



BRUCE PYKE, CRDC

# COTTON COTTON COTTON RESEARCH ROUNDUP



RALPH SCHULZE, CRDC

## Government decides on new 'identity' for CRDC

CRDC, along with other rural R&D corporations, has been included in an Australian Government directive about a consistent design style for government departments and agencies. Effective immediately, CRDC has been directed to adopt a new logo that has been designed centrally. Existing designs, logos and other corporate styles are not to be used after the end of the year. This will apply to all CRDC activities, including our website.

## Cotton industry environmental audit released

The findings of the second independent environmental audit of the cotton industry, commissioned by CRDC, were released in August. In 1991, the cotton industry was the first agricultural industry in Australia to undergo an independent environmental audit.

Although the new audit found the cotton industry has improved greatly since 1991, it made 48 recommendations for environmental improvements in areas such as water management, pest management and pesticide use and waste management. Through the Australian Cotton Industry Council (ACIC), cotton industry organisations are collaborating to develop a strategic plan and action list to address these challenges.



The new CRDC logo.

A draft industry response has been presented at an ACIC meeting and it is now the job of individual organisations to respond to their particular issues. A final collated response will be communicated to the industry as quickly as possible.

The environmental audit was undertaken by a Sydney-based firm, GHD Pty Ltd, and overseen by Professor Ron Harris of the University of Guelph, Canada. Some of the key areas of improvement the audit found were:

- Formulating and implementing a Best Management Practices (BMP) approach to cotton farming and environmental management.
- Ongoing increases in water use efficiency, which have resulted in lower quantities of water applied per bale.
- Improved pest management, including less reliance on pesticides, through the

adoption and implementation of Integrated Pest Management strategies of which the use of genetically modified cotton crops is a key component.

- Improved spray application to more effectively target spray placement and minimise drift.
- Increased chemical container recycling to reduce disposal in landfills.
- Improved land management through minimising erosion, identifying and managing salinity and reducing soil compaction.
- Development and adoption of farm management tools to achieve environmentally positive outcomes (such as improved soil structure and health by implementing SOILpak).
- Conducting a strong research, extension and development program which has resulted in improved management practices in pesticide use, pest management, water use, vegetation and land management, waste recycling and disposal, wildlife management and biodiversity.

The environmental audit can be downloaded from the CRDC website [www.crdc.com.au](http://www.crdc.com.au), or contact us if you would like a copy sent to you.

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The environmental audit praised the development of the industry BMP program.

### Cotton industry briefing attracts good crowd

A cotton industry briefing by CRDC, Cotton Australian and ACGRA at Parliament House in August attracted around 100 people, including parliamentarians, policy advisers and media.

Launching the CRDC Strategic Plan 2003–08 and the second environmental audit of the industry, Senator Judith Troeth said investment in research and development has driven the phenomenal growth of the cotton industry over the past decade.

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Troeth carries responsibility for rural research and development corporations and is an important voice for the cotton industry in the Australian Government.

Industry leaders who spoke at the briefing included CRDC's Chair, Bridget Jackson, Chair of Cotton Australia, Christine Campbell, National Farmers Federation President (and well known cotton grower) Peter Corish and ACGRA's Chair, Glenn Fresser. Parliamentarians representing most cotton valleys attended,



Senator Troeth.

including the Deputy Prime Minister and Member for Gwydir, John Anderson MP.

### Cotton variety trials 2003–04

It is important for cotton growers to have access to valid and reliable results to confidently choose their cottonseed varieties. We are working with seed companies to revise the Cotton Varietal Trial Protocol for 2003–04 to ensure commercial cotton variety trials achieve a set of minimum acceptable standards.

CRDC-approved trials have been conducted for 11 years, but some important changes for the coming season will mean growers can have increased confidence in varietal trial booklet results.

**Change 1:** A new CRDC Seal of Approval will appear on the graphed results of all trials that have been conducted in accordance with the new CRDC-endorsed protocol.

**Change 2:** CRDC will endeavour to have more 'in-the-field' presence at various trials for all aspects of the trial approval process. This will mean that the CRDC cotton variety trial coordinator, Jodi McLean, may be present at planting, picking, and ginning, and may accompany independent observers in field inspections, to observe seed companies' adherence to the protocol. CRDC will conduct the usual final audit of published results at the end of the season and report on the results of the audits and each seed company's adherence to the protocol.

**Change 3:** Industry Development Officers of the Australian Cotton CRC Extension Team serve as independent observers. An independent observer will make one field inspection of each trial and perform a second inspection only if this is warranted. In place of the second inspection, the independent observer will contact the cooperator (usually the grower or farm manager) towards the end of the season to discuss trial progress.

CRDC is preparing a report on the

2002-03 protocol and will be presenting the results shortly. We would like to thank all members of the CRC extension team for their help inspecting trials in 2002-03.

### **New decision support tools for coming season**

The 'Cotton Management Support Systems' of CSIRO and the Cotton CRC have been busy putting the finishing touches on a number of new decision tools that will be available for the coming season. The most important is the release of HydroLOGIC irrigation management software, which was launched by Cotton CRC Chair, Evan Cleland on September 15 in Goondiwindi, prior to the first training workshop for HydroLOGIC.

This was the first of a series of workshops conducted throughout the industry in September. HydroLOGIC will assist growers with irrigation decisions by allowing them to investigate the effects of different irrigation timing on yield and balance yield potential against water availability. HydroLOGIC is provided free to cotton growers and consultants.

Other decision tools that the team will have available for this season include an improved day degree calculator, an early season diagnosis tool for bollgard management via the Cotton CRC's website, and NutriLOGIC for nitrogen management — also available at the CRC website. The team is also working with members of the CRC and CRDC, discussing future directions for the computerised decision support delivered to the industry.



**Jodi McLean.**

### **CRDC program coordinator wins national award**

CRDC Program Coordinator, Jodi McLean, received the 2003 Science and Innovation Award for Young People in Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry at a glittering ceremony in Canberra in mid-September.

CRDC would like to claim this as a cotton-related award but the truth is that the award is for work Jodi undertook for GrainCorp before she joined CRDC last year. Jodi's work, which also forms her PhD thesis, aims to replace subjective visual assessment used for durum wheat at grain receipt points with objective measurement techniques such as digital imaging or Near Infrared Spectroscopy. Jodi's work is very relevant to cotton, with CRDC currently funding research by the CSIRO at Geelong to develop equipment for objective measurement of cotton micronaire.

The award is sponsored by the Grains Research and Development Corporation and will fund Jodi to give grain growers extension information about her research.

### **CRDC budget update**

CRDC received an unexpected bonus with the receipt of all 2002 farmer-paid cotton levies before the end of the financial year, due to the earlier harvest and shortened ginning period.

That's the good news. The bad news is that this money has, in effect, been brought forward from the 2003-04 year. When combined with uncertain prospects for water allocation in the coming season, CRDC's 2003-04 income will probably fall to well below budgeted levels. This means we will need to draw heavily on invested reserves to maintain even a significantly reduced research and development program. These investments and reserves, to which the Australian Government does not contribute, are established for this purpose but it was not anticipated that they would need to be depleted so dramatically in a single year.

The impact of our financial situation is worsened by a 'double whammy' effect. Income is depleted even further because of the activation of triggers in our legislation that limit the Australian Government's contribution. So the funds drawn from reserves will largely be unmatched by the Government.

Although we cannot control the effect of the continuing drought or the impact of our government funding formula, we will do all in our power to maintain funding for researchers, making the cuts as far as possible in the area of operating expenses within research projects and within the Corporation itself. 