

Doing some work around the Cotton Trade Show

By Brian O'Connell

Some improvement has been the growth industry of the past decade. We at the Cotton Trade Show are always keen to do a few extensions, but we believe they have to be properly done, preserving the underlying structure that has stood the test of the past nine years.

With this very much in mind we do have plans in place to take us into the next decade.

These include a close working relationship with a new neighbour — or is that landlord?

The Australasian Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (ACSA) is a recently formed body made up of the Moree Plains Shire Council, The Australian Cotton Trade Show and New England Institute of TAFE. The ACSA group has been formed to take up the existing TAFE rural skills training site located five km north of Moree, NSW.

The 50 hectare site incorporates a working irrigation farm used to grow cotton and other crops. This site is perhaps better known to the cotton industry as the

'home' of the National Australian Cotton Trade Show.

Improved water use efficiency on irrigation farms will be a key target for ACSA. To achieve this, the site will be further developed as a centre where industry can set up 'real world' demonstrations on a working farm — and training providers can run co-ordinated training and education for 12 months of the year.

To ensure that the farming activity on the site will incorporate current best commercial and research practice, several well regarded local growers will be key partners in the exercise — these will include Andrew Parkes (Keytah) and Tony Bailey (AFF).

For both these farming operations, and for all others across the industry, water is of paramount importance. Equally important, and of growing concern is the difficulty in securing staff at all levels.

As partners in the project, these growers believe that a significant spin-off benefit for them will be the opportunity to show potential staff that modern farming can offer interesting, challenging and rewarding opportunities as a workplace.

WATER AND TRAINING

Both these issues will be a focus of this year's National Australian Cotton Trade Show at Moree on May 24–25.

Innovation in irrigation is always of interest to the cotton industry. Seminars and workshops will again bring all up to speed on the latest best practice in the management of what is undeniably the lifeblood of our industry.

With regard to the need for a similar degree of innovation in education and training, we are also inviting bodies in this field that service cotton growing areas to participate in a new Education and Training display area at the Trade Show. These organisations, including high schools, agricultural colleges, TAFEs and Universities, will have the opportunity to meet with the industry to discuss industry needs and to discuss the contribution they can make to improving the awareness and skills of our communities.

ROTATIONAL CROPS

New additions on the trade show site will also include varietal trials of a number of rotational crops that offer agronomic benefits in cotton farming systems. Be they straight cash crops like corn or legumes like vetch and peas — they are all being increasingly seen in what were largely mono cropping areas.

Together with the variety trials, there will be scheduled machinery demonstrations looking at stubble management gear — including mulchers, cultivators, planters — that are a necessary feature of rotation cropping.

As the planning progresses we will be keeping the industry informed with updates on seminar speakers and the specific focus of the increasingly popular workshop program. Needless to say, but I will anyway, the Cotton Trade Show remains committed to its focus on the cotton industry and the farming systems that drive it. We look forward to seeing you on site in May.



The Trade Show will feature an increasingly popular workshop program.

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