



# the cotton wrap

**APRIL 2017**

**SEASON SUMMARY**

Picking is starting to ramp up with cotton coming off from Bourke to Breeza and all places in between. Yield's so far from irrigated are from 8 to 12 bales per hectare. Dryland crops are anywhere between 1- 3.5 bales per hectare. This crop below was estimated to be going at up to 3.5 bales in places with about a 3 bale average.



Dryland cotton being picked at "Callandor" near Boggabri.

Congratulations to Jack Harris and the team at "Miralwyn" for taking out honours in the Walgett crop competition. The winners were announced last Tuesday in the stately garden at "Carlton" thanks to Wal, Jane and Charlie Friend. The winning crop was Sicot 746B3F planted in late October on one metre spacing after a long fallow from wheat. A fertiliser blend was applied pre-plant with 300 units of N also applied as Urea. The yield predicted by the judges was between 8 and 15 bales per hectare and it was a worthy winner on the

day and a credit to the team. It was only a narrow win though with Sam and Kim Powell, "Riverview" coming in second only 2 points behind and Toby Moore third. Dave Fleming was awarded the Water Use Efficiency trophy for his crop of Sicot 714B3F which followed straight after Chickpeas on the 19th December and with 9 irrigations only used around 7 Megs and was still estimated to yield around 8- 9 bales per hectare.

Another surprise packet was this dryland crop at "Cara Mia", around 60 km west of Walgett and managed by Jack Harris. Planted on 19<sup>th</sup> December this 714B3F crop was on a super single row configuration. The crop received 70mm just after planting which caused some to be replanted and another 75 mm late January saved the crop. It missed much of the extreme heat whilst flowering and was carrying a very good fruit load when we visited last week.



Jack Harris and Farm Manager Coerte in their dryland crop at "Cara Mia"

## FIBRE QUALITY

With picking underway I posed a few questions to Rene Vandersluijs our Melbourne based fibre tech specialist about consideration for this season.

*Is high moisture in modules resulting in penalties or issues at Gins?*

Studies have shown that, irrespective of the harvesting method, seed cotton moisture has a significant influence on fibre quality.

Increased moisture results in a microbial/bacterial action which leads to colour degradation (spotting) and discoloration which affects the colour grade (as measured both visually and by instrument), with the fibre becoming yellower and less bright with trash adhering to the lint. Other fibre properties such as micronaire, length, strength and elongation can also be affected.

Seed cotton moisture also has a significant influence on seed quality, with an increase in moisture content resulting in a decrease in germination and vigour, due to an increase in free fatty acid content and aflatoxin level. Increased moisture content also leads to increased mechanical damage to the seed, resulting in an increase in the quantity and weight of seed coat fragments and mote. Furthermore, during ginning, increased moisture also leads to increased gas usage, reduction in production, blockages and the possibility of fires

*What is the maximum moisture level at picking and what is the accurate way to measure?*

It is commonly accepted that seed cotton can be harvested with moisture levels of  $\leq 12\%$  without compromising the quality of the fibre and seed. It must be remembered that up to 2% moisture is added to seed cotton by the spindles to keep them clean and to enhance

the adherence of the fibre to the spindle and allow for its removal by the doffer.

Furthermore the round modules produced by the JD round module harvesters are smaller in size in comparison to traditional modules, resulting in less dilution of the cotton from across different picking times and moistures. Some rules of thumb to consider relating to moisture on cotton to be harvested include:

- Install moisture measuring equipment on the harvester, or use hand held moisture meters.
- Moisture measuring equipment should be calibrated to ensure correct readings.
- Note that hand held moisture meters are usually  $\pm 1\%$  accurate
- If moisture is present on vehicles while harvesting it is most likely that the cotton is too wet.
- The seed should feel hard (cracks in your teeth)
- When a handful of cotton collected in the palm of your hand is squeezed into a ball and then released, the moisture content is acceptable if the seed cotton springs back to near its original size.
- If you can feel moisture on the cotton it is too wet.
- The addition of green leaf will add moisture.
- A symptom of moist cotton is frequent blocked doors, throwing cotton out the front of the picking heads.

A reminder also to maintain bearings in the roller feed and check clearances and adjustment or plastic wrap may be damaged and contaminate the next produced module.

More information is available on the John Deere wrap guide of which I have a copy but no web link just yet so let me know and I will send it on.



## WELSHY'S WEATHER

The next 3-4 week period looks like mild stable autumn weather, great for picking. It's hard to find good news for those looking to plant winter crop, although a rain-bearing system keeps showing up for the end of April that may settle the dust. The broader indicators seem to be shaping up to reach El Niño thresholds by the end of winter. If the eastern Indian Ocean turns cold this winter and spring then finishing rains for winter crop maybe scarce. Certainly not the year to be planting a late winter cereal crop the way spring is shaping up. Keep an eye on the Moisture Manager for more thorough updates.

A warning for all those weather station buffs as they do malfunction.



The weather station at "Miralwyn" had a slight battery malfunction.

*Until Next time*

### Geoff Hunter

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