

Cotton Australia workshops for BMP adoption

By Mike Beeston, Manager – Grower Services

Cotton Australia's grower services managers have actively engaged growers throughout winter with a series of workshops and one-on-one farm tours aimed at increasing BMP adoption. Feedback from these workshops has been overwhelmingly positive with many growers enjoying the group approach to information sharing and learning.

There are two types of workshops currently being held, each aimed at growers depending on where they are placed in terms of BMP implementation.

PCA workshop: The five core modules of BMP

The PCA workshop is designed to assist growers with their Pre-Certification Assessments (PCAs) in a positive and relaxed group environment. The PCA workshops focus on each of the following five core modules of BMP:

- Application of pesticides;
- Storage and handling of pesticides;
- Integrated pest management;
- Farm design; and,
- Farm hygiene

These workshops have been held successfully across every cotton valley and are intended for all growers, regardless of farm size or growing experience.

A vital component of the PCA workshop is the one-on-one follow-up with participants that occurs sometime after each workshop from the local Cotton Australia GSM. Having worked through the PCA and the five core modules, growers are then encouraged to invite their local GSM to conduct a farm tour at a time convenient to the grower. These one-on-one farm tours are casual with individual PCA forms developed at the workshop 'touched up' and progressed towards completion.

The number of growers attending the PCA workshops so far has underlined the significant level of formal grower engagement with BMP recently. While not all growers are through to PCA level just yet, many are on their way.

Land and water management module workshop

The second recent series of workshops focuses on the Land and Water Management Module and the Petrochemical Storage and Handling Module.

Cotton Australia has recently hosted a series of Land and Water module workshops across all parts of the industry, with the assistance of industry development officers (IDOs), environmental extension officers and local catchment group employees. The Land and Water module workshops provide growers with resources they need to complete the BMP Land and Water Module, including a detailed farm map.

Experts from a range of fields guide each group through a range of issues using Catchment Management Authority maps of the growers' farms to identify specific on-farm issues. Growers are taken through the work stations, with each work station covering different issues such as soil, water quality, weeds, pests and native vegetation.

Each station is staffed by an expert in that field who guides the grower through the necessary information they need to complete these BMP modules while completing overlays of their maps. Many growers find it advantageous to bring along their neighbouring farmers and work as a group.

The advantages of working as a group

In the past two months alone, more than 60 growers have attended either the PCA or Land and Water Module workshops. Feedback from these workshops has been extremely positive with many growers enjoying the group environment and the ability to compare notes with each other.

Many growers have found it beneficial to also bring along their agronomists, farm managers and/or consultants to workshop meetings.

Further PCA and Land and Water Module workshops will be conducted late-October through to December, once planting has finished. If the feedback from growers and farm workers so far is anything to go by, these workshops will no doubt develop into a regular fixture.

For further information, please contact your local GSM and book your spot in either the next planned PCA workshop, Land and Water Module workshop or both.



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