



SMALL GRANT REPORT

Summary Details

Please use your TAB key to complete Parts 1 & 2.

CRDC Project Number: CHCGIA 11070

CGA: Central Highlands Cotton Growers & Irrigators Association

Project Title: Grassroots Grant: Central Highlands Weather Network

Project Commencement Date: 1 May 2024

Project Completion Date: 30 November 2024

Project Summary

In 2014 the Central Highlands Cotton Growers and Irrigators Association (CHCG&IA) partnered with Biosecurity Qld and the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) to purchase and install 9 weather stations in key locations within the Emerald cotton growing and irrigation area. The weather station data is broadcast via the OzForecast website with data retained by the CHCG&IA. The CHCG&IA engaged Pat Menkens from Menkin's Irrigation a professional weather and water technology provider to locate the stations in a strategic manner to gain the best coverage for users. The network has been a valued asset by growers, industry support organisations and community across the Emerald cotton growing Area. The grass roots/on the ground value this network provides members of the CHCG&IA is ongoingly noted. Our members share feedback on the networks functioning and clear reiteration for the maintenance and expansion of the network to be a key objective of the CHCG&IA via formal email notices and verbal feedback in members meetings. Furthermore, our members request that the weather station network to be improved with fixing and replacing parts of the stations which have naturally expired/degraded over time. This it to ensure the network continues to operate in its entirety and foster a greater range of people across our industry who gain value from it.

Outcomes & Impact for Industry

- Accurate, reliable and accessible weather data has been supplied to growers, consultants and contractors more reliably than before with this community gaining greater appreciation for the weather station network noting the extent of its importance to our community.
- There has been ongoing collaboration between growers, industry service providers and in general community which the CHCG&IA wish to further develop.
- Growers are enabled to make crop protection, nutrient and irrigation decisions with greater accuracy reducing the costs of the inputs

M&E Outcomes: Number of outcomes achieved.

2

People Connections

The CHCG&IA engaged with Eve Scott from Menkin's Irrigation to assess and improve the weather station network. Eve is the key business owner and technician for the climate technology in the Central Highlands, we sought to engage with her to better establish our working relationship with her business to promote strength and continuity of service.

- The CHCG&IA have gained feedback on the weather stations developments via direct email feedback requests and open dialogue in our general meeting with our grower members this worked well to gain insight into their running and repairs.

The CHCG&IA have directly engaged with 10 cotton growers/property owners in the Central Highlands, our whole grower (40 growers) and industry membership (30 businesses) base and general community with strong feedback that the weather station network is critical for efficient and effective climate understand and decision making in the Central Highlands.* Shared learnings, similar challenges recognised from one 'older' growing region (CH) with the newer growing region (NT/WA).

* Encouragement from the CH Growers to the North Growers to keep trialling, finding ways, utilise the CGA/Cotton Aus/CRDC & CottonInfo resources to build capacity of knowledge to keep improving the region to see results.

* CHCG&IA reconnection of own growers within CGA – younger generation connected well with more senior growers (age bracket of 23rs - 54yrs). Tour provided a great opportunity for exploration of ideas and observations.

M&E People: Number of connections achieved.

10

Learnings

A key learning for all involved is the expiring nature of the weather station infrastructure and the importance of routine assessment and maintenance to ensure consistency and integrity of the data collected. This authentic learning has caused for greater attention and diligence to be taken with the stations.

- The project has been driven by our grower and associate members, with this community orientated agenda our communication and collaboration has increased. This kind of group activity promotes greater understanding of an individual's position and negotiated decisions provide wider benefits than working in solitude. Access to a range of partners with technical expertise is shared through a group and benefits are maximised.

- Growers have improved understanding of past, current and future weather which facilitated improved irrigation management to reduce localised flood risks, soil erosion and nitrogen losses.
- Operators who apply Ag Chem and fertiliser products have increased climate knowledge relevant to their location and time of work improving their applications and reducing the risk of off target chemical/fertiliser products that could cause damage to agricultural production and/or the environment or community.

Station Network has highlighted the community's reliance on the climate data which is captured and communicated in live time for efficient and informed decision making in our local agricultural businesses. The extent of necessity for this service which has been reiterated during the project causes the CHCG&IA to see it as a matter of importance to seek and improve the sustainability and longevity of the weather station infrastructure.

-The CHCG&IA hold value to continue to directly engage with growers and/or property owners which have a weather station situated on their property to thoroughly understand the running and efficacy of the stations via routine email feedback requests, direct phone calls and data assessment to best understand how the stations are operating and facilitate timely repairs and maintenance. The CHCG&IA will also look to engage with industry members who use the weather station network to inform their work to ensure a high and safe standard of consolation and/or contracting is achieved.

-The CHCG&IA recognise a need to build financial capacity around these weather station assets and will work towards collaborating with our members on the best course of action to ensure longevity and consistency of this network.

M&E Learnings: Number of learnings and planned actions for the project.

0

Do you have recommendations for CRDC (eg RD&E gaps?)

NA