

New cotton CRC gets the nod

In late December, the cotton industry welcomed the news of the success of the bid for the new Cotton Catchment Communities Cooperative Research Centre (the CCC CRC). While the new CRC will have a different emphasis to the current program, it is the third consecutive CRC for the industry — which reflects well on the achievements of the previous two.

The Federal Government will commit \$26.5 million over the next seven years towards research conducted by the CCC CRC.

Chairman designate of the new organisation, Dave Anthony, said the Government's support would allow the cotton industry to continue the development and pursuit of cutting edge research and adoption of world's best practice in production, environmental and catchment management.

Dave said the Government's commitment had been supported by pledges of \$36.8 million in cash and \$74.8 million of in-kind support from CRC partners.

"This represents a \$138 million investment in research, education and training over the next seven years to improve the economic performance of the cotton industry, stimulate sustainable use of natural resources for regional communities, and progress Australian cotton from a commodity to a brand," he said.

Dave expects that over the next seven years, the CCC CRC will add approximately \$1.2 billion to the value of the Australian cotton industry, representing a

return of more than \$40 for each dollar of investment by Australian taxpayers.

"Our research will generate improved social and economic conditions in rural communities through increased yield, optimised inputs, reduced pesticide use, increased water use efficiency, improved water quality, improved international competitiveness and innovative education and knowledge management.

BENEFITS

The aim of the new CRC will be to produce a cotton industry that:

- Uses cutting edge research outcomes to secure international competitiveness by increasing yield and fibre quality;
- Adopts world's best practice in production, environmental and catchment management.
- Generates improved social and economic conditions in rural communities through enhanced educational and employment opportunities; and,
- Results in increased yield, optimised inputs, reduced pesticide use, increased water use efficiency, improved water quality, improved quality cotton, IP commercialisation, integrated natural resource management outcomes, training opportunities, a skilled workforce and employment in remote regions.

CCC CRC MEMBERS

The core members of the new CRC are:

Australian Government

- CSIRO (five divisions).

State Governments

- NSW Department of Primary Industries.
- Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.
- Department of Agriculture Western Australia.

Industry

- ACGRA.
- Cotton Seed Distributors Ltd.
- Cotton Australia.
- CRDC.

Universities

- The University of New England.
- The University of New South Wales.
- The University of Queensland.
- The University of Sydney.
- University of Technology — Sydney.

There are also 46 supporting participants of the CRC from the industry, universities and local government. *The Australian Cottongrower* and the Cotton Trade Show are proud supporters of the CRC.

RESEARCH FOCUS

The focus of the new CRC will be to undertake collaborative world-class research, education and commercialisation activities.

The farm program will focus on:

- Integrated crop protection;
- Water use efficiency;
- Plants and soils;
- Precision farming; and,
- New tools and technologies.

This farm focus is expected to result in:

- An increase in cotton yields of 20 per cent and reduced costs of 10 per cent through optimised use of inputs by 2010;
- Reduced pesticide use by 50 per cent overall through IPM and Area Wide Management;
- A 20 per cent increase in cotton yield per megalitre of water; and,
- An increase in Water Use Efficiency across the industry from 60 to 80 per cent.

The catchments program will focus on:

- Research for improved river health and sustainable use of groundwater while sustaining cotton profits;
- Increased efficiency in delivery of water allocations to industry, environment and community;
- Improved capacity to purify irrigation water for re-use and the environment;



The CRC bid committee — Left to Right (back row): Hamish Millar, Geoff Naylor, Geoff Hewitt, Dave Anthony, Guy Roth and Bob Dall'Alba. (Front row): Bridget Jackson, Lewis Wilson, Dallas Gibb and Brendon Doyle.

- Proactive management strategies to prevent rising water tables and the occurrence of salinity in cotton growing areas;
- Improved vegetation condition, extent and management; and,
- The cotton industry meeting its obligations in helping achieve catchment targets and community expectations in water, salinity, vegetation and biodiversity.

The communities program

Will work with regional communities and local government to:

- Evaluate the economic impact of cotton growing, processing and marketing activities on regional communities and their linkages to regional, and national economic activity;
- Define frameworks for the social interrelationships that are important to the viability and long-term prosperity of regional centres and the industry; and,
- Promote employment opportunities for indigenous people in regional areas.

The products program

Will aim to ensure Australian cotton will be in demand worldwide by textile mills and end consumers for its high quality and 'eco-friendly' credentials and other value adding opportunities by:

- Objective measurement of fibre characteristics and integration of agronomic, harvesting and ginning systems that minimise fibre damage and contamination;
- Eco-labelling of Australian cotton through the Industry's Best Management Practice (BMP) initiative; and,
- Development of added-value by using current on-farm water storages for diversified aquaculture initiatives.

The adoption program will include:

- PhD programs;
- Innovative short courses;
- Science for schools;
- Information delivery systems and innovative decision support tools; and,
- Implementation of a comprehensive environmental management system.

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New CRC chairman Dave Anthony (left) and interim CEO Guy Roth.