

Australian Cotton Conference — you can't afford not to go

By Greg Kauter

Doesn't time fly when you are having fun...it may seem like only yesterday that you were living it up on the Gold Coast at the 12th Australian Cotton Conference, but believe it or not, that was 18 months ago and the 13th Australian Cotton Conference is just around the corner.

The biennial conference, which is organised by the Australian Cotton Growers Research Association (ACGRA), is one of the highlights in the cotton diary. It brings the whole industry together under one roof — from researchers, consultants, marketers and (most importantly) growers.

The theme of this year's conference, to be held on the Gold Coast on August 8–10, is *Product, Production, Profit — Progressing our Natural Advantage*.

Emerald cotton grower and Chair of ACGRA, Hamish Millar thinks that this year's conference will be the best yet.

"The conference organising committee wanted to develop this year's program with the needs of growers in mind," he said.

"We spoke to ACGRA members and other growers — large and small — from all cotton growing areas to find out what issues mattered to them. There was one clear message coming from all angles — profit."

With a pretty clear signal that the bottom line was at the front



There will be plenty of social and networking opportunities.

of their minds, the conference theme was developed and the program built up around the issue of profitability — from a triple bottom line perspective.

"It's pretty straight forward if you relate it all back to profit" says Hamish.

"It basically means that the sessions at the conference will examine the benefit to the bottom line of managing the environment, financial outputs and inputs and the social aspects of the farm and the industry. For example, managing your water use more effectively or training staff well will impact upon your bottom line, managing nutrient applications will reduce the costs of your inputs and the long term management of your soils will have a positive impact upon long term profitability."

PROGRAM TAKING SHAPE

Planning for the conference is well underway and the program is starting to take shape. Conference openers include:

- Ben Fargher, CEO of the National Farmers Federation, who will talk in broad terms about Australian agriculture and the role of cotton;
- Tony Pearson, Head of Australian Economics at the ANZ Bank will put the Australian economy in perspective when he talks about the global economy; and,
- Dr Chris Mitchell from CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research Division will talk about the potential impacts of climate change on Australian agriculture.

It wouldn't be Cotton Conference without an opening address focusing on biotechnology — Professor James Dale, Director at the Centre for Tropical Crops and Biocommodities and Senior Member of the Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation will discuss biotechnology and the changing landscape of agriculture. In addition, day two of the conference will see a plenary session dedicated to biotechnology and speakers exploring its progress and its promise. Speakers during this session include:

- Dr Fred Perlak — Director, Cotton and Specialty Crop Technology for Monsanto in the US; and,



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- Paula Fitzgerald — Executive Director at Agrifood Awareness Australia.

As well as some of the old favourites, such as a dryland workshop, cotton awards dinner and the trade exhibit, this conference will also include some new and exciting developments. Virtual posters will adorn the corridors and computer terminals will contain background information about the program and the speakers.

There will be an expanded 'Hands on Research' session which will bring delegates face to face with the tools and technologies of tomorrow and new product launches throughout the course of the three day event.

BEAUTIFUL GOLD COAST

This will be the second time that the Cotton Conference has been held at the majestic Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre at Broadbeach. It is expected that many of the attendees at the conference will take advantage of the beautiful surroundings by engaging in some of the social and networking events which are also planned as part of the conference.

All in all, Hamish Millar thinks that people will not only have fun at the conference, but that they will leave with real practical solutions to solving some of those issues which are affecting the profitability of the industry.

"As a hands on family farmer, it is often difficult to take time out to catch up with everything that is going on in the industry. I find the Conference a great opportunity for networking — getting to meet with researchers, extension officers and other cotton industry personnel who are committed to this challenging and rewarding industry. Not only that, but, you get to do it in a great venue at a very reasonable cost and you will also have a lot of fun doing it."



Attendees can take advantage of the beautiful surroundings.

Cotton Conference: Some highlights

TUESDAY, AUGUST 8 TO THURSDAY, AUGUST 10

TUESDAY, AUGUST 8

Welcome address

Hamish Millar, Chairman ACGRA
Political interactions with agriculture in Australia

Ben Fargher, CEO, NFF

The world and Australian economies

Tony Pearson, Head of Australian Economics, ANZ Bank

Climate change and the cotton industry

Dr Chris Mitchell, Leader, Climate, Weather and Ocean Prediction Theme, CSIRO

Biotechnology and the changing landscape of agriculture

Professor James Dale, Director, Centre for Tropical Crops and Biocommodities, QUT

Marketing our product

Bob Dall'Alba, Chairman, Australian Cotton Shippers Association

Unveiling FIBREpak

- Dr Stuart Gordon, CSIRO Textile & Fibre Technology
- Dr. Greg Constable, Program Leader, CSIRO Plant Industry

Post farm gate BMP

Allan Williams, Project Officer, EMS Pathways Project

Branding our product

Ms Sarah Reiter, Director, Client Services, Cato Purnell Partners

Welcome reception in trade display area sponsored by NAB agribusiness

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9

An overview of the cotton comparative analysis

David Newnham, Director, Boyce & Co

Profitable production

Mark Morton, Director, Resource Consulting Services

Profitable resource management

Mrs Roberta Brazil, Chair, Land & Water Resources R & DC

Changes in crop production

Bruce Pyke, General Manager, Research & Extension, Cotton R & DC

How do I pull it all together?

- Tony Bailey, farm manager, Milo, AFF Properties P/L
- Neek Morawitz, cotton grower, Emerald

Traits and technologies for cotton

Dr Fred Perlak, Director, Cotton and

Specialty Crop Technology, Monsanto,

US

