

Industry combines in conference breakthrough

A new era of industry cooperation beginning with the 14th Australian Cotton Conference at Broadbeach, August 12–14, will see all facets of the Australian industry ranging from production to shipping being represented at the one biennial conference.

Agreement was reached on March 28 and announced jointly by the Chairs of Australian Cotton Growers Research Association (ACGRA) Ben Stephens, and Australian Cotton Shippers Association's (ACSA) Pete Johnson. Cotton Australia is already involved deeply in the Conference and chair Joanne Grainger has also strongly supported the move.

The joint parties believe the 2008 Conference theme of 'New Beginnings – Cotton in a Climate of Change' ideally reflects current challenges and future opportunities for all industry sectors. They said the integration of both conferences reflects a new climate of cooperation in the cotton industry that would be essential for industry as it recovered from drought and begins to adapt.

ACGRA chair, Ben Stephens said a Cotton Conference in 2008 showcasing all facets of the industry is a vital breakthrough and eagerly sought by both organisations.

"At home, producers and shippers recognise that the Australian industry will undergo a period of change and this reflects both challenges and opportunities," he said.

"With ACGRA and ACSA joining forces at the one conference, this sends a strong message for both the Australian industry and

to the markets we serve that we are united in seeking a customer-focused future.

"The August conference will be very exciting and packed with technical and industry content that will be a must-attend event for anyone who sees their future as being connected in any way with cotton.

"ACSA and ACGRA have run very good conferences separately in the past, and 2008 is the right time to join forces," he said.

Raising the profile

ACSA chair, Pete Johnson said the joint conference was a 'fantastic opportunity'. It will assist us in raising the profile of Australian cotton internationally while establishing a joint forum for information sharing up and down the value chain," he said.

"This is a key step for the Australian industry to take and it is the ideal opportunity to build relevance of the Australian industry on the world-stage.

"Australian cotton production is set to bounce back to former levels. ACSA is well aware that traders and spinners may need to be reintroduced to Australia's premium fibre. In recent years our customers and traders have learnt how to substitute our fibre with competing product. A joint Conference is an ideal platform to allow us to work on recapturing those markets.

"The 2009 crop is likely to be four times the current record low crop and we will need to work hard getting our volume and prices back to where they should be."

Pete Johnson said Australian crop marketing is undergoing rapid transformation. He said 'open outcry' futures trading had

ceased in early March, and the market was now 100 percent electronic.

"Trading hours had already been extended, and as it is only a matter of time before the market trades on a 24 hour basis," he said.

"The 2008 Australian Cotton Conference would be the ideal platform to showcase the new premium fibre and service that Australia can uniquely supply, while also providing a clear insight to a dynamic and quickly-changing marketplace.

"The rapid emergence of India and China together with the huge impacts hedge traders are exerting on global commodity markets means it has become imperative for producers and shippers to be in the one space at The Conference, sharing the excellent technical, networking and information resources that will be central to a profitable future for the Australian industry," he said.

Cotton Australia chair, Joanne Grainger said many producers saw value in attending past ACSA Conferences and with a combined program, more would now greatly benefit through exploring all aspects of the market beyond the farm gate.

"We can all learn more about the value chain.

"There is strong relevance for growers to be exposed to the market, and it is good the industry has been able to bring all facets together in the one conference," she said.

Foundation sponsors and supporters of the ACGRA Cotton Conference, CRDC and CSD both support the new-look conference.



The Trade Display was a popular feature of the 2006 Australian Cotton Conference.