

# Research Roundup

By Bruce Pyke and Ralph Schulze, CRDC

---

## CRDC Budget

The CRDC Board considered the 2003–04 budget at its March meeting and had to take into account the current state of stored water and water allocations for the 2003–04 crop. Revenue is forecast to fall from \$13.5 million (2002–03) to \$8.3 million (2003–04) with the drought impacting on both industry levy receipts and Commonwealth contributions.

Given these circumstances, the Board approved expenditure for 2003–04 totalling \$12.8 million — some \$3.6 million less than expenditure for the 2002–03 financial year. So the Corporation will require over \$5.0 million of its reserves to meet this expenditure.

About 145 projects valued at \$11.3 million have been budgeted for research and extension grants expenditure. CRDC has had to make some difficult choices in reaching this outcome, but it has aimed to maintain research capacity by continuing to support research and extension personnel while reducing operating budgets.

This could slow the progress of some research projects and in some cases affect the capacity to meet original objectives. But it has the important longer-term benefit of retaining researchers within the industry and ensuring that current research directions can be maintained.

The budget has now been submitted for Ministerial approval and we expect to be informed of the outcome in June.

## CRDC Board Visits Moree

In May the Board held its meeting in Moree as part of its ongoing policy to visit cotton growing regions and meet with local growers. The meeting focused on fibre quality and post farm gate future needs, biotechnology and what is in the pipeline, environmental management and weeds.



BRUCE PYKE, CRDC



RALPH SCHULZE, CRDC

The Board held a dinner meeting with local growers and consultants where research priorities were discussed. Crop nutrition attracted plenty of interest during the evening.

The following day the Board and staff visited Auscott Midkin and inspected their new lateral move irrigation system, native vegetation conservation projects and the new bale press system in the cotton gin. Auscott agronomists Tim Richards and Justin Ramsay presented the results of their trials on skip row irrigation, mepiquat chloride and precision agriculture.

### Cotton Comparative Analysis Report for 2002

For the second year running, CRDC has participated in a joint venture with Boyce Chartered Accountants to produce the Australian Cotton Comparative Analysis Report. The 2002 report is now complete and will shortly be available from the CRDC web site ([www.crdc.com.au](http://www.crdc.com.au)).

The report focuses on the 2001–02 crop but also includes trends that have been measured by Boyce for 10 years or more. The Comparative Analysis is provided to the industry as a management tool to help growers identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of their operation and to implement change in areas identified as needing improvement. The Corporation encourages growers, consultants and IDOs to make use of the information contained in this report.

### Successful Bid for Land and Water Management System

CRDC and Cotton Australia have been successful in obtaining \$600,000 for a project entitled "The development and assessment of the Cotton BMP into a comprehensive environmental management system through the development of a land and water module." The project is funded by Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Australia and is one of 15 national agricultural projects.

The aim of the project will be to trial a land and water module through the best management practices program as well as ensure BMP is recognised by the government as an effective management system. An important part of the project includes an evaluation of the BMP



Bridget Jackson, Chair, CRDC, Harvey Gaynor, Auscott Midkin Manager and Dr TJ Higgins, CRDC Board and CSIRO Deputy Chief Plant Industries.



program over the past six years.

It will evaluate the farm production improvements and environmental outcomes that the BMP program has achieved during its life. The project will start in June 2003. For further information contact Chaseley Ross (Cotton Australia Policy Advisor) or Rachel Holloway at CRDC.

## Riparian Guidelines

Many cotton properties adjoin rivers, creeks and watercourses, so the sound management of riparian land is a topic of interest to most growers. We now know from scientific research that careful and well-planned management of riparian land is important for the control of off-farm impacts from chemicals, sediment and fertilisers.

The vegetation on riparian land — and how it is managed — is a crucial determinant of stream health and water quality. Riparian lands and adjoining floodplains are also often important for conservation of local biodiversity because they are fertile, provide access to water, support a greater variety of species and provide corridors for the movement of wildlife. CRDC has been developing guidelines to help growers manage the riparian zone. These guidelines will be available this winter.