

Micro-irrigation with innovation

ON February 4, N-Drip, the innovative gravity-powered drip system that addresses the needs of broadacre farmers, was showcased at a second field day in Nangwee, in the Darling Downs farming region of Queensland.

More than 30 participants visited two fields in which the N-Drip system is installed. The first was a very healthy-looking cotton field (which stood out in comparison to a neighbouring flood-irrigated cotton field), and a recently-harvested sorghum field.

N-Drip is an affordable low pressure drip system that operates with no pumps or filters, and so requires almost no pressure (0.05 bar). This was the most surprising fact for most field day attendants, who came from around the region to see with their own eyes how a drip system with 50 cm head pressure can deliver water through laterals more than 580 meters long.

"N-Drip is a breath of fresh air for the drip industry," says Greg Mills, an agronomist from Dalby, Queensland with more than 35 years of experience. "I loved the simplicity and robustness of the system, and I was happy to have all my questions answered today."

The N-Drip system can be installed in any field which has been levelled for flooding. Taking advantage of the field's slopes and accounting for pressure loss caused by the friction of the water against the pipes, the N-Drip team creates a tailored design that can irrigate any levelled flood field with the uniformity and ease of operation that a drip system offers.

"We're halfway through the season, and we've seen 50 per cent saving in water in this cotton field, with more fruit and better-looking crops" says Udi David-Stern, General Manager for N-Drip Australia. "Drip irrigation is a widely-researched irrigation method that has been in use for more than 50 years. Numerous studies show the benefit in yield and water savings when using drip irrigation on different crops. The major innovation here is the simplicity and affordability of our system, which finally makes drip irrigation a viable option for broadacre crop farmers."



Smart-apply intelligent spray control system

AUSTRALIAN farmers can soon reap the benefits of industry-leading technology to help control spray drift, with the finalisation of an allied distribution agreement between John Deere and Smart Guided Systems to roll out the Smart-Apply Intelligent Control System across the country.

Using Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR), the Smart -Apply Intelligent Control System technology is an add-on kit for air-blast sprayers that are towed behind John Deere tractors in horticulture production.

From December 22, 2020, it will be sold and serviced by John Deere dealers to not only assist farmers to guard against spray drift but also to reduce chemical use, for better environmental and economic performance.

John Deere Production System Manager, Stephanie Gersekowski, said the global agreement, which also includes the United States and Canada, will contribute to farming's sustainability, while maximising the potential for profit in horticultural enterprises.

"This innovative precision spraying solution can be used effectively in high value crops such as fruit and tree nut orchards, nurseries, and vineyards," Stephanie said.

"The Smart-Apply system helps ensure only the canopy is sprayed and automatically adjusts spray volume based on the plant's density per nozzle zone. This results in lesswasted product and helps maintain agronomic efficiency for growers.

"We encourage all farmers interested in learning more to speak to their local John Deere dealer."

Smart Guided Systems Chief Executive Officer Steve Booher said John Deere was known for having world-class dealer channels and for providing outstanding sales, service, and support to customers.

"The agreement gives our customers access to an innovative, field-proven precisionspraying control system for use in high-value specialty crops through a proven distribution channel," Steve said.

Stephanie said the agreement was in line with John Deere's overarching goal to partner with farmers for a forward-thinking and prosperous agriculture sector by increasing the adoption of precision agriculture technology.

"As the sector strives to become more productive, profitable and sustainable, John Deere will continue its work as an industry leader in technological farming advancements," she said.

"Being the new home for the Smart-Apply Intelligent Control System is a big step towards ensuring leading AgTech can be used by all farming sectors."

For more information visit your local John Deere dealer or JohnDeere.com.au



CGS announce northern service hub in Darwin

PETER Cottle has been appointed Manager, Northern Australia for leading specialist agribusiness supplier CGS who have announced the opening of their Darwin office. The decision to base its northern Australian operations in Darwin follows the growing confidence of its customers in developing tropical cropping opportunities in north



Peter Cottle.

Queensland, the NT and northern WA. CGS operates in NSW and Queensland from a network of 12 locations servicing the specific agronomy and production needs of growers producing cotton and a range of other specialty crops.

"Northern Australia shows a lot of potential to become a consistent and significant contributor to Australia's agricultural cropping industries," said CGS's CEO Steve Ainsworth. "We see a lot of opportunities in the tropics for growers over the next couple of decades as the world looks to access reliable supply of high quality food and fibre."

CGS Darwin will provide a central hub for CGS and its industry partners to service local opportunities for growers investing in the broad acre production of cotton, grains and horticultural crops.

CGS recently announced that respected agribusiness leader Peter Cottle is joining the company to head up its operations in northern Australia based in Darwin in a major coup for the company.

Peter Cottle has a diversity of agricultural experience which extends over a 40 year career in roles including cotton agronomy, farm operations and the general management of a number of large agricultural businesses in Queensland and northern NSW. Peter has been pivotal in helping growers transform marginal properties into growing sustainable concerns, and to partner with agricultural leaders to uncover opportunities for long term growth and success.

"My passion has always been partnering with growers who see the potential of their properties. It's great when people have a vision for improvement," Peter said. "That's where we come in, helping growers drive long-term productivity and success."

"I believe northern Australia offers significant opportunity for both broadacre and horticulture expansion and that it is very much an "untapped" region when it comes to farming. There are plenty of good people up here in the north who are hungry for success and I look forward to partnering and helping them to access advances in research, farming system development and new technology that we've been rolling out across Queensland and NSW. Now has never been a better time to invest in northern Australia."

February–March 2021

Updated tool to support farmers' carbon options

FARMERS can now better understand the potential opportunities from carbon-reducing activities using a farming tool developed by CSIRO, Australia's national science agency.

The LOOC-C ('Look See') app gives farmers detailed assessments of how their land and farming practices could be eligible for rebates under the Climate Solutions Fund (CSF).

The newest update of the app now includes measurement of soil carbon and beef cattle herd management.

The app gives estimates of abatement quantity for CSF methods in Australian Carbon Credit Units for specific land areas, like a paddock, and is consistent with the latest version of the National Carbon Accounting Model, which is used to estimate land sector carbon emissions.

This means LOOC-C users have access to the most up to date carbon estimates available, at the touch of a button.

CSIRO's LOOC-C project leader, Peter Fitch, explains that the aim of the tool is to help farmers and land managers participate profitably in greenhouse gas mitigation and maximise the benefits to the land from carbon markets.

"LOOC-C is unique and the quickest way of finding out what carbon farming options are available for your farm, what you're eligible for and what the benefits might be," Mr Fitch said.

"We see it as a high-tech conversation starter that enables farmers to undertake a preliminary assessment of options and connect them with a suitable next step for their carbon farming journey."

Dr Kate Andrews, CEO of NRM Regions Australia, has endorsed the tool since its launch in December 2019.

"This app is an example of what the industry needs at the moment, allowing opportunities in the carbon market to be explored simply and without obligation," Kate said.

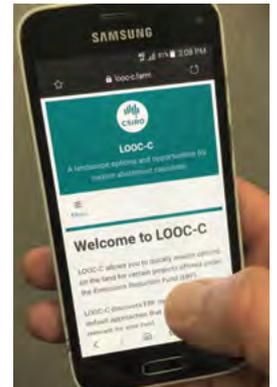
"You can tell that the development of the app included input from both landholders and project developers, it's great to see these types of products coming from CSIRO."

The Queensland Government has been quick to see the value of the tool and has been using the app as part of the roll out of its Land Restoration Fund.

Carbon farming is a way for landholders to help reduce national carbon emissions by capturing and holding carbon in their plants and soil, generate environmental and on-farm benefits, and get paid for it.

Examples can include planting trees, retaining vegetation rather than clearing it for cropping, reducing soil tillage or improving pasture for livestock.

The app can be accessed at <https://looc-c.farm/>



Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program participants announced

THE participants in the latest edition of the Australian cotton industry's premier leadership initiative – the Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program (AFCLP) – have been announced.

The leadership program, delivered by Cotton Australia and the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC), is run every two years, with this year's program being the seventh time it has been staged.

The program is best suited to emerging leaders actively working in the Australian cotton industry who want to progress their leadership skills.

Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay said a combination of growers and researchers had been selected for this year's AFCLP.

"The applicants we had for this year's program were the strongest we have ever observed, which highlights the depth of leadership potential we are fortunate to have within our industry," Adam said.

"Our selection panel had the challenge of choosing just 15 participants, and I am confident the AFCLP will help shape those people in their work guiding the Australian cotton industry through the decades ahead.

"I thank everyone who applied to be involved, and I congratulate those who have been selected and wish them well on this journey."

Adam said the AFCLP will provide the cohort of participants with the opportunity to grow as individuals and as a group.

"One of the great things about this flagship program is it empowers each individual participant to flex their leadership muscle in a way tailored to their strengths, while also binding the group of participants in a collegial, constructive way where they become a powerhouse of ideas for our industry," he said.

"We immensely value our industry's people, and I'm extremely confident this group of emerging leaders will help shine a light

for the entire cotton industry for years to come."

CRDC Executive Director, Dr Ian Taylor, said the Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program would take on extra importance in 2021.

"Last year's pandemic and crises highlighted to us the value of good leadership, and how when our leaders bind together in the face of adversity and share ideas in an agile and positive way, the hurdles we all need to climb become just that bit smaller," Ian said.

"I believe this program, with its face-to-face forums, an interactive online discussion forum, one-on-one coaching, an individual project, and integration with industry activities, will empower our emerging leaders to dream big and strive for greater success.

"I wish them well on their leadership journey and look forward to working with them as we build a stronger Australian cotton industry."

Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program 2021 participants:

- Nicole McDonald, Melbourne, VIC
- Joe Briggs, Coleambally, NSW
- Sally Ceeney, Warren, NSW
- Patrick Fillipi, Sydney, NSW
- Jess Lehmann, Canberra, ACT
- James Traill, Moree, NSW
- Richard Gray, Moree, NSW
- Charlie Clark, Goondiwindi, QLD
- Alexandria Galea, Emerald, QLD
- Will Jackman, Moree, NSW
- Chris Hutchinson, Moura, QLD
- Matthew Anning, Springsure, QLD
- Rob Weinthal, Gunnedah, NSW
- Melinda Swift, Warren, NSW
- Kimberley Fawkes, Dalby, QLD.



Alexandria Galea.



Nicole McDonald.

Global fertiliser price outlook positive news for Aussie growers

AFFORDABLE fertiliser prices helped support Australian agricultural producers' profits through the 2020–21 winter cropping season. And a plentiful global fertiliser supply – along with stable currency outlook – spells further good news for growers in the year ahead, according to agribusiness specialist Rabobank.

In its latest Semi-Annual Global Fertiliser Outlook: Demand Revival, the bank says while global fertiliser prices had climbed off their 10-year lows during the second half of 2020 – primarily due to improved world-wide demand – this newly-found price strength was expected to tail off during quarter two this year.

“Heavy supplies and growing production capacity will continue to weigh on prices across the nutrient complex,” the report says.

The bank expects global urea and phosphate prices to remain stable until the start of quarter two, supported by northern hemisphere demand.

But once that seasonal demand had subsided, global markets would again be exposed to heavy supplies, the report says.

And for Australia – where 70 per cent of fertilisers overall are imported – that means favourable farmgate prices for fertiliser should be “here to stay for 2021”, says Rabobank agricultural analyst Wes Lefroy.

“For the three main fertiliser products sold domestically, the figures are even higher when it comes to Australia’s reliance on imported product,” he said. “During the financial year 2019, 92 per cent of urea, 81 per cent of mono-ammonium phosphate (MAP) and 100 per cent of Muriate of Potash (MOP) sold here was imported.”

And of Australia’s domestically-produced fertiliser products, Wes said, a number rely on imported raw materials.

“As such, local farmgate fertiliser prices are largely driven by global prices, the Australian dollar and, to a lesser extent, ocean freight rates,” he said.

“For growers, the good news is we expect heavy supplies and growing production capacity will continue to weigh on prices across the global fertiliser market.”

Australian demand

Australia’s recent bumper winter crop – production is forecast by ABARES to increase 76 per cent year on year – had fuelled local fertiliser demand, the Rabobank Global Fertiliser Outlook said Nationally, according to Fertiliser Australia, nitrogen sales were up 26 per cent year on year during the first half of 2020 and, despite Covid-19’s supply chain pressure, urea imports passed two million metric tonnes in August last year – well above the preceding three years.

Potassium sales were also up 41 per cent year on year.

With a continuing wet summer forecast, Wes said strong demand was likely to remain into 2021 as Australian farmers replenish nutrients following the bin-breaking winter crop.

“A long application lead time and high availability will ensure importers can supply demand for next season and decrease the likelihood of any localised shortages,” he said.



Rabobank agricultural analyst Wes Lefroy.

Potential challenges

Wes said while global fertiliser prices overall were expected to remain favourable for Australian producers, one factor limiting importers’ purchasing power would be a relatively weak Australian dollar – which the bank expects will continue to trade near the USc 76 for the next 12 months.

At current urea prices, a one cent drop in the AUD represents approximately a five to six AUD/tonne increase in local prices, he said.

The ongoing impacts of Covid-19 also needed to be considered in the year ahead.

“The resilience of local and global fertiliser supply chains to the impacts of the global pandemic this year has been something to celebrate. In fact, to the end of August 2020, year-to-date urea imports reached 2.1 million metric tonnes, some 300,000 tonnes more than 2019, and 665,000 tonnes more than 2018,” Wes said.

“But with case numbers still very high in many parts of the world, the potential for a Covid-19-related interruption to either supply or production remains.”