



Information when you need it

the **cotton thread**

Border Rivers, St George and Dirranbandi

April May 2021



Picking underway in the Balonne and MacIntyre regions.

Season Update

Picking of crops in the Balonne region is approaching completion with the exception of some late plant and crops that were re-started in January when further irrigation water was received. Early reports indicated some cotton was below base grade on colour however subsequent reports indicate that the bulk of crop is meeting base grade or better with good length. Picker yields are suggesting many crops are yielding around 15b/ha with a limited number of gin weighed fields supporting this. In general outturn has been around 42% with 41-44% seeming to be the range to date.



Best Practice



Beardmore dam was filled by a flow event during March and April that yielded a 21-day harvest event for river harvest irrigators. The flow triggers were quite low meaning the water volumes these irrigators were able to take were relatively low and currently provide limited opportunity for next year's crop, and may be utilised to ensure a good winter crop result instead.

Picking in the MacIntyre so far has largely been dryland crops with irrigated crop harvest only commencing in recent days. As yet, there is a lack of data on yield and/or quality to indicate how the crops for the region will fair.

The MacIntyre region has benefited from good rainfall that led to inflows into their supply dams, Glenlyon and Pindari. Both are around the 50% full level at present and are likely to see irrigation allocation for next season. Of greater benefit to many were the flow events in the river and creek systems in the region. These, along with on farm captured water, have seen many storages in the region filled providing the opportunity for a significant area of irrigated cropping next summer.

The recent [CottonInfo Moisture Manager](#) shows models supporting a normal outlook for rain in the coming months.



Source	Temp Forecast	Precipitation outlook				
		Emerald	Sth Q'ld	N-NSW	C-NSW	S-NSW
ACCESS-S 	Warmer	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Drier M/J/J
UK Met 	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Drier M/J/J
IRI NMME 	Normal	Above normal M/J/J	Normal	Above normal M/J/J	Above normal M/J/J	Drier M/J/J
ECMWF 	Cooler	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Above normal M/J/J
CMCC 	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal
JMA 	Cooler	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal

Cotton in the Balonne

Cotton Australia has released a video featuring Balonne Shire Mayor, Sam O'Toole talking about the important contribution that the cotton industry makes to the Balonne regional community. Hold the control button and click the below image to start the video.



Quality Considerations

As we are now embarking on harvesting and ginning, consider the following:

Harvesting plays an important role in determining fibre and seed quality, as the quality of ginned cotton is directly related to the quality of seed cotton prior to ginning. Therefore, irrespective of which mechanical harvesting method is used, the setup and adjustment, training, and skill of the operators, as well as the rate and application of nutrients, timing of defoliation and harvesting play a major role in the amount of trash and moisture present in the seed cotton.

Quality Considerations

1. Moisture

Increased moisture results in microbial/bacterial action which leads to colour degradation (spotting) and discoloration which affects the colour grade, 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.

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.

2. Module Staging

To avoid variability in fibre quality and processing performance modules should be staged, transported, and ginned in the sequence that they were harvested.

When transporting modules through harvested rows, the module should be carried high enough to minimise contact with those rows to prevent drag and tearing of underside of wrap.

Modules should be staged on well drained areas of bare soil, such as turn-rows. If the soil is wet, wheel slip by the truck can cause the loading chains to tear the plastic wrap.

Do not allow module ends to touch, as this will cause water to enter the modules rather than to run off down the ends. The modules should be aligned so that the centrelines are within a ± 13 cm band. Gaps between modules also allow ventilation.

3. Contamination

The incidence of plastic contaminants can cause major problems and it is thus essential that our industry does all it can to prevent plastic wrap making its way into cotton bales. The first, and most, logical step to address the problem of contamination, is to prevent/avoid or

minimize the contamination entering the production process, particularly during growing and harvesting, through appropriate farm management and associated practices, for example:

- All workers should be made aware of the consequences of contamination and must be provided with the tools to clean up and isolate rubbish, for example provide garbage bins in which all waste is thrown and use only white cleaning rags.
- Where practical remove plastic and other contaminating debris from the field prior to harvest.
- Significant wrap tears must be repaired in the field prior to loading on module truck to prevent further wrap damage and ginning problems.
- Loose outer tails must be secured with 3M™ Hi-strength 90 spray adhesive or lint bale repair tape.
- Tag modules and notify the ginner of potential issues caused by malfunctions during harvesting.

The Australian Cotton Ginners Association encourages growers to discuss their requirements with their ginner and even be present when their cotton is being processed.

Thank you to Rene van der Sluijs, Technical Lead for Fibre Quality, CottonInfo for contributing this segment.

For further information, Rene can be contacted on: sluijs@optusnet.com.au

Research priorities for CRDC investment

CRDC representatives have been visiting regions with the aim of gathering ideas for future research focus from industry members. These ideas have covered topics such as:

- Irrigation management
- Limited water decision making
- Evaporation mitigation
- Defoliation package for the south
- Management for early retention
- Minimising micronaire discounts
- Soil health – how to promote
- Disease management – Reoccurring Wilt information
- Yield decline
- Chemical solutions for BRR
- Managing soil variability
- Further development of SLW App
- Nutrition management – role of micronutrients, biologicals, N inhibitors, P&K rate and placement, N decisions (and in-field testing)

- Water x crop area planning aid
- Defoliation options and process – access to overseas registered products

It is important that growers and industry stakeholders are able to bring forward research topics to help the direction of the industry as a whole and to make individual businesses more productive.

So here is your chance to have your say. Cotton Australia are conducting a short survey where you can put forward three research topics.

To complete the survey, click [here](#).

Note CRDC no longer invests in plant breeding or varieties. This is done through Cotton Breeding Australia. Please keep this in mind when thinking about research priorities for CRDC.

CRDC is funded through an R&D levy, which all growers pay (the levy equates to \$2.25 for each 227 kilogram bale of cotton; or \$4.06 per tonne of exported seed cotton), with the Government matching the funds dollar-for-dollar.

Over the past 29 years, over \$340 million has been invested in cotton RD&E by growers and the Government – and it has been estimated that the return on investment for growers is \$7 in benefits for every \$1 invested.

Teach the Teacher, Mungindi

Cotton Australia and the Mungindi CGA recently hosted a well-attended and successful education event for the local teaching community.

Over 20 teachers attended a cotton information and education afternoon which started with an on-farm session hosted by the South Benarba team and Longworth family.



Teach the Teacher, Mungindi on the property Yarralumbly

Attendees were welcomed by CGA President Tristram Herslet followed by presentations from Bec Longworth, Sam Heagney, Ian Howse and Rob Holmes covering the business structure, operational overview and management, cotton production and the current season crop.

This was followed by a walk around a round bale cotton picker provided by local grower Ben Warby.

The group then moved onto the nearby Mungindi gin and a presentation from Glen Smith on the ginning process. The group dined at the Mungindi golf club and heard from Glen Smith, Evolution Farming, on water allocations, and Nellie Lawson on best practice in the industry and the global Better Cotton Initiative promoting responsible and sustainable cotton production.



CottonInfo Blog

2021 sustainability focus - May: improving our biodiversity

Along with soil and water, biodiversity – the variety of life forms found in an environment including animals, plants, bacteria, fungi and micro-organisms – makes up the natural capital that cotton farms rely on to exist.

For cotton growers, biodiversity provides services including natural pest control and pollination, erosion control, carbon sequestration and storage and enhanced water retention. These can all deliver a direct financial benefit to growers, as well as improving wellbeing from simply having more trees and biodiversity in the landscape.

To find out more, follow the link in the title.

CSD Update



The recent publication of [FACTS ON FRIDAY](#) covers the topic of selling and marketing cotton. It explains how cotton price is determined and the components that make up the Australian price along with how premiums and discounts can impact the price a grower receives. It then looks at the parameters of cotton quality, what is are measured, how and when these can cause a price premium or discount to be incurred.

The above “Facts on Friday” is a hyperlink however only members of CSD will be able to access the publications.



The April publication of the [COTTON YARN](#) covers a range of topics and news including:

- Preliminary Variety trial results
- Flood damage to Gwydir crops
- Season updates for the production regions – these provide a brief snapshot into crop progress across the cotton production areas of Australia

CSD members can access this information from the CSD website [here](#).

CRDC news

News from CRDC includes:

- The Autumn edition of the [Spotlight](#) magazine is out.
- CRDC board meets for first time face-to-face for first time since new board members appointed.
- Career opportunities exist for a Research and Development manager and a CottonInfo communications lead person.

For more details on these, click [here](#).

COTTON AUSTRALIA CORNER

[Cotton Matters](#) – key points

- CA meets with QLD Ag minister



- Flood support available for affected growers
- CottonInfo Update: Picking hygiene
- Stay safe while picking
- Cotton Australia Regional manager – Macquarie Valley – position open.
- Farm management deposits scheme survey – have your say
- Small business rebates available to NSW growers
- New information available after casual employment law reform
- Murray Darling Basin Authority regional community forums
- Northern Food Futures Conference May 17 – 20.
-

News from Cotton Australia is largely covered in the Cotton Matters topics above.

- For further information click [here](#).

What's On:

- 6 May:** Cotton Australia St George Cotton Community Catchup Tour
- 7 May:** Cotton Australia Grower Breakfast, 7.30am, AgNVet, Thallon Rd St George
- 11 May:** Chem Cert course, Balonne (contact CountryCo Ag Services admin@countryco.com.au for more details).
- 12 May:** Australian Cotton Shippers Meeting, The Australian Hotel, St George 6pm
- 25-26 May:** [Florabank workshops](#), Wee Waa
- 7 June:** Bayer Roundup Ready Extend Flex Crop System spray application training, Goondiwindi.
- 8 June:** Bayer Roundup Ready Extend Flex Crop System spray application training, St George

Andrew McKay

Regional Extension Officer - Border Rivers, St George & Dirranbandi | CottonInfo

M 0407 992 495 | **E** andrew.mckay@cottoninfo.net.au | **W** www.cottoninfo.com.au

Disclaimer:

The contents of this newsletter are a general guide only, not comprehensive or specific technical advice. Circumstances vary from farm to farm. To the fullest extent permitted by law, CSD expressly disclaims all liability for any loss or damage arising from reliance upon any information, statement or opinion in this presentation or from any errors or omissions in this document.