By Amanda Thomas

Welshy’s weather wrap ........

The recent decay of the 2015/16 El Niño is gathering pace, with 2 US research agencies declaring a spring and summer El Niño the most likely scenario. 3 of 4 multi-week models surveyed today report a rain event between 17-21 of April so worth keeping an eye on this system as it develops.

As for winter cropping season, both statistical models and general circulation models are favouring average to above growing season rainfall. The lead AEGIC analogue years for 2016 at the moment are 1983 and 1973 so check out your farm rainfall records for those years.

One thing to note is the model consensus for higher than normal temperatures this winter growing season. Early planted crops may grow and mature very quickly, which may see them exposed to frost later in the year. Check the CliMate app to check out rainfall probabilities for your location


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Day Degrees Update

Muldoon Pratten Ag Consulting has provided the day degree charts for this season we have had a well above average in all areas. You can see we are tracking fairly similar to last season. The early planted crops reached first flower quite early in December this year. The Narromine end of the valley is currently getting its second defoliation and the Warren end is picking, early reports are showing high to very high yields.
Fig 1. 2016 Day Degree graph (Source Muldoon Pratten Ag Consulting)
Muldoon Pratten Ag Consulting (MPAC) have crunched the figures on the day degrees relative to planting date. Due to the warm start with a low number of cold shock days the early planted crops lead the way and the later stuff did not catch up like it has done in some seasons. Some growers in Warren were able to take advantage of soil moisture and plant on moisture, however it did come with its challenges. If you interested in finding out more check out the moisture planting case studies from this season.
Round the traps ...........

March was field day madness, we had the two MCGA valley field days the CSD and Monsanto Bollgard 3 field day, and a Canopy Temp Sensor farm walk. The MCGA field day was broken into to two half day farm tours. The first one was at Narromine that went on a bit of tour of some of the high achievers from last season, we looked at Cover crops and Strip Tillers (see files attached). The Warren tour headed out to Auscott to look at the result of 1, 2, 3 and full waters on the 60Inch cotton in skip and solid. We then went to Alex and Mouse Ramsay’s to see if we could get the skinny on how to grow close to seventeen bale crop.

CSD and Monsanto had a Bollgard 3 field walk at “Hatton” Warren and “Westwood” Narromine to look at the impressive new varieties that will be available for growers next season.

Pic 1: CSD Variety trial from above (Source Angus Obrien Hatton)
Round the traps …. 

“Redundant roots”, that is the new word for this month uttered by Michael Braunack to the crowd last Monday in the soil pit at Drew Penberthy’s property near Bellata. A great turnout of 53 growers and consultants also heard from Michael Bange and Warwick Stiller on research projects currently being conducted in dryland cotton around row configuration, moderating plant growth with hormones and new CSD new varieties containing Roundup Ready Flex technology suitable for dryland coming through the breeding programme. CGS had soil probe data corroborated by the soil pit showing graphically how hormone affected cotton was mirrored in root formation with the main root lacking vigour and size( redundant roots) and water use increased along the skip row with moisture bulges own the plant line.

Dave and Pete Ricardo hosted a field day at “Morvenvale” a to look at progress of dryland cotton which was planted on super single row spacing and had around 200ml rainfall. The growth and yield potential certainly shows that cotton has a fit in these western cropping areas. A soil pit showed the cotton roots accessing moisture at 60cm
Opportunity knocks ………

Funding from the Sustaining the Basin: Irrigated Farm Modernisation (STBIFM) program has already helped more than 100 irrigators become more water efficient and made their irrigation businesses more profitable. The program is in its final stages, and NSW DPI encourages other eligible irrigators in northern NSW to apply for their share of the $111 million to upgrade on-farm water infrastructure and improve water use efficiency.

Recent changes have been made to the program as a result from irrigator feedback, to make it easier for irrigators to improve their water use efficiency and to make it simpler for those applying for infrastructure modernisation funding to plan for and finance their projects. The changes include:

- the release of indicative prices for entitlements – available on the STBIFM website
- the option of contributing water instead of cash or in-kind
- all irrigators across the program area may now apply for a reimbursement of up to $2,000 for the preparation of an Irrigated Farm Water Use Efficiency Assessment (IFWUEA).

Farm planning funded through the program has been a valuable tool for many irrigators, which is why financial assistance for the preparation of an IFWUEA has been expanded to all catchments in the program area (Macquarie, Peel, Border Rivers, Lower Namoi and Barwon Darling). IFWUEAs help irrigators locate and quantify on-farm water losses, and that information can then be used to look at options to improve on-farm efficiency.

For further information, please head to the STBIFM webpage, or contact Project Officers, Bill Williamson, Dubbo (0427 660 618) or Peter Verwey, Narrabi (0409 812 497).


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