# GROWING PIMA IN AUSTRALIA

## A PERSPECTIVE

## THE TANDOU EXPERIENCE

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Encouraged by a trial 1/2 acre result of 2.8 bales per acre from the 1990 cotton pick, Tandou has grown 70 acres in 1991 and 850 acres in 1992 installing one roller gin to process the 1991 crop and expanding the gin this year to four roller gins with provision to expand to a total of eight. The same Tandou gin also accommodates two saw gin stands with provision for a third.

Tandou's reasons for growing Pima commercially, and the agronomic and marketing differences to upland, do not differ with Steve Buster's paper.

The Tandou results however in 1991 and 1992 have been disappointing, mainly due to a later than optimum planting time for our area and a low plant establishment most likely due to moisture receding from the planting zone too quickly. Upland varieties sown beside the Pima and watered up on the same day produced an acceptable stand while the Pima only reached acceptable levels where water backed up from the tail drain.

Pima yields varied with plant population from 0.8 to 2.3 bales per acre, the main difference between Tandou and Bourke conditions is much lower temperatures particularly at the beginning and end of the season.

Tandou will continue to plant approx 5% of our area to Pima with the major change this year being sowing into moisture using soil capping and decapping techniques as in some areas of California to assist with holding

temperature and moisture round the seed enabling more reliable early planting. We hope to gain 2 weeks with this technique.

Tandou's inherant advantage for Pima production is its low average rainfall of 9" per annum with a 40 point average for April and 70 pts for May, however it has already experienced the quality discounts from a late pick after rain where last year grade 5 Pima sold for upland price.

Classing results for this year's Pima which was picked in June after 110 points rain will be to hand at the Conference.

The available heat units at Tandou were borderline for Pima production this year (the coldest on record) when it took from 14th October to 29th April (defoliation) to record a total of 2176 units.

The risks associated with Pima at Tandou are certainly higher than upland and we would think unacceptable for higher rainfall areas.

Building on the knowledge gained from the previous three seasons, Tandou management is confident of Pima becoming an economical proportion of our cotton production in the future.