

# A new era for BMP

By Louise Adcock, BMP General Manager, Cotton Australia

Over the past decade, the cotton industry's BMP program has been highly successful in achieving significant change and has positioned the industry well by reducing its environmental impact, particularly in the area of chemicals. Recently this culminated in Cotton Australia signing a landmark BMP accreditation agreement with the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Water.

The Queensland Government now formally recognises BMP certification as an alternative for cotton growers who have been asked to develop a statutory Land and Water Management Plan (LWMP). The accreditation agreement required Cotton Australia to demonstrate that BMP Certification is a true demonstration of good environmental risk management.

But we are very aware that BMP needs to be made more relevant to growers on a day-to-day basis. The next phase of the program will aim to further reduce the industry's footprint while assisting growers with resources and support to increase productivity. It will strive to be more relevant, practical and to meet the evolving needs of growers and the industry into the future.

## Revised framework

Recently, the ACIC BMP Committee agreed upon a revised BMP framework for the program. The new program is being redesigned based on grower feedback and builds on the strengths of the current program and innovative nature of the industry. The revised framework has taken into account all of the feedback and survey

data collected from industry over the past two years.

As the cotton industry moves into a new era, the BMP program will take a whole of farming business approach rather than focusing on cotton alone. It will be based on the fundamental elements of a farming business such as water, soil, energy and inputs. It will focus on 'farming systems' which will incorporate the broad range of crops grown within a cotton farming system.

The primary aim of the BMP program will be to assist growers to respond and adapt to change. Its secondary aim will be to credibly demonstrate the industry's reputation of professionalism, efficiency, innovation, and as responsible environmental stewards who produce quality cotton.

## Multi-leveled approach

The BMP program will be multi-leveled, providing growers with a higher degree of flexibility within the program. The stages will range from minimum industry standards, to BMP certification and beyond.

Growers will be able to choose elements of the program that best suit their farm business priorities and every element within the program will be designed to make 'practical' business sense. It will also have the capacity to retrospectively recognise growers who have been proactive in the past and, if required, will be linked to resources, tools and knowledge to improve in other areas growers see as valuable.

## A web-based tool

The BMP program will also become electronic, providing growers and industry representatives with a more effective and streamlined tool to foster greater participation. A key aim is to build a web based tool that will become a 'one stop shop' for information, tools and resources to assist growers to implement practices on farm.

The program will also aim to have stronger links to the latest industry research, technology and extension to position the industry well into the future.

We aim to launch the first stage of the revised BMP program at the Cotton Conference on the Gold Coast in August.

For further information please contact me on 07 4639 4908 or 0407 090 089.



The Australian Cotton Industry's BMP General Manager, Louise Adcock, pictured above with David Taylor, 'Neilo', Toobeah, Von Warner, 'Bullamon Plains' Thallon, and Ben Stephens, Auscott, Narrabri.