

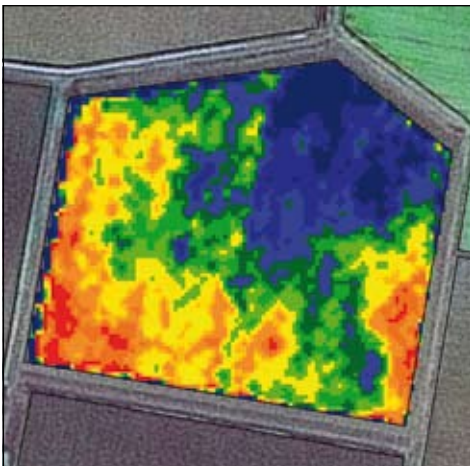
## Cotton CRC pursues precision farming

The Cotton Catchment Communities CRC currently has the use of recognised precision farming practices on at least 50 per cent of the annual cotton crop by 2012 as part of its strategic plan. But while the potential for improvement of economic and environmental outcomes through the use of precision agriculture is well recognised, the specific activities required for its implementation are less well understood.

So the Cotton CRC has commenced a three year project to investigate and demonstrate a range of precision farming practices with the QDPI&F and Terrabyte Services.

With study areas in the Namoi and Darling Downs (each covering 3600 square kilometres), the researchers are working with a group of growers and consultants to identify appropriate applications of satellite and airborne imagery, soil and yield mapping, targeted soil and crop monitoring and spatial data analysis. A post graduate student will be investigating the use of remote sensing to directly estimate crop biomass and leaf area for use in decision support systems.

The planned outcome will be a series of



Precision farming techniques can be used to identify and correct a wide range of yield constraints — including salinity. This satellite image shows high crop growth as red and poor growth as the blue area. While a pre-crop soil test had shown elevated EC levels for one location, the imagery shows the extended area of poor growth representing up to 30 per cent of the field. This field will be EM surveyed following picking and further soil investigation undertaken.





case studies demonstrating the processes and cost benefit of the use of a wide range of precision farming technologies and their use within and across cotton farming system enterprises. Particular emphasis will be given to the activities required to develop strategies for variable rate input management.

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