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COTTON CONFERENCE AND AWARDS

The 2020 Australian Cotton Conference, which was planned for August, will not proceed.

With the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic evolving daily and amid much uncertainty, the conference committee has taken account of the health and safety of delegates, sponsors and exhibitors to call the conference off. Whether or not the country is back to "business as usual" by August, commitments and decisions have to be made now for an event of this size.

At this time the committee is in negotiations with the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre to find a workable alternative solution. More than likely, the conference will be held sometime during the winter of 2021.

For those that have already registered for conference, a full refund will be offered.

Further information will be made available to the industry as soon as it is available and if you have any questions or concerns, please contact the conference secretariat: Tracey Byrne-Morrison
M: (0408) 799 185 E: secretariat@australiancottonconference.com.au

The 2020 Cotton Industry Awards have also been cancelled and more details will be available in the near future.



Editorial...

David Dowling, Editor

IT'S hard to recall just how the media filled their pages and programs before the coronavirus came to town. There is not much else to talk about at the moment, and quite rightly, because this is probably the biggest "black swan" event any of us will experience in our lifetimes – hopefully, at least.

I'll leave any predictions to the experts in epidemiology, although they haven't done so well so far. Instead, I'll follow the lead of the US President and say that I have a "good feeling" that the current policies will bring the situation under control in Australia within a reasonable time frame. We were too slow to start, especially on border protection, but hindsight is a wonderful thing.

Being an island nation helps, plus we have a very good health system and money in reserve with a budget which was getting close to surplus – something we may not see again for a decade or two. Other countries will not fare so well, including some of our best trading partners such as Indonesia. Farmers need to be prepared for a roller coaster ride in commodity prices in the next year or so, and be ready to be flexible in their planting options as well. At least there are now large areas of Australia which are likely to have planting options over the next few months after the late summer rainfall.

As an essential industry, agriculture should suffer less disruption than most others. But problems may start to appear in both the supply of inputs and the marketing and distribution of production. The world has become an interdependent place. We sell cotton to Indonesia and China but only as long as the mills are running and the mills will only run while customers are buying cotton clothes. And even online sales are likely to suffer because there is no point buying clothes if you are sitting in your lounge room all day.

While the nasty little virus causing Covid-19 has grabbed all the attention in recent weeks, it is not the only dangerous organism which has invaded or threatened to invade Australia. In this issue, we will look at a couple of others with relevance to the cotton industry.

Fall armyworm have been found in northern Australia and are likely to be an issue for cotton growers at some stage in the future, although early indications are that Bollgard 3 should give control in most cases. More information from the experts starting on page 20.

And there are a couple of viruses which, while not as deadly as the Covid-19 virus, could be a massive problem for our cotton industry, especially as it expands in northern Australia. Starting on page 14, Murray Sharman looks at the risks of transmission from our near-northern neighbours.

Until next time, stay safe.

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