

Producing an Early Crop - The Central Queensland Approach

by

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It was once a commonly held belief in central Queensland that, because the potential cotton growing season was a long one, earliness was not an important management consideration. Such a belief is now very much a minority view among the irrigated cotton growers. On the other hand, less importance is placed on earliness in raingrown cotton because it is an expanding part of the industry and other management considerations currently receive priority.

The presentation covers the major techniques that are employed by irrigated cotton farmers in central Queensland to produce an early crop. In most instances these techniques are similar to those applied to produce early crops in the southern cotton growing areas. Emphasis will be placed on cultivar selection, planting period, pest management practices, use of plant growth regulators and harvest preparation methods. The pros and cons of producing an early crop are debated. The lack of a reliable economic analysis of the methods used to produce an early crop is highlighted.

The rapidly expanding central Queensland raingrown cotton industry can be seen as still being in the process of developing appropriate management strategies. The potential value of managing a raingrown crop for earliness will be discussed in relation to some of the current management practices.

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