

New opportunities in cotton education

The revival in the area planted to cotton this season has created new opportunities for industry participants interested in expanding their education, knowledge and skills via the Australian Cotton CRC's Cotton Production Course conducted by The University of New England.

A recent Cotton CRC pilot study of the impact of the drought on 33 local businesses in the Wee Waa area alone found that permanent staff numbers fell to 69 per cent and casual employment fell to 52 per cent of that in 2001.

Of the terminated employees, one-third remained in the town, one-third left the region and the remainder were unaccounted for.

Cotton course coordinator, Dr John Stanley said these are ominous signs for the cotton industry, and indicate that its reservoir of skilled personnel requires replenishment and reinvigoration.

"The Cotton Production Course provides a comprehensive and practical qualification in the agronomy, crop protection, and environmental aspects of growing cotton," he said.

"All course materials have been developed in conjunction with cotton industry personnel and researchers to ensure relevance to the cotton industry. The Certificate can also be used to partly qualify for accreditation and registration as a consultant with Cotton Consultants Australia," John said.

Each unit in the Cotton Production Certificate includes a four day residential school held at the Australian Cotton Research Institute, where all materials are delivered by experts from industry and research organisations.

The residential schools and assignments are designed to dovetail with the cotton production calendar to allow students to fit their studies around work commitments. Most students do one unit in each semester, completing the four units required for the cotton production certificate over two years.

Program Leader for education and technology transfer with the Australian Cotton CRC, Greg Kauter, said the course was very valuable training for field agronomists and agribusiness personnel alike.

"There are many people now pursuing business careers in the cotton industry that have never worked with the crop in the field and the course not only gives them an academic qualification but a great insight into the production and environmental drivers of the cotton farming system.

The closing date for applications is January 17, 2005.

Admission and/or enrolment enquiries should be directed to Dr John Stanley at The University of New England Ph: 02 6773 3758 or 0428 223 332 or E: jstanle4@une.edu.au



Graduates of the cotton course — Hamish McIntyre, Alexandra Glauerdt, David Kelly, Kylie Borchardt and Jessica Richards.