

# Grower advice for Cotton Australia

By Adam Kay, CEO, Cotton Australia

The Cotton Australia Grower Members Advisory Committee (GMAC) was formed in August 2007. In general, the GMAC Terms of Reference are:

- Provide a sounding board for advice to Cotton Australia;
- Direct geographical representation;
- Provide a better understanding and agreement to solutions;
- Better assist communication; and,
- Add value to the role of the CGA.

At the initial meeting in August, it was decided to host a GMAC forum to identify issues facing Australian cotton growers today and five years from now and to develop actions that Cotton Australia can consider in future planning.

Leading up to the GMAC Forum, Cotton Australia sent a number of grower member feedback sheets to all CGAs in order to capture grower input on key priority areas they believe Cotton Australia needs to address in the immediate future and beyond. The consultative process was also designed to ensure effective information flow across the whole industry from growers to CGAs and then the Cotton Australia board.

The feedback sheets were then tabled and discussed in detail at the GMAC forum, held in Narrabri on November 20.



Adam Kay.

## GMAC FORUM

Growers from across NSW and Queensland converged on Narrabri for the one-day GMAC forum which was independently facilitated. The forum was well attended by members of most CGAs, with input and clarification also added by two Cotton Australia observers, Chair, Joanne Grainger, and CEO, Adam Kay.

The meeting fostered fantastic discussion including looking at what Cotton Australia was currently doing well and what growers believed Cotton Australia could do better.

There was also excellent discussion on

the key areas identified earlier by growers and their CGAs through the grower member feedback sheets.

The five key issues GMAC members believe Cotton Australia should focus on over the next 12 months (and some examples of the activities Cotton Australia may undertake) were:

- Water (eg lobbying governments, protecting water rights, communicating outcomes with growers);
- Labour skills shortage (eg investigating protocols for importing skilled labour, lobbying government to retain existing staff, supporting education providers to promote and provide training);
- Input costs (eg reviewing fixed water charges with government, benchmarking Australian cotton input costs);
- Industry structure (eg investigating relevance, roles and responsibilities and funding of cotton industry organisations); and,
- BMP (eg engaging markets on the value of BMP and focusing on BMP benefits with government and decision makers to help meet accreditation requirements).

## WHERE TO NOW?

Outcomes from the GMAC meeting provided great direction for Cotton Australia staff and Board in their planning processes throughout November and December. This will ultimately result in a framework for Cotton Australia's 2008-09 Annual Operating Plan which will be ready for implementation in April 2008.

Overall, the process of consultation with growers and CGAs was very well received. GMAC members are also keen to see that actions undertaken by Cotton Australia staff and the Board against the above GMAC Forum outcomes are reported to GMAC on a regular basis.

Thanks to all who participated in the GMAC meetings and to those growers who provided input for their CGA representatives to bring to the discussions. It is expected that this entire consultation process will be repeated next year. It is also expected that more growers and CGAs will wish to be involved each year as they see value in being part of building the actions and solutions for the industry — which will ultimately result in benefit for their regions and their enterprises.



Participants at the Grower Members Advisory Forum.