

Improving the Australian cotton quality 'queen'

Over the past five weeks the Deltapine team has been travelling around the regions presenting data on varieties to assist growers in their planting decisions.

The message from these meetings was

'Yield may be King — but quality is Queen'. When the Australian cotton industry first became a key player in the international cotton market it was regarded as a producer of top quality cotton. Most of Australia's competitors were not

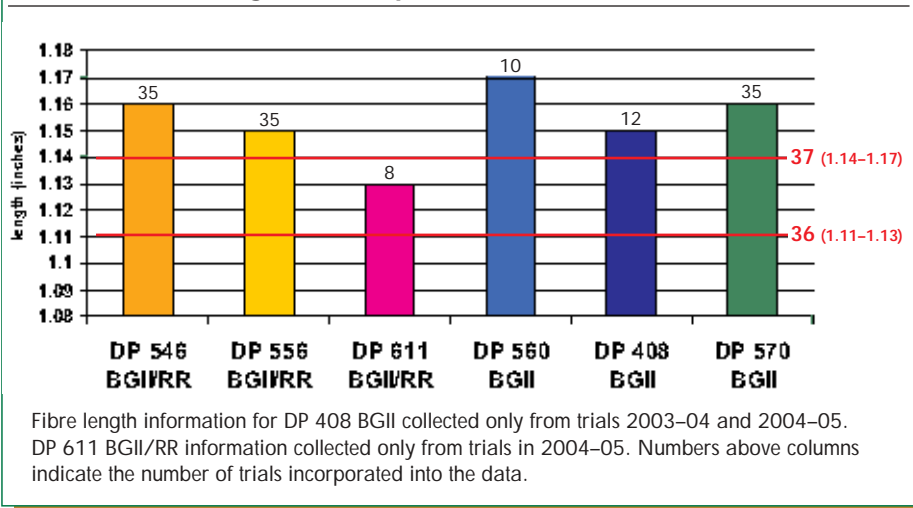
able to produce equivalent quality.

But the world market is changing. The spinning industry is striving to improve efficiency and quality. And spinners are demanding more from their suppliers. Production from countries such as the US, Brazil and West African nations has increased and all are now exporting far greater quantities of cotton with improved quality.

Fluctuating planting areas and challenging seasons have resulted in inconsistent supply and quality from Australia. The quality of Australian cotton has been under the spotlight following these years of reduced production. When Australia was unable to supply, spinners were forced to look for cotton from other countries.

Cotton from these alternative suppliers has, by and large, met the spinners' demands. If Australia wishes to win back traditional markets and help to ensure the sustainability of the industry into the

FIGURE 1: Fibre length in Deltapine CRDC trials 2002-03 to 2004-05



future, we must look to improve the reliability of product supply. Climatic conditions will always be an important component of production but there is still scope to try to deliver what the market wants.

So what does the market want? Middling or preferably strict middling white, a 36 (1.125 inches) staple length or greater, at least 28 g/tex strength and a micronaire of 3.8–4.5.

About five years ago, Deltapine acknowledged that some work was needed to improve the fibre quality from our varieties. Since then Richard Leske and the Deltapine breeding team have been focusing on improving the fibre quality.

The Bollgard II and Bollgard II/Roundup Ready varieties that have been released onto the market in recent years demonstrate that the research focus is paying off — all show improvements in fibre parameters such as length and strength.

For example:

- DP 570 BGII has a strength of 30.7 g/tex and a fibre length of 37 (1.16 inches); or,
- DP 546 BGII/RR with a strength of 32 g/tex and a staple length of 36 (1.15 inches) through commercial gins.

Figure 1 confirms the consistency of



Deltapine plant breeder Richard Leske has been focusing on improving quality.

the Deltapine range, showing the summary of long term trial results over the past three seasons.

Not only do these varieties have suitable strength and the desired length, they all fit in the micronaire range of 3.8 to 4.5. The breeding team is continuing to focus on improving these parameters but for now,

selection of varieties which consistently deliver these results in commercial ginned trials will be beneficial to help sustain markets for Australian cotton.

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