

FastStart winning cotton grower awards announced for 2019–20

THE winners for the FastStart Cotton Establishment Awards for the 2019–20 season have been announced, with Angus Doolin from North Star, taking out the irrigated cotton category; and Brett Enkelmann from Murgon winning the dryland category. Each grower wins a pair of tickets to attend a tour of Kununurra, Western Australia, to observe farming practices in this diverse growing region.

The FastStart Cotton Program is a collaboration between Syngenta Australia and Cotton Seed Distributors (CSD) that funds research and practical solutions to support healthy establishment and robust growth in the early stages of a cotton crop's life. The competition, which compared establishment percentages and uniformity, saw over 70 entries this season across both dryland and irrigated categories.

"There are lots of growers out there doing a fantastic job of optimising their seedling establishment through the utilisation of the technology and tools that FastStart is providing," said Syngenta Seedcare Technical Services Lead, Sean Roberts.

"We want to recognise and celebrate this as best practice cotton farming. The Awards are a great way of doing this, as well as sharing what good looks like with other growers."

CSD Marketing and Extension Lead, James Quinn said this year's top farmers were all the more impressive considering all the factors that contribute to establishment success.

Some of those correlated factors include how well the planter is set up, field and soil bed preparation, planting conditions, operator performance and the management of any soil insects and seedling diseases.

James said the FastStart Cotton Establishment Guide provided the information these growers needed to navigate crop

establishment while FastStart-supported seed treatments helped safeguard seedlings against soilborne insect pests and diseases.

"Achieving even establishment of a cotton crop isn't easy but it is critical in getting the crop off to a good start. This can influence the development of the crop and ultimately, yield and quality at picking," said James.

The winning growers also reflected on the award.

"I'm thrilled to win the FastStart Cotton Establishment Award for the irrigated crop category, which is particularly pleasing given it's been an extremely tough season," said Angus Doolin.

"We focus on a full no-till system and aim to maximise seedling establishment by managing stubble within the plant line prior to planting. We use Syngenta seedcare treatments and adjust the planter speed to the conditions to ensure consistent seed placement."

"I'm very honoured to have won this season's dryland FastStart Cotton Establishment Award," said Brett Enkelmann.

"With the dry weather, this season has been a very challenging time; but with the use of a precision planter, FastStart technologies and a no-till farming system, the benefits are evident in the emergence and strength of this season's cotton.

The FastStart Cotton research and development program is funded through a contribution from the sale of CSD seed treated with Syngenta's cotton Seedcare range. The program addresses key grower and industry challenges such as the control of insect pests and diseases, as well investigating complementary technologies to help drive yield potential and minimise risks associated with establishing cotton in Australia.



Angus Doolin.



Brett and Kay Enkelmann.

IRRIGATED COTTON WINNER – ANGUS DOOLIN, NORTH STAR

SNAPSHOT

Soil types	Brigalow Belah and red loam soils
Cotton crop area	160 ha
Planting equipment	John Deere MaxEmerge planter
Planting rate	15.5 seeds/m
Avg. planter speed	6.5 km/hour
Avg. planting depth	2.5 cm

CROP SUMMARY

Planting date	18 October, 2019
Establishment method	Pre-irrigated, watered up
Previous crop	Wheat (winter 2018)
Plant stand/m	15.2 plants/m (98% establishment)
In-crop irrigations	Centre pivot irrigation ongoing
Nitrogen	Nil pre plant, spread 300 kg/ha urea and rely on carryover from cereal for other nutrients
Phosphorus	Cotton Sustain after last cotton crop (2 years ago) – 250 kg/ha + 2 t/ha gypsum (mulched root pupae bust working)
Potassium	30 kg/ha Krista K Plus foliar through pivot
Zinc	2 kg/ha Zinc Heptahydrate through pivot



ANGUS' TOP 5 TIPS FOR ESTABLISHMENT SUCCESS

- Utilise a full no-till system.
- Run trash whippers to clear trash prior to planting.
- Slow planting speed – avoid planting too quickly (this season we planted at 6.5 km/hour).
- Ensure there is sufficient moisture below the seed and ensure watering up is sufficient.
- Plant on a rising temperature plane.

DRYLAND COTTON WINNER – BRETT ENKELMANN, BYEE QLD

SNAPSHOT

Soil type	Black alluvial
Cotton crop area	70 ha
Avg. summer rainfall	675 mm
Planting equipment	Norseman Precision Planter
Planting rate	10 seeds/m
Avg. planter speed	9 km/hour
Avg. planting depth	2.5 cm

CROP SUMMARY

Planting date	30 October, 2019
Establishment method	Rainfall
Previous crop	Mungbeans
Plant stand/m	8.9 plants/m (89% establishment)
Rainfall	42 mm at planting
Nitrogen	20 kg/ha – applied 7 t/ha feedlot manure
Phosphorus	163 kg/ha
Potassium	163 kg/ha



BRETT'S TOP 5 TIPS FOR ESTABLISHMENT SUCCESS

- Ensure you start with a full profile with stubble cover and good soil condition.
- Use a planter with precision planting capabilities, down force for depth control and super trash whippers. Ensure the planter in good condition and set up correctly.
- Ensure the soil temperature is above 14 degrees and on a rising plane.
- Plant a variety with a good seedling vigor for your area.
- Vibrance Complete has given us a better establishment this season.