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Siratac Ltd.

IN PHILOSOPHY

By now most people in the cotton industry have formed an opinion about Siratac as a concept and Siratac as a Company. The range of opinion varies from those who are strongly against both the concept and operation of the Company to those who are current users and strong supporters. Inevitably the majority are neither convinced one way or the other and remain to be sold on the idea.

In order to come to grips with Siratac it is necessary to develop a philosophical attitude toward cotton growing based on a common objective, giving due consideration to the consequences of our actions both past and present.

The basic underlying philosophy of Siratac must be predicated in the following way:-

- * There needs to be a standard by which better pest management decisions can be made. Change through better systems and education is necessary to provide better pest management.
- * Provide better value for the pest management dollar.
- * Insecticides are our most valuable pest management tool and need to be preserved.
- * Past patterns of insecticide usage have caused resistance in insects making control more difficult and expensive in the long run.
- * There are good reasons for demonstrating a responsible attitude toward the use of insecticides in the environment.
- * The Cotton Industry is well supported by excellent research and has a responsibility toward applying it to practice.

So, if you think that some of our past or present pest management practices could lead to long term difficulties and affect the viability of the Cotton Industry, then you need to do something about it. Siratac is a pest management tool that can assist in making a more rational decision. In addition there are other facilities such as irrigation management and Compucot that can enhance your knowledge and assist in making other decisions. There is the benefit of all this knowledge being accumulated in the system over time for its general improvement and for the information of the industry at large.

It is also worth noting that by world standards Australian Cotton is subjected to a large variation of pests which apply pressure for long periods of time. This simply means that we have perceived a need to use the most powerful insecticide more often to get maximum yield. The long term consequences of this practise is well known.

Siratac is a standard reference which can help in making a rational decision.

IN PRACTICE

The use of Siratac has sustained steady growth since its introduction, with 10,000 ha. in 1982/83, 32,000 ha. in 1983/84 and a projected 45,000 ha. for the 1984/85 season. In 1983/84 the area represented about 30% of the NSW crop. For the 1984/85 season Siratac will be made available commercially in the whole of Queensland for the first time. On projected areas for the next season our coverage will be around 25% of the Australian Cotton Crop.

In spite of our modest success the Company has been confronted with some difficulties. Unfortunately its operation has become a divisive issue in some areas and this has tended to detract from its true role and viability. Most of the problems I believe are the result of misunderstanding of Siratac's role, resistance to change and lack of involvement by the industry at large. Because there is no Industry Funding now or subsidy, it must operate and grow within the funds provided by the users. Yet there are many spin off benefits to the Industry as a whole for which Siratac gets no direct financial benefit.

Although the Company has operated at a financial loss for the past year this was considered necessary for its introduction. However for future operation it is necessary for the Company to operate profitably and within its financial means. It is important for the Industry to have a realistic expectation of just now the Company is capable of performing. It can not go anywhere or do anything without the financial support provided by paying customers.

The process of teaching and disseminating information on Siratac has been made more difficult because of limited resources and many farmers have not taken easily to this new technology. The learning curve has been slower than anticipated and needs a positive "self help" attitude to understand the system.

Local groups of interested users could help individuals having trouble.

By nature the seasons will vary and so will insect activity. Our knowledge has been gathered in only a very short span of history, therefore the information through the system must be fallible. To a user who knows its strengths and weaknesses the main objective is to improve the weakness. To a sceptic the weakness is its downfall and the reason it can never work. It is largely a question of attitude and perception.

IN FUTURE

The philosophy and technology of Siratac is fundamentally sound, so it remains then for the Cotton Industry as a whole to determine the extent of its future. Many of the original aims and objectives have been modified, some more than others and I hope that we can be sensitive to the Industry's needs without comprising principles.

We live in an age of technological change and we are a part of it. Our main concern should be the rate at which the Cotton Industry can absorb this change. Computers and improved communication have added a whole new dimension to farm management.

In future the Company needs to be commercially viable. The service fee and the extent of our farm contact in any area will be commensurate with the total usage in that area. Put simply, the more it is used the cheaper it gets.

In conclusion, please give the following thoughts some consideration.

Siratac Ltd. is a non profit Company owned by its members all of whom share in the responsibility for its operation. It exists for the benefit of the Industry as a whole but the farmer is ultimately the main beneficiary. Siratac is a dynamic system that has the flexibility to meet the Industry's needs provided it has the support.