronomist, summed up the benefits of progressing to C-Probes last season:

“Straight away I had the benefit of soil moisture data when I wanted it — rather than driving 100km each way with the neutron probe.” He went on to say, “Scheduling the first irrigation has always been difficult, but the continuous data allowed me to visualise the root activity and set up the crop right from the first irrigation. It really gave me the confidence to push the crop.”

In a normal year a fully irrigated crop would be irrigated roughly every 10 days, but during the 2001–02 season, this irrigation interval was pushed out to between 13 and 19 days.

Some fields didn't even receive a single irrigation, while the majority of fields received between two and five in-crop irrigations. Even with limited irrigation, blocks that had five irrigations still yielded over nine bales per hectare.

When water is tight, being able to continuously monitor crop water use and schedule irrigations accordingly can have a significant impact on the season's outcome.

#### Cotton consultant joins Agrilink

Agrilink's soil moisture and weather monitoring technology was first trialled in cotton in 1999.

Agrilink is now working with over 60 leading corporate and private cotton growers, including Auscott, Twynam and Clyde Agriculture, as well as the leading private growers. Telemetry networks have been established in the Macquarie Valley, Namoi Valley, Gwydir Valley, MacIntyre Valley, St George, Dirranbandi, Hillston, Darling Downs and Emerald regions.

Agrilink has appointed a new account manager for the cotton industry, based in Moree. Nicole Griffin, who has spent the past five years as agronomist/branch manager with Cotton Growers Services in Moree, has an agricultural science degree from Hawkesbury Agricultural College and has practiced as an agronomist for eight years in irrigated crops.

Nicole has considerable experience in the cotton industry and extensive knowledge of agricultural production systems. She brings her business management expertise to Agrilink and will be



Nicole Griffin.

managing a team of five technical and agronomy staff, servicing the cotton industry in NSW and Queensland.

Visit Nicole and the team at the Agrilink stand at the Cotton Conference.

For more information please contact: Nicole Griffin account manager cotton on mobile 0427 835 175 or Ph: 1800-AGRILINK (1800 247 454) [www.agrilink-int.com](http://www.agrilink-int.com)