

Germinating ideas

By Craig McDonald, CSD Extension and Development Agronomist

This edition of Germinating ideas will look at some of the field days and crop competitions held around the regions and the appointment of a new extension and development agronomist at Moree.

Cotton crop competitions

The cotton field day and crop competition season has been in full swing recently. Bourke was able to conduct a competition and have a field day — the first in almost three years.

The winner was a 'Mulga Farming' crop of Sicot 289B managed by Mick Bartlett and agronomist Matthew Wright. The people's choice award went to a crop of Sicot 71BR at Clyde Agriculture's Beemery Station, managed by Andrew Garnsey and agronomist Matt Ceeney.

Craig McDonald from CSD, said the Bourke region had quickly and successfully embraced and adopted Bollgard II technology and was reaping the benefits and advantages offered by it.

"The judging panel examined the many different aspects of cotton production, including yield assessment, insect management, nutrition, crop health and water management, and made special note of innovative management techniques," he said.

The Upper Namoi region conducted a cotton competition and field day that was very well attended. Tim Gavin from 'Gabo' Gunnedah won the competition with a very even crop of Sicala 60BR. The Upper Namoi crops look very good this year — the result of a milder season and a being able irrigate on time. They are showing very good yield potential based on fruit counts and plant monitoring data.

A competition was also held at Walgett. The crops there are also showing very good potential. The winner was a crop of Sicot 71BR grown by Geoff Taunton, second was a crop of Sicot 289BR grown by Jim Moore and manager Doug Newton and third place was a crop of Sicot 289BR grown by Dave Fleming.

Field days well attended

More than 90 cotton growers, consultants and industry input and service suppliers attended a series of field walks hosted by CSD in the Border Rivers region.

The centre of their attention was the performance of cotton varieties released commercially for the first time this season, including inspections of a selection of 12 large-scale replicated variety trials in the Macintyre and Balonne regions.

CSD's extension and development agronomist for the Border Rivers, David Kelly, outlined the results of a detailed plant-monitoring program that had been conducted during the season.

"We've found some significant agronomic contrasts between varieties in all trials. This excellent information will complement the yield and fibre quality data that these experiments eventually provide, and offer

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CSD agronomist John Marshall (left), catches up with St George cotton growers Nick Bligh and Wayne Rogan.



Walgett crop competition place getters — (L to R) Dave Fleming 3rd (Sicot 289BR), Geoff Taunton 1st (Sicot 71BR), Doug Newton (Manager) representing Jim Moore 2nd (Sicot 289BR).

sound guidelines for managing Bollgard II varieties in future seasons,” he said.

CSD’s Dalby-based extension and development agronomist, John Marshall, noted that all trials in the region are currently looking excellent, and will provide useful data on which to make future management decisions.

He said that through long-term CSIRO breeding, and joint CSIRO/CSD trial and selection programs, the seed technology available to growers is rapidly expanding.

“Next year CSD will offer cotton growers a choice of more than 30 CSIRO varieties. Two varieties with enormous potential for commercial planting in 2005 are Sicot 71BR and Sicot 80B. Both varieties were released in limited quantities for this season, but next year they will be fully available,” he said.

John also outlined the huge research effort funded by CSD in combating the devastating soil borne disease, Fusarium wilt.

“CSD has two staff dedicated to disease management work and a significant amount of this time is focused on Fusarium wilt.

“Since Fusarium first came to prominence in the early 1990s it has become



James Quinn.

apparent that there is no ‘silver bullet’ for its control, so our containment and control strategy has focussed instead on integrated disease management, which involves managing crops in a way that makes them less prone to infection.

“Included in this is the widespread use of

the F-rank system when choosing varieties to plant in Fusarium affected fields, manipulating the planting date, and trialling of products that trigger the plant’s immune system to render it better able to combat Fusarium.

“The success of the CSIRO breeding program for Fusarium has been clearly demonstrated this season with the excellent performance of three higher F Rank (greater than 140) varieties, particularly in instances where growers have resumed growing cotton in fields where the disease level had made it non-viable”, John said.

New Moree appointment

CSD has appointed James Quinn to the role of Extension and Development Agronomist based in Moree, servicing principally the Gwydir Valley.

After finishing a Bachelor of Agricultural Science degree at Sydney University, James took on a role with the Cotton CRC supervising the farming systems trials. In 1997 he moved to Moree as the Cotton Industry Development Officer with the NSW Department of Agriculture. Then in 2001 James took on a role as assistant manager with Australian Food and Fibre and was located on ‘Mitchell Plains’ west of Moree. 