

Innovation in Irrigation — focus for 2005 Trade Show

By Brian O'Connell, Cotton Trade Show Co-ordinator

The lingering effects of the drought saw the planted area for this 2005 crop increase significantly over last season. And subsequent widespread rain should ensure a much-improved “billion dollar” harvest this autumn and leave some water in the storages for the 2006 season.

In 2004, irrigators planted 161,500 hectares to produce over 1.35 million bales of cotton — over 88 per cent of the total cotton crop. Let's face it; cotton-growers are primarily farming water, not land. Water is of paramount importance to our industry.

So much so, that water will again be a primary focus of the National Australian Cotton Trade Show.

WORKING WITH WATER

Growers and exhibitors alike repeatedly tell the Trade Show organisers that the underlying strength of the Trade Show is its exclusive focus on the cotton industry. It is designed specifically to meet the needs of producers, suppliers, and processors. And the need to sustainably manage water is necessarily of interest to all industry participants.

We are planning a series of grower forums, workshops, farm visits, and on-site working displays — all addressing water issues. This is being done in association with irrigator groups, researchers and state and federal government departments with responsibilities in this area. In particular, negotiations are underway with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and

Forests to draw on the resources of the Natural Heritage Trust “Innovation in Irrigation” project.

A lot of work is currently being done on water loss mitigation and the various research teams are due to report within the next few months. These projects include assessments of various products to minimise evaporation from water storages. Arrangements are underway to have these reports and products featured — and demonstrated — at the Trade Show.

The Trade Show site at the TAFE Agriculture Centre in Moree incorporates both conference facilities and a working cotton farm to accommodate in-field and irrigation demonstrations. This has seen the Trade Show become the preferred venue for new product launches into the cotton industry and it promises to be on again this year.

CASE COTTON CLUB — THE NETWORKER'S HEAVEN

The Trade Show is also recognised as a great networking opportunity — attracting over 1700 cottongrowers, their staff, and consultants from all cotton producing areas to meet with more than 230 cotton specific exhibitors.

This year the networking will be enhanced with the introduction of the Cotton Club Pavilion. The concept was trialed at the ACGRA Cotton Conference on the Gold Coast and there was no doubt it was a winner.

Visitors to the Trade Show will be able

to meet and talk in comfort in the Cotton Club lounge with coffee and bar service facilities. And, as at the Gold Coast, exhibitors will have access to sites strategically located around the lounge area.

ROLLING OUT THE ROTATIONS

Also strategically located around the Trade Show site itself this year — weather permitting — will be a series of comparative trial plots featuring rotational crops within cotton systems. There are many cereals and legumes that have long been recognised for their contributions to a successful cotton crop through soil conditioning, disease and weed management — and not to mention cash flow generation.

We are working with groups like Conservation Farmers of Australia with a view to establish these trials on a long-term basis. This will give cottongrowers an opportunity to compare and contrast rotational alternatives over a variety of seasons and a variety of agronomic management approaches.

So make your way to Moree for the last Wednesday and Thursday in May — lots of others will be. This year there will be everything that has made the Trade Show such a success in the past, together with much that we are planning that will be new, and probably some things we have no idea about — but all of which will be great on the day.

For further information on the National Australian Cotton Trade Show Phone 07 4659 3555 or

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Irrigation technology at work at the Trade Show.



The Trade Show from the air.