

Addressing the skills shortage

"Getting recruitment wrong is costly, it wastes time, energy and money. The wrong worker, or a poorly trained worker, can lose valuable stock, damage machinery, misuse chemicals, cause crop losses, or worse still, cause severe injuries to themselves or others." The Farm Recruitment Manual, 2003.

Recent state and national studies have identified direct links between labour/human resource management and farm productivity. Last year a report commissioned by Cotton Australia identified a link between skills shortages on cotton farms and a lack of effective staff attraction and retention strategies. In response, Cotton Australia has developed a training program called **Cotton Advanced** in conjunction with representatives from the cotton industry and TOCAL Agricultural College. This program is specifically aimed at owners and managers. It is comprised of three professional development workshops which will be offered to cotton growers over the next 12 months.

Human Resource Management Workshop



Australian Government
Department of Education,
Science and Training

When: 4 August, 9:30 am – 4:00 pm
Where: Moree Services Club, Moree
Who: Mike Stephens
How Much: \$99 including GST...includes meals and a workshop manual.
To Register: phone Darren Bayley 1800 025 520

The first of the three workshops will address the skill needs of cotton farmers as they take on the role of human resource manager for their farm business. The workshop will cover all aspects of staff management in a modern cotton production enterprise. The workshop topics include:

- Identification of skill requirements
- Preparation of job descriptions
- Range of employment options including traineeships & school-based new apprenticeships
- Recruitment agencies and the Job Network
- Equal employment opportunity legislation
- Relevant industrial awards
- Employee induction and OH&S
- Interviewing procedures
- Contracts of employment and unfair dismissal legislation

The workshop facilitator, Mike Stephens, is internationally recognised in the field of human resource management, having studied farm business management in the UK, New Zealand and France. He is a director of his own company, *Working with People*. The flexible, interactive style of the workshop will allow key questions of the group participants to be addressed. This pilot workshop has been made possible through funding from the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

Water use efficiency in the Gwydir "Advancing water management in NSW" is a project co-funded by the CRDC, Cotton CRC, NSW DPI and Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA.

The overall aims of this project are to:

- Improve whole farm water use efficiency in furrow irrigation systems
- And to assist in achieving CMA targets.

Nathan Ferguson, District Agronomist West Moree has 50% of his time allocated to this project as an in-kind contribution by NSW DPI. A full time Water Use Efficiency Officer will also be appointed.

The main activities to be carried out in the coming season will include the monitoring of several irrigation events using Irrimate equipment and identification of management options to optimise furrow irrigation. Equipment is also available to do some monitoring of losses from on farm storages.

Land and Water module workshop

The Land and Water module is the latest module of the cotton industry's BMP program. This module is a voluntary component of the BMP program until 2008 when it will become compulsory for any grower involved in BMP. The module encourages growers to document the natural resources on the farm and show that those resources are being used within their capacity.

A workshop was held earlier this week in Moree by Cotton Australia and the Cotton CRC to introduce growers to this module and get them started towards completing the module. Growers were provided with map imagery of their farm and other mapping tools to complete the first objective of the module – a *detailed farm map*. The workshop was also an opportunity for growers to talk through other areas covered in the Land and Water module such as irrigation efficiency and the management of soils, riparian areas and native vegetation.

Another workshop is planned for mid September, before planting. If interested please contact Polly Gibbons, Cotton Australia on 0408 982 891.