

# Getting a degree in BMP

Cotton producers may soon be able to turn their environmental stewardship into a tertiary qualification, thanks to a FarmBis initiative.

A unique project has set out to align national training competencies with the industry's Best Management Practice program, BMP.

FarmBis has funded the research as one of its Targeted Industry Initiatives designed to enhance learning outcomes across the rural sector.

The project is being managed by the Cotton Research and Development Corporation under the direction of National Cotton Training Coordinator Mark Hickman.

Mark said the BMP manual principles were widely adopted. A recent industry survey indicated 90 per cent of cotton producers adopt the principles. Although not all had sought formal accreditation for their learning.

"It is very exciting that cotton growers or property managers might qualify for a Diploma of Agriculture if their property is BMP accredited," he said.

"This would be a great recognition of personal achievement, an individual reward for the time and effort put into the BMP program."

## Independent review

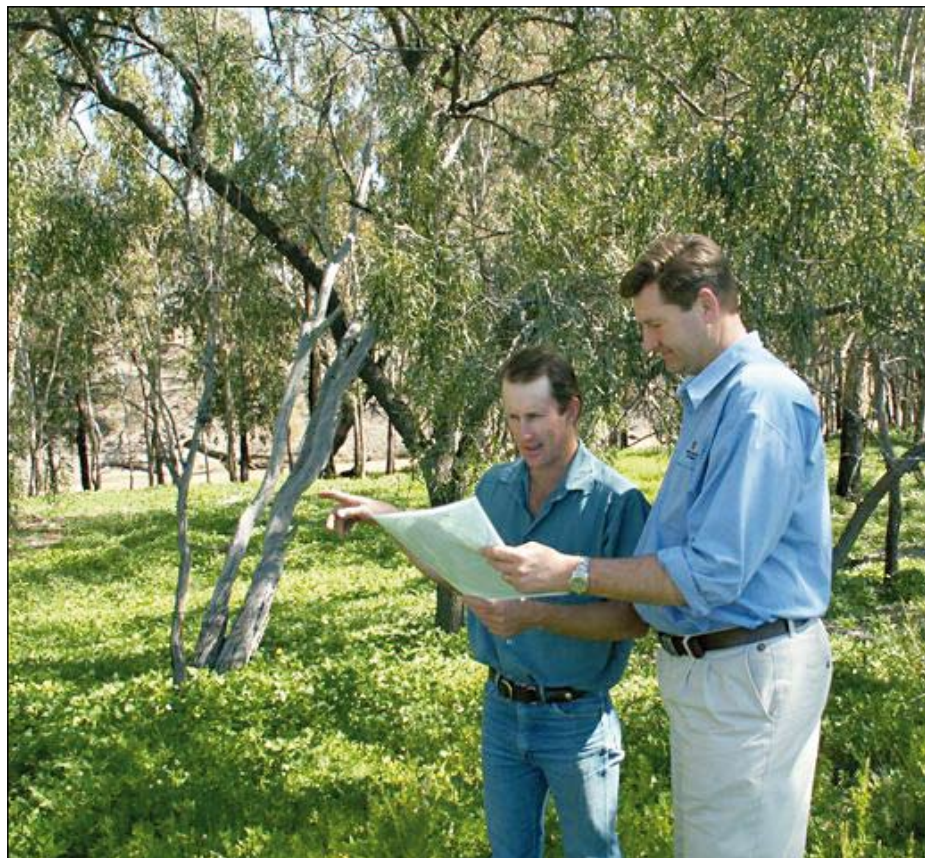
An independent consultant was retained to review the BMP manual and map linkages of information it contained against national training competencies.

The review indicated strong alignment to competencies from the conservation and land management, rural production and business management packages. These identified units were used to create the Diploma of Agriculture associated with the project.

Mark said it was expected the project would increase farmer interest in the BMP program and help instil a culture of learning in the industry.

The next phase of the project involves assessing the mapping results in case studies of three Darling Downs cotton producers who have BMP accreditation. The services of Tocal College were engaged as an independent assessor for the project. Each case study participant was interviewed using a recognition of prior learning model.

"Leaders within the cotton industry are very interested in the practical outcome of



Jason Sinclair and Mark Hickman.

this project. The outcome will value add to an already successful BMP program and cut new ground for education within the industry.

"FarmBis is to be congratulated for supporting this project which should really stimulate the interest of cotton producers," Mark said.

Jason Sinclair is one of three producers who have taken part in a pilot evaluation of the project. Jason manages a farm west of Condamine for Peter Corish and is excited by the potential.

"I thought it was a great initiative by FarmBis and jumped at the chance to get a personal qualification," he said.

"This property has undergone a rigorous assessment as part of the BMP process and we have just undergone a full self assessment of the program. I was also involved in BMP planning at another Corish family property near Goondiwindi."

**FarmBis is a Commonwealth-State training initiative. It has a range of targeted industry initiatives and offers subsidies of 65 per cent on accredited business training. For details of courses available, visit the website [www.farmbis.gov.au](http://www.farmbis.gov.au) or contact Michael Gilbert in Brisbane on 3239 3064.**

**"Business success starts with recruiting and retaining the best employees."**

**These are the questions that need to be answered!**

- ▲ Having difficulty filling permanent vacancies for many months?
- ▲ Have you had to lower your standards to fill permanent vacancies?
- ▲ Spending a lot of time and money trying to recruit new employees?
- ▲ High staff turnover is an operational problem?
- ▲ Unreliability in terms of attendance and performance is an issue in your business?
- ▲ The absence of quality labour is significantly impacting on your profitability?

**If you have answered 'YES' to the majority of these questions – you need to talk with us**

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