

The Trade Show's back in town

By Brian O'Connell, Trade Show Coordinator

In the words of Big Arnie, Governor of California – we're back! The National Australian Cotton Trade Show will be on in 2009 – on the 27th and 28th of May to be exact, at the Moree TAFE site.

As you are aware we took a break in 2008. And I am sure you recall that it wasn't the best year we have ever had! The year off provided a number of opportunities:

- As per feedback from growers and exhibitors we have been able to bring the Trade Show into 'sync' with the Cotton Conference and we intend to go forward with this event every second year. This will mean that there is only one major cotton industry gathering in each year.
- We have also taken this opportunity to expand the scope of the event.

The nature of the cotton industry has changed markedly over the past few years with growers compelled by reduced water availability and financial risk management to explore a range of alternative crops. They are now bringing their high-tech farming methods and management to a wider range of farming opportunities.

For some years now being a 'cotton farmer' has been a slightly artificial distinction. Most farmers that make the decision to grow cotton do so primarily because it offers them the best returns in that particu-



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lar season. It is also an exciting and challenging crop to grow with an emphasis on good management and the development and adaptation of new technology.

This same emphasis is now being much more widely applied to all crops – both irrigation and broadacre. So these days, cotton growers identify with a wider farming community.

NORTHERN CROPPING SYSTEM

We publish magazines into both the cotton and grain industries. We are finding more and more that the best growers in both industries have a lot in common. And we believe we are seeing the emergence of what can be called a 'northern cropping system'.

Although there are local adaptations, the machinery and the technology is similar on the best farms ranging from Emerald and the Burdekin in the north, to the Macquarie in the south, and has even been adapted to southern NSW summer cropping areas.

We have always strived to have the Trade Show at the leading edge of innovation in the cotton industry. With grower and supplier support we have, over recent years, incorporated into the event aspects of 'northern cropping systems'.

EMPHASIS REMAINS ON INNOVATION

Just as cotton growers have sought to broaden their horizons, the scope of the Trade Show will now be expanded to include other summer and winter crops, both irrigated and broadacre, as they relate to this cropping system. And just as the growers have taken their knowledge and experience with them on their journey, we will be maintaining our emphasis



New technology will again be the focus.

on the new technology and management systems that will enhance a grower's environmental and economic sustainability.

We are very much aware that staging a successful event this year will be a challenge – 'global financial melt downs', on-going water shortages and the vagaries of the weather are hard to ignore. But good farmers, the farmers who have been the core of our support over the past 10 years, are not going anywhere. They will be getting on with business and looking to maximise their opportunities – we will strive to do the same.

LESSONS FROM THE CONFERENCE

We put a lot of work into the Trade Display and associated activities at the 2008 Cotton Conference and we were very pleased with the level of industry support we saw there. It was a great conference which saw great changes – the coming together for the first time of ACGRA and ACSA.

We noted in particular the high level of interest in the grower workshops. Not surprisingly, our planning for a reinvigorated Trade Show includes, amongst many other things, sourcing good speakers and facilitators for an expanded grower forum/workshop program.

This will also reflect the growing emphasis on joint projects between the grain and cotton industries.

INDUSTRY RESILIENCE

The decision to proceed with the Trade Show was made on the basis of an amazing amount of resilience we are seeing among growers and suppliers. We are confident that the industry will continue to cope with all the current challenges it faces – and when the dams fill up and 'sub-prime' becomes just another dirty word – it will bounce right back again.

It will necessarily be different, but it will be back. And as I said before – so are we!

We can do with your support – see you in Moree, May 27–28.

For more information, contact Brian O'Connell on Ph: 02 6778 3255, Mob: 0413 130 777; The Australian Cottongrower on Ph: 07 4659 3555, Mob: 0417 703 169; or visit www.cottontradeshow.com.au



The Trade Show will be back at the Moree TAFE site.



The grower forum program will be expanded.



Good farmers are getting on with business and maximising opportunities.