

Improving on the Cotton Trade Show

By Brian O'Connell

The challenge for good operators in this industry is always “how do I improve on what I did last season – and the season before that?” That’s how you can identify the good growers.

They ask that question of themselves, their advisors, their people and their peers. I was recently at an industry forum – another industry’s forum, not cotton – when a very frustrated grower vehemently declared that “I can’t farm any better than I’m doing now!”

This really brought home to me that the underlying strength of the cotton industry is the readiness and the commitment of everyone – growers and service providers alike – to learn more about their industry.

The industry has an insatiable need to know.

So how does that translate into the planning for each National Australian Cotton

Trade Show? Well, we know that the industry wants to see things done well, to see improvements and innovations, and to see their peers.

So the venue and service delivery mechanisms need to be refined to ensure the Trade Show is a showcase – the showcase – for launching new products and services. The aim is to bring together the best the industry has to offer across all fields.

THE VENUE

It’s only the end of March, after a very tough season for most, yet all but a few sites have sold out on an expanded Trade Show layout.

The Trade Show remains focused (the exhibitors are all cotton industry service providers), it is compact and the exhibition areas clearly defined. No matter what site

you want to visit you will still never be further than 150 metres from the bar – which is at the centre of the layout. This has obvious advantages for those seeking refreshments but it also means that visitors can readily access all areas.

And to ensure it’s easy to compare and contrast, with ‘like’ suppliers grouped together – tillage, precision farming, irrigation, processing and marketing – they are all within a few metres of each other and they welcome comparison with their competitors. They have pride in their product and they are happy to go head to head. And they do this quite literally, not just on the adjacent sites, but also on the machinery field demonstration areas.

Changes this year begin in the carpark. Last year there were 1000 vehicles on-site by 11 am and those arriving later in the morning had a good walk to the gate. This year there will be a continuous shuttle service that will pick up in the carpark and deliver visitors to the Trade Show entrance.

The already very impressive main cotton industry pavilion has been expanded to satisfy increased exhibitor demand and there are also significant changes to the on-site catering services.

NEW PRODUCT RELEASES

Once again, many companies are taking the opportunity to launch new products at the Trade Show. The facilities on hand – including the field demonstration area, the irrigation display area, and the seminar rooms – together with the largest annual



The Trade Show brings together the best the industry has to offer.

gathering of growers and service providers, have all helped to make this event the venue of choice for the release of innovative ideas.

At the recent massive Wimmera Machinery Field Days in western Victoria, there were many thousands of people and half a dozen precision agriculture exhibitors.

There will be three times as many PA exhibitors at the Cotton Trade Show side-by-side in one pavilion — and immediately adjacent to the field demo area, which they will use extensively. Many of them will be demonstrating new product releases.

There might not be new products running all the way from A to Z — but they do go from A to V. From A for adjuvants, adhesives and auto steer through to V for variable rate aerial application of growth regulators and new varieties. Along the way throw in liquid fertilisers and laser leveling; satellites and sensors — there will be something new on-site for everyone to see and trial.

SEMINAR SESSIONS

The topics for the industry seminar sessions once again reflect those issues currently of particular interest to growers.

On the Wednesday morning the empha-

sis is on biotechnology. The cotton industry is making considerably more progress in this field than any other agricultural sector. The very nature of our day to day farming practices have changed dramatically and now insects and weeds are no longer our greatest preoccupation.

But water remains a preoccupation and the real value of water is our topic for the Thursday morning session.



Suppliers are happy to go ahead and demonstrate their equipment.

On both days growers will be addressed by industry leaders from home and abroad together with authorities in the appropriate fields. An open forum will follow.

BIG RED PICKER SEARCH

To coincide with the 60th anniversary of the cotton picker, sponsors CASE IH, Kenway and Clark and the National Australian Cotton Trade Show are running a search to find the oldest red picker in Australia. The picker should preferably be alive, or at least intact because we want to make it an entrance display in the big industry pavilion at the Trade Show.

We will transport the picker to and from the Trade Show and the reward for the oldest picker will be two registrations for the ACGRA Cotton Conference on the Gold Coast in August. If there is any uncertainty about which picker is the oldest, our tractor historian, Ian Johnston will be the final judge.

If you have a nomination for an old picker, call John Forrest on 02 6751 1045 or David Dowling on 07 4659 3555.

We look forward to greeting growers from all cotton areas on May 26–27, 2004 at the National Australian Cotton Trade Show, TAFE Agricultural Centre, Newell Highway, Moree. 