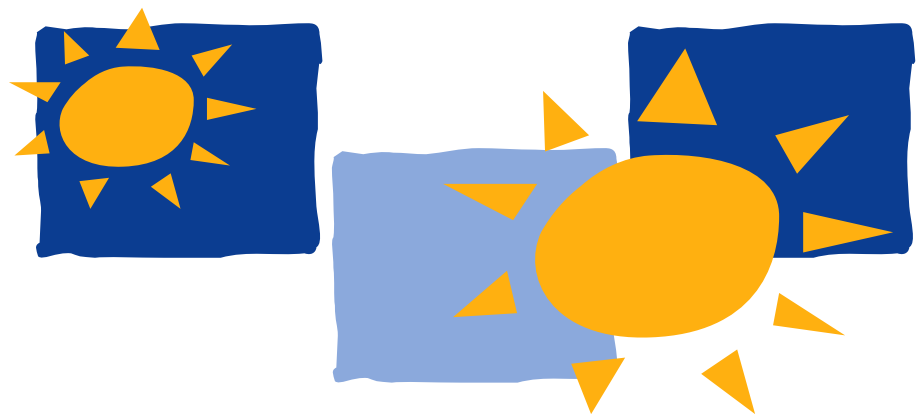




# Piloting a Cotton Agribusiness Engagement Strategy to support development of an innovative agribusiness sector

Final Report -  
To Cotton Research and  
Development Corporation  
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## Executive Summary

This project can be regarded as a research and development project in that it has drawn together a potential capacity building function that meets the strategies outlined in the CRDC Cotton Industry Strategic R&D Plan 2008-13. It has drawn upon a series of communication processes to engage with CCA and secure their formal agreement to move forward into a more structured engagement with the wider cotton industry.

The objective of this process is to facilitate the delivery of cotton industry funded R&D results to growers via crop consultant members of the CCA as a key information conduit. Another objective is for this to result in a strategic engagement process that lasts 3-5 years and becomes a process sustained by a robust business model where CCA could ultimately be regarded as an 'extension agency of the cotton industry'.

This process can be complemented by a wider agribusiness engagement strategy to secure similar support of the wider agribusiness sectors operating in the cotton industry. It is understood that such a strategy is proposed for development during 2010/11.

The project culminated in a meeting on 21 May 2010 between CRDC, Cotton Catchments CRC and Cotton Australia, as well as CCA, to agree on a series of tasks and actions that had been developed during the course of the project. The outcomes of the implementation of this process is proposed to lead to the metamorphosis of CCA into a new stronger business entity that meets the industry needs being developed by the key agencies in the cotton industry – CRDC, Cotton CRC and Cotton Australia.

It could well become a key strategic alliance in the cotton industry that becomes a case study for other rural industries that are considering how to best engage the wider agribusiness sector in supporting the delivery of R&D outcomes to growers.

### Potential Tasks and Activities for CCA

A range of tasks were defined for consideration in this new CCA business model:

- A Web portal allowing access to all research results by consultants and growers
- Further development of the current 2x Annual CCA Forums to increase their effectiveness and responsiveness to industry issues
- Ensuring interim R&D results are available
- Trial new methods of consultant interaction / communication
- An Annual Research Review – an innovation proposed to build on the Annual Forums
- CCA Annual Survey
- Annual Cotton Meetings Calendar – that benefits both consultants and growers
- Supporting the structuring of greater collaboration between GRDC and CRDC with CCA via NGA
- Providing input / feedback on R&D priorities / projects
- Providing input / feedback at the development stage of R&D projects
- Supporting field trials and accessing the results
- Benchmarking / evaluation to support understanding the effectiveness of the projects
- Support implementation of myBMP.

Two key elements of this process are to ensure the model is self sustaining over 3-5 years and that it can be demonstrated to be meeting industry needs. It was proposed that initially a single Extension / Liaison Officer be appointed by CCA, with the proposed industry funding, to undertake key tasks. This recognises that the CCA Executive is a group of volunteers and that the current CCA operates on a modest budget that allows for minimal 'non-core business'.

It was also concluded that relationships between this project and the cotton industry and GRDC and NGA ought to be fostered.

It was proposed that several Commissioned Projects and other project activities are needed to support these initiatives. In order to continue the project momentum, given that this project concludes on 30 June 2010, a series of actions were proposed. These include:

- Reporting to the CRDC Board, as the key potential funding agency, for immediate funding
- Developing and submitting key Commissioned Projects as per above for CRDC funding support
- Submitting additional initiatives in PRP format as per above for CRDC funding support
- Supporting enhanced communication between CCA and CRDC / CRC and CA – as well as GRDC and NGA – on a continuing basis by all attendees – so the current open lines of communication can be fostered and brought to fruition.

These resulted in a series of recommendations to maintain the momentum:

***Recommendation 1***

That the Commissioned Projects as proposed are developed for the August 2010 CRDC Board Meeting by a person nominated to undertake that dedicated task.

***Recommendation 2***

That the PRPs defined for the remaining functions are developed in accordance with the CRDC PRP schedule of 2010 by a person nominated to undertake that task.

Throughout this project, the role of the project leader has been to act as an outsider looking in who has no other role than to meet the project objectives and be accountable for doing so. His role has been to meet the needs of the different sector groups and ensure the groups collaborate as planned or deviate from the plan in a widely agreed manner.

As this project concludes on 30 June 2010, this function no longer exists. It becomes the role of the industry – CRDC, or CRC or CA – to foster the engagement and communication.

***Recommendation 3***

That a nominated person is responsible for maintaining open lines of communication.

The potential for engagement of GRDC through, and in collaboration with, the NGA needs to be explored as a matter of urgency due to the need to develop relationships and secure further funding streams.

For the relationships between this project and NGA and GRDC to be fostered a person needs to be nominated to undertake this function.

***Recommendation 4***

That a nominated person is responsible for developing a relationship between this project and NGA.

Should the cotton R&D sector not elect to continue the initiatives created during this project – or CCA not elect to continue – then each sector would lose considerable credibility with the other. Lost credibility proved to be an issue to be overcome during this project. The lost opportunity is also that CCA has some 140 current members and a potential pool of 300 members that could become cotton industry R&D outcome deliverers or advocates direct to cotton growers.

***Recommendation 5***

That it is imperative for the engagement that has commenced between CRDC and CCA to continue in a timely and organised manner.

Furthermore the potential for wider agribusiness engagement exists in terms of engaging the re-seller, supplier, machinery, banking, etc agribusiness sectors.

***Recommendation 6***

That the wider agribusiness engagement strategy be implemented through an investigative process similar to this project and commenced during 2010/11.

## 1. Project Objectives

This project was conceived during 2009 at a time when the myBMP initiative of the cotton industry was in hiatus. This project focused on defining the first steps of engaging with the Crop Consultants Australia (CCA) as a major cotton industry R&D outcome delivery conduit to growers. It was proposed that engagement would occur with CCA and that there would be an opportunity to trial key initiatives during the project prior to greater 'roll-out' via a subsequent program during 2010/11.

The initial project objectives were:

- Develop a clear 'roadmap' of how strategic opportunities involving more formal or effective pathways for adoption of R&D can be implemented with the Crop Consultants Australia and/or individual consultants;
- Formally engage with the Cotton Catchment Communities CRC and Cotton Australia in relation to the role of agribusiness in the my BMP / adoption context;
- Create and test a genuine industry-wide collaboration that helps define the CRDC, Cotton Australia and Cotton Catchment Communities CRC 'spaces' to encourage more practical and sustainable engagement of the R&D sector of industry with the various types of agribusiness involved in the production of cotton;
- Report on the need for / factors effecting wide engagement of other agribusiness organisations beyond Crop Consultants Australia, which are also key agribusiness (national reseller companies, local re-sellers such as CSD, suppliers like Monsanto, banks, machinery companies and dealers, etc) to inform a proposed Phase 2 of this project; and
- Define and consult an on-ground pilot (Phase 2) that commences early in 2010, to demonstrate to the Cotton Consultants Australia community and the industry how the elements identified in the roadmap can be practically implemented.

However during 2009/10 as the project commenced circumstances had altered. These included project commencement during late 2010 at a time when CCA Executive and members were about to commence their 'busy time of the year' and at a time when key strategic planning and collaboration was occurring between Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC), the Cotton Catchment Communities CRC (CRC) and Cotton Australia (CA) in a bid to confirm a more structured R&D outcome delivery process.

As a result the final operational project objectives could be defined as:

- Seek the engagement of CCA as a partner in the delivery of cotton industry R&D outcomes
- Determine the key elements of engaging with CCA and the steps that could be used to undertake engagement with CCA and its members
- Test the interest and practicalities of engagement directly with CCA members
- Develop a whole of industry engagement process so that CCA could become an integral element of cotton R&D outcome delivery and feedback to and from growers.

(In this project report 'agribusiness' is an overarching term that deals with on-farm advisers, who work in the private sector, for some form of financial remuneration, and work directly with farmers in solving their enterprise management issues, through some form of collaborative decision-making process. Specifically the agribusiness group, CCA, represents predominantly private consultant members who are single operators or smaller operations of several consultants.)

## 2. Project Process

The initial project process proposed was based on addressing these key issues:

### 2.1 Research question:

If CCA and its members were to become a primary channel for delivering cotton industry R&D outcomes to cotton farmers (levy payers), what would CRDC, and the industry need to change to achieve this outcome?

How would CRDC do so? In what sequence? What other issues would need to be addressed? How would a pilot project be set up to demonstrate the outcome and how would this demonstration be the first step in widespread adoption of CCA members being a primary channel for industry R&D?

### 2.2 Specific outcomes:

The following specific outcomes were sought:

1. Cotton Consultants Australia (CCA) is formally and fully engaged in the proposed process and the project (called the 'roadmap')
2. A representative sample of key CCA members broadly representing 70% of cotton growers (across the varied grower segments) who have been fully engaged in the project and as a result have had input to and are agreeing to the roadmap
3. Agreement to the use of an electronic knowledge portal (based on the FarmPlus system) becomes one key element of the engagement / delivery process where such a system aggregates unrestricted industry R&D knowledge and a consultant is benefitted by being able to augment such a system with their own tacit knowledge and experiences which become a discrete overlay of additional knowledge for the benefit of their own client growers
4. A signed off roadmap of what to do, when and how, and by whom available is presented to the November CRDC board meeting (the roadmap proposed to be called a CRDC CCA Engagement Strategy)
5. Formal engagement of the Cotton Catchments CRC and Cotton Australia in the myBMP context creates genuine industry-wide collaboration and helps define the CRDC, CA and CRC 'spaces'
6. Define specifically how an on-ground pilot project, that commences early in 2010, would operate to practically demonstrate to the CCA community and the industry
7. Report on the need for / factors affecting wider engagement of other agribusiness organisations beyond CCA which are also key agribusinesses (national re-seller companies, local re-sellers such as CSD, suppliers like Monsanto, banks, machinery companies and dealers, etc) to inform a proposed Stage 2 of this project.

### 2.3 Proposed and actual process

<i>Proposed process</i>	<i>Actual process</i>	<i>Notes on Process and Outcomes</i>
Develop scenario 2-page paper on what is proposed and have this as a briefing paper for the benefit of participants and stakeholders	<i>October 2009</i> Initial meeting with CCA at which discussions were held regarding whether they were interested in formal engagement with CRDC.	Agreed that discussion should continue Created a Formal CCA-CRDC Statement of what is to be achieved, why and how – as a support for further formal engagement with Executive of CCA, to brief CRDC and the CRC – as part of meeting outcomes
Engage with CCA Executive / key personnel in a roundtable open discussion	<i>November 2009</i> Several meetings with key CCA Executive members undertaken to canvass key concepts in further detail Further review of FarmPlus web portal concept with Director of FarmPlus and CCA Executive members	Whole CCA Executive agreed to consider continued discussions to achieve win:win Interested in rolling out the FarmPlus web portal already developed for cotton use by CRDC for use by CCA Business Plan and strategy documents are important to demonstrate Value Proposition

Engage with Cotton CRC and Cotton Australia (CA) key personnel	<i>December 2009</i> Meetings with Phil Armytage, Paula Jones, CRC; Bruce Pyke and Rohan Boehm, CRDC Meetings with Peter Graham CSD Briefings with Adam Kay, CA	Clarified other industry organisation position in the practice change continuum Completed the industry wide consultations = general agreement for broader CCA role – the question is what and how?
Revise paper; becomes agreed industry scenario that is to be investigated during remainder of the project	Not prepared as not required	The above issues provided data for structuring 'consultant interviews' to flesh out the key emerging issues Revised paper remained uncompleted because no need to finalise it – next key issue was survey process
Prepare interview process	<i>January – February 2010</i> Prepared CCA member interview process Based on preceding issues Sought input to key questions from CCA and CRDC	The interview process was structured so the data gathering from CCA members answered the key questions – from original project research questions and subsequent 'enabling' issues that had emerged to-date
Face to face interviews with 8x key CCA members who represent the group of approx 16 consultants who by themselves account for 80% of industry cotton production	<i>March 2010</i> Interview process approved and finalised Phone interviews undertaken rather than face-to-face as all consultants in their 'busy time' 9x respondents based on list supplied by CCA	Interviews investigated the key issues They drew out data and developed conclusions on the key questions / issues / factors, etc as required Representative group of the cohort of the top consultants who service 80% of the industry interviewed as initial group
Phone interviews with another 8 CCA members ensuring the mix is representative of remaining experience and interests.	<i>March 2010</i> Phone interviews rather than face-to-face undertaken as all consultants in their 'busy time' 8x respondents based on list supplied by CCA	Further interviews refined the key issues and findings and started the road mapping Based on a semi-structured interview process or 'deep conversation' to ensure all the key issues are 'understood' (including the nuances)
Report on findings to CRDC, Cotton CRC and Cotton Australia	<i>March 2010</i> A summary interview report was prepared for CRDC – and Rohan Boehm briefed accordingly The report outcomes were reported to a meeting of CRDC, CA and CRC on 27 April 2010 in terms of considering their future strategies	This ensured CRDC was aware of the emerging issues of interest to industry and to be reported to CCA It was considered to be unlikely that the 2009/10 timing would achieve more than 'agreement to proceed by CCA'
Summarise into position paper for presentation to CCA  Present to CCA Executive as a proposed course of action	<i>March 2010</i> The interview report was delivered to the CCA full Executive at a face to face briefing at their meeting in Goondiwindi on 24 March 2010	The briefing allowed the CCA Executive to understand the full implications of the findings from their members and consider the relevance to their position on the project going forward At this point it was apparent no piloting of actual delivery processes was likely during 2009/10 They requested their members be briefed on the project at their AGM and Annual Forum on 28 April 2010
Present to CRDC Board – November meeting	Unable to be achieved due to project timings	
	<i>April 2010</i> Report to CCA members at Annual Forum on 28 April 2010 During the Forum members were asked to rate their level of support for the proposed project	CCA members virtually unanimously: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed to support the project</li> <li>• Agreed to participate in the project</li> <li>• Agreed to proceeding with the web portal</li> </ul>

Formal CRDC and CCA seminar or briefing	<p><i>May 2010</i></p> <p>A Roundtable meeting was held on 21 May 2010 with representatives of CRDC, CRC, CCA and CA where the key outcomes of the CCA Executive meeting on 24 March 2010 were reviewed.</p> <p>It was agreed that it should be recommended to the CRDC Board that a project should be commissioned to proceed accordingly.</p>	<p>The Roundtable meeting endorsed the key concepts of the CCA Executive and reviewed them for stronger linkages to current industry priorities.</p> <p>There was general agreement on the key outcomes from the meeting as being achievable, relevant and a 'fit' with current industry priorities</p> <p>The findings were reported accordingly and are outlined in this report.</p>
<b>Summary position</b>	<p><b><i>Outcomes 1-6 in Section 2.2 above were achieved.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Issues relevant to Outcome 7 are dealt with broadly in this report.</i></b></p>	

The primary purpose of this project was to determine if CCA was prepared and able to engage with CRDC, CA and the Cotton CRC – and if so, how that was to be achieved.

It was agreed by all parties that this engagement is a desirable outcome – and as a result the process for doing so was identified. Key next steps for the implementation of that action plan were agreed on 21 May 2010. While it was initially proposed that some form of 'Implementation Process' would be undertaken during this project, it became apparent that that was un-achievable during 2009/10. This was because it became apparent that it was more important to define the key issues and Key Success Factors for such engagement before actually commencing it. In other words the mapping process had to take precedence so all parties could agree on the appropriate steps required.

However that implementation process is now able to commence in 2010/11 as the steps forward have been mapped out and agreed by all parties during the 21 May 2010 meeting.

Because of the necessary pre-occupation of the project in seeking a way forward and engagement with CCA, minimal attention was applied to the engagement of the wider agribusiness sectors. This will be required through future work.

### 3. Key Findings

#### 3.1 The perspective of the CCA Executive

The Executive of the CCA took a thoughtful, engaged and inclusive process throughout the project. They saw the value and potential of a more robust engagement between the CCA organisation and the key cotton R&D agencies – to secure a stronger and more relevant role for the organisation, to secure stronger engagement between their members and those agencies and to facilitate the delivery of R&D outcomes to cotton growers.

The key elements they saw as needing to be a part of this relationship were:

- Some means for CCA to cover its costs of undertaking an expanded role
- The value of some form of web portal access point – which is why they saw value in investigating the FarmPlus tool that CRDC had already canvassed as a single web entry point to all cotton industry R&D outcomes
- Increasing the value of current forums that CCA and other key cotton organisations already conduct, while being mindful of the need to ensure any and all workshops, seminars, forums and conferences are relevant, timely, value for money and coordinated
- Considering due process in engaging with their members, researchers, the cotton R&D agencies, and between CCA and CRDC in particular with nominated liaison officer/s
- Respecting the role of current initiatives including the Annual Survey
- Recognising the importance of providing relevant field based feedback from growers to cotton industry R&D organisations, so that the cotton R&D priorities can directly meet industry needs in the paddock
- Understanding the value of accountability and transparency, as well as good communication and formal evaluation processes to demonstrate success and value for money
- Developing a transparent value proposition so everyone in the industry can see What's In It For Me.

#### Key Success Factors

From their view point they identified key elements of success as being:

- Create the best consultants – with high levels of knowledge that can be acquired as easily as possible, in the best format possible
- Strong robust communications to growers and others in industry – with crop consultants being key elements of that process
- Consultants who can fulfil their role – which is to refine information for client use
- Partnering with industry – potentially using the web portal developed by CRDC (FarmPlus)
- Acknowledging that this all this needs to be part of an overall strategy.

To do so CCA identified constraints that would have to be addressed as being – good survey tools (for the annual survey and to maintain engagement with members on a regular basis to check-in on progress of meeting their needs), personal development of members to support business growth (in light of climatic and industry demands), understanding of legality and liability issues (in any new roles they and the organisation might take) plus to avoid stress due to heavy workloads (that might result from any new initiatives). They noted that there may be valid reasons for 'certification' to ensure quality assurance.

They also focussed strongly on seeking input from their membership throughout the consultation processes of the project in order to ensure their engagement and endorsement.

A series of next steps were defined on 21 May 2010. These are outlined in Section 3.4 below.

### 3.2 The perspective of the CCA membership

As part of the proposed project process, a survey of a representative group of CCA members was proposed. This was endorsed by the CCA Executive and undertaken during March 2010. Furthermore the CCA Executive invited the project leader to brief the CCA membership during their April 2010 Forum in Moree.

#### CCA Member Survey

While Attachment 8 defines the findings of the survey of a representative group of 17 CCA members in detail, the key findings of the survey can be summarised as:

- Crop consultants see themselves as the main R&D information source for growers and believe that their clients are mostly up-to-date with R&D information
- They see reliance on web based information increasing in future and so access to a suitable access tool or web portal to provide direct access to research summaries is important to them
- Such a tool could provide additional communication functions including newsletters, forums, links to final reports, email alerts, etc for consultants and potentially to their clients in a range of ways
- They reported that their clients mostly preferred to access information by means of consultants, the internet, field days, other growers and magazines including the Australian Cotton Grower as the primary means of information access
- For consultant themselves, other consultants and growers, seminars, workshops, GRDC Adviser Updates and field days/trials, plus email alerts, access to research papers including those from paid subscription journals and publications, were viewed as the key methods of accessing R&D results in order to remain up-to-date
- Professional development was considered to be a pivotal concept when considering future cotton consultant business development needs
- The CCA is thought to be doing a good job of delivering R&D information and there is strong support for the organisation to increase its role in extending information to crop consultants and their growers
- Over half that group reported that they would be prepared to be involved in on-ground activities to deliver information resulting from this project
- Payment by industry would support that process and make it easier for consultants to contribute
- The right people, resources and information were seen as pivotal ingredients to ensure that a web portal would work effectively for CCA, the industry, consultants and growers
- A mix of industry funds and user pays was seen as the most relevant way to fund this package of measures.

Other issues to arise from that survey were:

- Approximately two-thirds of respondents were from businesses with more than one salaried staff members and one-third were from 'single operator' or partnership businesses
- The primary function was as a crop agronomist dealing with certain or specific crop; just under half functioned as farming systems agronomists dealing with 'whole farm production issues'
- Six worked in the Darling Downs region with the others spread across the entire cotton growing catchments
- Consultants worked with a range of growers in terms of numbers of clients and size of enterprise – averaging 14.5 growers and 4,200 ha of cotton and an average of 11,700 ha of other crops, with the potential to grow an average of 7,600 ha of cotton in an 'ideal season'
- The main constraints for clients achieving their best outcomes were water availability, weather and economic considerations including pricing

### **April 2010 Forum Outcomes**

The project leader briefed the CCA membership at this Forum on wider agribusiness and consultant issues as well as the findings of this project. He asked for their input on whether or not they considered the proposed direction of the project to be relevant to them. CCA members virtually unanimously:

- Agreed to support the project
- Agreed to participate in the project
- Agreed to proceeding with the web portal.

Some members sought further details on 'how this would all work'. They agreed to wait until further clarification occurred through CCA.

### **3.3 Perspectives of other industry bodies**

During the project a range of key industry bodies were identified and their perspective on the project objectives was sought.

#### **Cotton Catchments CRC**

At a meeting with senior CRC personnel the following issues were identified:

- The previous extension models are no longer viable and the only one that appears to be working is the CSD model
- About 50% of their R&D project are tied to CRDC
- The current my-BMP program is collaborative between CRDC, the CRC and Cotton Australia and has a strong delivery focus via a General Manager responsible for best practice and research implementation
- This 3-way collaboration must determine how to engage effectively with agribusiness to achieve outcomes and industry engagement
- An overall industry team needs to be created including 'all players'
- A structured communication and R&D outcome delivery campaign with defined targets will guide this in future
- Engagement with CCA fits this strategy so they form 'part of the team'.

#### **CSD**

Cotton Seed Distributors success is based on these factors:

- An understanding of the R&D mentality and process gained from strong focused and continued engagement with the R&D community
- Growers are the key beneficiaries of this not-for-profit entity so they are prepared to support its programs and processes
- A contemporary way of doing business that relates well to growers and advisers and can be very responsive
- A strong focus on delivery of outcomes to growers on their terms and in their modus-operandi that meets their needs as well as doing relevant R&D especially via trials
- Doing business is therefore all about relationships.

#### **Cotton Australia**

The CA perspective addressed:

- The key success factors of the CSD model
- The importance of a combined 'industry team approach'
- Need for cotton consultants to have broadest possible perspective while maintaining their key market niche

- The importance of ‘talking the same language’ between researchers and consultants
- There is no one size fits all with this extension function.

### **3.4 Next steps**

The outcomes of the 21 May 2010 meeting defined:

- Key drivers for the CCA – that are expected to result in a metamorphosis of CCA into a new stronger business that matches the new stronger business model they and the wider industry seek
- A range of tasks were defined – for consideration in this new CCA business model that can be self-sustaining over 3-5 years and can be demonstrated to be meeting industry needs
- Discussion about key personnel required to make this a reality – namely a single Extension / Liaison Officer be appointed by CCA and funded by proposed industry funding
- A proposed 3-Year Plan of activities to encapsulate the defined model
- An outline of several Commissioned Projects for CRDC consideration that are needed to support the model that links with the CCA Annual Survey
- A series of Key Action Points that need to be undertaken at defined dates by identified personnel.

### **3.5 Engagement with the wider agribusiness sector**

While it was proposed that during this project there would be some reporting on the need for / factors affecting wider engagement of other agribusiness organisations beyond CCA, including key agribusinesses (such as national re-seller companies, local re-sellers such as CSD, suppliers like Monsanto, banks, machinery companies and dealers, etc) to inform a proposed Stage 2 of this project; the actual process used for this project precluded any form of engagement apart from with CSD.

A range of reports on these issues have been prepared by Gordon Stone, the project leader, for rural Research and Development Corporations and for agribusiness. As a result the following observations can be made:

- Growers often use more than one adviser – including a skilled agronomist; a farm inputs specialist; a farm financial adviser; a specialist machinery adviser for such applications as Precision Agriculture, etc; financial planner; marketer; accountant; irrigation consultants; bankers and others
- Those that use more than one adviser are quite often the more profitable and innovative farmers who deal with a range of specialist issues and hence seek out key trusted advice from specialists
- Each adviser often has a niche in the business, with the farm business operator being the overall manager and coordinator of the specialist input functions
- Access to cutting edge, practical and relevant information is a key constraint to advisers and growers alike – as a result innovations such as FarmPlus have appeared to address those needs and facilitate access to R&D outcomes
- Information access must be timely, easy to access and accurate
- Adviser roles are based on trust, strong long term stable relationships and robust communication based on directly meeting grower needs.

The nature of the cotton industry, where many cotton growers are growing cotton and broad acre grains crops, with potential for livestock and horticultural enterprises as well, means that growers seek out competent advisers from beyond the crop consultant sector.

As a result it would be remiss of the cotton industry not to engage with key additional agribusiness sectors at a senior management and on-ground adviser level. This would ensure they have the widest possible coverage of influential agribusiness adviser sectors.

## 4. Discussion and the way forward

Attachment 10 outlines the process and tasks agreed at a meeting on 21 May 2010 to facilitate the metamorphosis of CCA into a new stronger business that meets the industry needs being developed by the key agencies in the cotton industry – CRDC, Cotton Catchments CRC and Cotton Australia.

### 4.1 Potential tasks for CCA

A range of tasks were defined for consideration in this new CCA business model:

- Web portal allowing access to all research results by consultants and growers – with differentiation in function for consultants and growers
- Further develop the current 2x Annual CCA Forums to increase their effectiveness and responsiveness to industry issues. A new model may be developed with closer engagement to consultants. This would support their attendance at forums in 2/3 regional locations and by focussing on delivery of R&D results.
- Ensuring interim R&D results are available
- Trial new methods of consultant interaction / communication. These include webinars, email alerts, audio / video tools, etc.
- An Annual Research Review – an innovation proposed to build on the Annual Forums
- CCA Annual Survey
- Annual Cotton Meetings Calendar – that benefits both consultants and growers
- Supporting the structuring of greater collaboration between GRDC and CRDC with CCA
- Providing input / feedback on R&D priorities / projects
- Providing input / feedback at the development stage of R&D projects
- Supporting field trials and being able to access the results
- Benchmarking / evaluation to support understanding the effectiveness of the projects
- Support implementation of myBMP.

Two key elements of this process are to ensure the model is self sustaining over 3-5 years and that it can be demonstrated to be meeting industry needs.

### 4.2 Personnel

It was proposed that initially a single Extension / Liaison Officer be appointed by CCA, with the proposed industry funding, to undertake:

- Development of a Northern Grower Alliance type of function for the cotton industry
- Manage the operations of the CCA Annual Survey and look for value adding opportunities
- Support the R&D priority setting process to ensure grower / consultant viewpoints are expressed in planning and implementation of RD&E projects and programs
- Support industry ability to react to urgent industry programs and emergent issues
- Support industry communication processes including local trials and other innovations
- Support liaison on key industry issues
- Support member engagement on key issues
- Support, undertake and drive implementation of key programs – see above – including innovations to support the overall objectives.

In addition some key CCA member functions that this person would support are:

- Input to development of communication / technology delivery tools
- Reaction to emerging problems / industry issues

- Support urgent adoption issues.

This recognises that the CCA Executive is a group of volunteers and that the current CCA operates on a modest budget that allows for minimal ‘non-core business’. As a result specific dedicated personnel are required to carry these ideas forward to fruition. The CCA Executive has recognised and agreed to a robust evaluation process being implemented to demonstrate progress in meeting objectives of the proposed projects.

It was also recognised that the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) has a role in the expansion of CCA from simply cotton issues to wider broadacre industry views and issues. One key organisation in the cotton growing regions is the Northern Grower Alliance (NGA) and the potential for development of linkages with CCA, CRDC and GRDC was explored.

It was concluded that relationships between this project and NGA and GRDC ought to be fostered.

### 4.3 Proposed 3-Year Plan of Activities

The following process was defined as being the preferred model:

<b>Function</b>	<b>Year 1 – commencing July 2010</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>
<b>R&amp;D</b>	Short term R&D needs – help define them and provide feedback on them and advice on how to resolve	Short term R&D needs – help define them and provide feedback on them and advice on how to resolve	Short term R&D needs – help define them and provide feedback on them and advice on how to resolve
<b>Development</b>	Investigate how the NGA model might translate to the cotton industry and develop a model	Trial the model	Rollout the model more widely
	Investigate innovative communication models including GRDC interaction	Trial key innovations	Rollout key innovations after successful trials Continue trials of other potential innovations
<b>Delivery</b>	Appoint a CCA member to the 3xC (CRDC, CRC and CA) Development and Delivery Team for the key cotton programs. Role is to support the practicalities of engagement with the consultant sector of those key functions. Includes liaison, demystifying the processes used, representation of the sector, coordination of sector support, support thinking / actual field delivery, etc. Participates in fortnightly phone meetings and annual meetings over the year. This person would be an operational CCA member – supported by the CCA Extension/Liaison Officer.		
	Annual forum – see above re defined aims to maximise effectiveness of the industry forum processes	Annual forum – innovation	Annual forum – innovation
	Web portal to support access to R&D results and set up meetings calendar	Innovation re web portal based on feedback. Could include webinars, email alerts, etc	Innovation re web portal based on feedback
<b>Implementation</b>	CCA Annual Survey \$80k / yr	CCA Annual Survey \$80k / yr	CCA Annual Survey \$80k / yr
	Liaison with myBMP re implementation process and feedback on use / effectiveness and links with Annual Survey	Liaison with myBMP re implementation process and feedback on use / effectiveness and links with Annual Survey	Supporting the updating of my BMP in response to industry needs

It was proposed that there are several Commissioned Projects that are needed to support the above:

- Funding of a CCA Extension / Liaison Officer over 3-years – salary and on-costs and operational costs

- Funding of the Annual Research Review which includes updating of the Annual Consultant Forums to maximise effectiveness.

This assumes that the funding of the CCA Annual Survey over 3-years is confirmed.

#### **4.4 The proposed Action Plan**

Those attending the meeting on 21 May agreed to undertake some core initial functions to facilitate commencement of the process:

- Report to CRDC Board as the key potential funding agency for immediate financial support – Rohan Boehm, CRDC – June 2010
- Develop and Submit key Commissioned Projects as per above for CRDC funding support – August 2010 (person TBC)
- Submit additional initiatives in PRP format as per above for CRDC funding support – September 2010 (person TBC)
- Support enhanced communication between CCA and CRDC / CRC and CA – continuing and by all attendees – so the current open lines of communication can be fostered and brought to fruition.

##### ***Recommendation 1***

That the Commissioned Projects as proposed are developed for the August CRDC Board Meeting by a person nominated to undertake that dedicated task.

##### ***Recommendation 2***

That the PRPs defined for the remaining functions are developed in accordance with the CRDC PRP schedule by a person nominated to undertake that task.

#### **4.5 Key factors affecting the relationships that have been developed**

Throughout this project, the role of the project leader has been to act as an outsider looking in who has no other role than to meet the project objectives and be accountable for doing so. His role has been to meet the needs of the different sector groups and ensure the groups collaborate as planned or deviate from the plan in a widely agreed manner.

Anecdotally this has been strongly appreciated by CCA as they considered all the issues and options of structured engagement. It has been understood to have been of value to CRDC so they can participate in rather than manage the process.

As this project concludes on 30 June 2010, this function no longer exists. It becomes the role of the industry – CRDC, or CRC or CA – or Ken Flower, to foster the engagement and communication.

##### ***Recommendation 3***

That a nominated person is responsible for maintaining open lines of communication.

The potential for engagement of GRDC through and in collaboration with the NGA needs to be explored as a matter of urgency due to the need to develop relationships and secure further funding streams.

For the relationships between this project and NGA and GRDC to be fostered a person needs to be nominated to undertake this function.

##### ***Recommendation 4***

That a nominated person is responsible for developing a relationship between this project and NGA.

Should the cotton R&D sector not elect to continue the initiatives created during this project – or CCA not elect to continue – then each sector would lose considerable credibility with the other. Lost credibility proved to be an issue to be overcome during this project. The lost opportunity is also that CCA has some 140 current members and a potential pool of 300 members that could become cotton industry R&D outcome deliverers or advocates direct to cotton growers.

**Recommendation 5**

That it is imperative for the engagement that has commenced between CRDC and CCA to continue in a timely and organised manner.

**4.6 Summary**

This project can be regarded as a research and development project in that it has drawn together a potential capacity building function that meets the strategies outlined in the CRDC Cotton Industry Strategic R&D Plan 2008-13. It has drawn upon a series of communication processes to engage with CCA and secure their formal agreement to move forward into a more structured engagement with the wider cotton industry.

The objective of this process is to facilitate the delivery of cotton industry funded R&D results to growers via crop consultant members of the CCA as a key information conduit. Another objective is for this to result in a strategic engagement process that lasts 3-5 years and becomes a process sustained by a robust business model where CCA could ultimately be regarded as an 'extension agency of the cotton industry'.

This process can be complemented by a wider agribusiness engagement strategy to secure similar support of the wider agribusiness sectors operating in the cotton industry.

The immediate focus in 2010/11 is:

- To ensure the long term engagement of CCA by CRDC, Cotton Catchments CRC and Cotton Australian delivering on their end of the funding bargain
- CCA delivering on its commitment to use their networks to support R&D outcomes delivery to cotton growers
- For CRDC to support continued strengthening of their engagement with the wider agribusiness sector in the cotton industry by commissioning a further project to 'round out the agribusiness sector engagement in the cotton industry'.

As a result it is relevant to canvass the potential for wider agribusiness engagement in terms of engaging the re-seller, supplier, machinery, banking, etc agribusiness sectors. This process ought to continue the initiatives commenced in 2009/10 during 2010/11.

**Recommendation 6**

That the wider agribusiness engagement strategy be implemented through an investigative process similar to this project and commenced during 2010/11.

**References:**

Stone, G (2009) – Maximising the Connection between RD&E Providers and Agribusiness;  
Publication No. 08/180, RIRDC

## Attachment 1 – Outcomes of first meeting with CCA Executive Committee

### Overview

Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) is seeking a more formal and strategic engagement with Crop Consultants Australia (CCA) to support the focussed delivery of its R&D outcomes to cotton growers via the agribusiness channel. This is part of the Human Capacity Program and Implementation Strategy of the CRDC Strategic Plan 2008-13.

Gordon Stone has been commissioned to establish the rationale, key drivers and operations of the Engagement Strategy. This builds on his previous experiences in other R&D Corporations and with agribusiness clients.

The current 2009/10 year is focussed on establishing this Engagement Strategy and the 2010/11 year will aim to implement the strategy in a manner that is agreed in the first year. The first year aims to implement some key activities – to be determined.

The CRDC Board is committed to this process – the aim is to secure similar CCA commitment. Other cotton industry stakeholders will be engaged over time. However the emphasis is to start small, create significant successes, develop strong working relationships and once they are cemented then move forward incrementally.

### Meeting outcomes

The key issues to emerge from a meeting between Gordon Stone, Matthew Holding (President CCA) and Doug McCollum (Treasurer CCA) (Ian McPherson included by phone) were:

- In principle CCA is interested in some form of strategic engagement
- It is important to determine how to cover CCA costs. The methods, amounts and links to projects along with generating strategic income for CCA are part of this process. This will require consideration by the Executive of CCA and CRDC, therefore forming part of the project first steps.
- Several potential key elements of engagement were considered and include:
  - i. Need better access to information, eg. Accessing R&D results via the FarmPlus web portal (searches 400 Australian ag sites) which may need to dovetail to the CCA site
  - ii. Greater use of forums (CCA hosts one at end of March, the AGM is in late April / early May and is associated with a Technical Update and a 2-day forum is held July-August)
  - iii. Appoint a specific CCA nominee as key 'liaison officer' (one area of payment)
  - iv. The Annual Survey to generate relevant info and income (Ian McPherson is CCA contact)
  - v. CCA keen to provide input to cotton R&D priorities and feedback on relevance of R&D results
  - vi. How best to ensure CCA members are on ground advocates to cotton growers – for both R&D information delivery and feedback on future needs?
  - vii. Need to facilitate better researcher – adviser access / liaison
- It is important that both sides see value in this engagement – progress needs to be evaluated
- The value proposition is to support CCA to maximise role and relevance to members / industry.

Factors to consider are:

- End of October to end of March are the busy times – so most liaison will be with CCA Executive Officers rather than Executive / members in that period (they are in the paddock)
- Any key issues / areas of liaison with the Executive need to be undertaken in the next month
- What is role of Cotton Catchments CRC? And Cotton Australia?
- The Annual Survey is a key element of this project – next meeting in 10 days time (Ian to attend).

2 October 2009

## **Attachment 2 – Notes from full CCA Executive meeting**

Gordon Stone was invited to brief the CCA Executive meeting on 2 Nov 2009 by phone conference.

Attendees were – Matthew, Doug, Fiona, Fleur, Jamie (St George), Nick (Moree,) Rachel (Gunnedah), Ian McPherson (St George) and Dallas King.

Gordon outlined the key issues behind the thinking about the need for a strategy. He covered – delivery of R&D outcomes, enhanced communication, the use of the FarmPlus tool and getting feedback from growers on future priorities and current R&D outcomes to researchers and research administrators.

### **Meeting outcomes**

The key issues to emerge from the meeting were:

- Concept has merit – should lead to a win:win
- Needs to be discussed in detail in face to face meeting in March – dates to be determined
- Part of the pilot could be at the meeting in May of all consultants – with a focus on improving information flow
- Could be a possible regional meeting process amongst the cotton growing areas of 3x meetings / yr – with CCA acting as major conduit for information flow
- If this was to occur need to have a person employed to organise it – with right capabilities
- Would need base funding from CRDC / CRC
- Have to demonstrate relevance to members
- Could we ensure no charges for use of FarmPlus – what about costs being covered from advertising such as chemical companies?

2 November 2009

## Attachment 3 – Notes from CCA Executive Committee meeting

Further key issues were considered at another Executive Committee meeting attended by FarmPlus Director Adrian Davis:

### 1. Review of Key Issues relevant to project

- Purpose for CCA is confirm information transfer opportunity from R&D community to members, plus professional development, add new services to CCA to ensure broader relevance and reach
- Value to increase membership from current 140 to surpass previous 'good level' of over 300
- Needs to link to 2x cropping seminars held annually in early-May and mid-July
- CCA seminars are more focussed on member needs than GRDC Adviser Updates
- Annual survey is a key issue for getting information from consultants to support industry decisions; it is significant income generator for CCA. Would like to expand it and in doing so pay consultant contributors for their time to ensure it is highest quality
- Key professional development issues are to create a professional industry, accessing information appropriately relevant to their work programs (eg access information while in the car during summer or more reading in winter)

### 2. Key Success Factors

From their view point key elements of success are:

- Create the best consultants – with high levels of knowledge that can be acquired as easily as possible, in the best format possible
- Strong robust communications to growers and others in industry
- Consultants can fulfil their role which is to refine information for client use
- Partnering with industry – potentially using the web portal developed by CRDC (FarmPlus)
- All this needs to be part of an overall strategy.

To do so CCA seeks good survey tools, personal development to support business growth, understanding of legality and liability issues plus to avoid stress due to heavy workloads. There may be reasons for certification also.

### 3. Agreed Outcomes

The following were agreed:

- The FarmPlus web portal is of value to CCA. It may support the member survey, take the place of the current web site, support CCA branding of its product offerings, and add value to membership, ensure seminars are contemporary due to supporting electronic delivery, support communication to members in varied ways, support strategic programs that could be part of future service offerings, ensure access to the most relevant Australian R&D knowledge, also access to global knowledge
- The key elements of FarmPlus that might be able to be used over time (into the future) are – the information search function, trial data, e-newsletters, webinars, podcasts, support access to trial data, provide researcher 1:1 interactions with consultants, support wider RDC engagement (being CRDC and the CRC), support income from advertising (ideally low key), provide a strategy to support growth of the organisation in ways not yet considered, access to survey data, a survey tool to members and users, allow for re-modelling of current CCA website, support information on industry trends (could support gathering of the data from exit data of all users), identify topics of interest for access or future R&D / trials, pictorial representation of key issues like pests and diseases, input to seminar topics – all accessible from consultant offices, in client homes and via field use (wireless modems)
- Charging for use was a key issue – could be underwritten by the industry, paid for partly by consultants and also by growers and other industry use, like researchers
- If CRDC has created a proven product it would be valuable to access it
- Need a value proposition for this overall project that other consultants can relate to – and guide the role and function of CCA

- Needs to put CCA in a strong industry position
- What is the role of corporate partnerships with suppliers, etc in the wider industry?

#### **4. In summary**

- This is an exciting initiative
- Need to work out nuts and bolts – ensure maximum impact by and for CCA and members
- Clearly requires more thought and member input – a draft business plan would be good to articulate all this very clearly
- Need to think about income streams and overall commercial value of the proposition
- Must encompass all key issues considered to-date
- Needs to link with annual survey and ideally value add to it

So what CCA needs is:

- A Business Plan for CCA to guide its development
- A strategy document to demonstrate the commercial / competitive focus of this work for CCA and members
- Clearly defined links with / value add to the annual survey
- Demonstrate how money can be saved by industry organisations and members by setting up some of these initiatives
- Enhance the CCA capability and capacity
- Demonstrate nationally that this is a good business like model.

13 November 2009

## **Attachment 4 – Notes from meeting with Cotton Catchments CRC and CRDC**

Present: Phil Armytage and Paula Jones, Cotton Catchments CRC and Bruce Pyke and Rohan Boehm, CRDC with Gordon Stone

### **1. Background**

- All previous extension models are no longer viable
- CSD model is only current model that is really working
- 300 projects in the CRC that need delivery roadmaps – about 50% is tied to CRDC
- The myBMP program is shared a third across CRDC, CRC and Cotton Australia (CA) – it is a re-born version of the original BMP program
- Currently recruiting a General Manager Best Practice and Research Implementation who will have to take a very commercial approach to delivery of outcomes
- Will contract CRC outcomes to very specific deliverables
- Have access to CCA member Dallas King who gives strong advice

### **2. Links between CRC and CRDC then with CCA**

While CSD is an important conduit, also looking for other conduits:

- Still to determine best engagement between CRDC and CRC – the General Manager Best Practice and Research Implementation noted above is a key initiative
- Must determine how to engage effectively with agribusiness to achieve outcomes and industry engagement
- The CRC is very focussed on achieving its outcomes
- So CSD, CCA and key departmental extension personnel need to be somehow created as a maximum team including with links to myBMP
- Setting up a Campaign and Targets structure for the General Manager Best Practice and Research Implementation to focus on

3 December 2009

## Attachment 5 – Notes of meeting with Peter Graham, Managing Director, CSD

Gordon Stone met Peter Graham, Managing Director of CSD and outlined the key issues behind the thinking about the need for a strategy by CRDC.

### Key issues

The key issues to emerge from the meeting were:

- CSD has a joint venture with CSIRO – this allows it to talk directly and in the same language as key researchers
- It is a company limited by guarantee made up principally of growers – this means it is a not-for-profit – the majority of surplus funds (around \$4.5 mill / yr) go back into industry R&D
- This also supports strong engagement with the R&D community – because CSD is a funder / not-for-profit / researcher too
- Peter sees the need for a package of industry activity – CRC / CRDC and CA focus on setting up the research strategy and priorities – this needs to be linked to a ‘Path to market’ where organisations like CSD act as ‘synthesisers’ so they support outcomes of R&D being delivered on-farm
- The culture and operations of deliverers needs to be contemporary / have similarity to end users = common ground
- Because of the common ground = a reason to talk with farmers
- This also means the need for Capacity Building so the team (has the skills / experience / expertise) can be actively involved in Extension and Delivery of R&D findings
- Decisions about which cotton variety to plant – and how to manage its growth = common ground to talk, ie. it is the story that needs to be told. In other words ‘Varieties are the key story’ and reason to talk; this means discussion on moisture, production practices, etc follows on ... to maximise yield and generally deals with ‘whole of enterprise issues’ ... with a strong commercial focus
- It means advisers can deal with climate change, and key emerging issues too if / when they are raised
- Another key is that their business is about relationships – not sales and marketing – which is the focus of the resellers
- CSD on-farm personnel have a dual function – all are extension plus they undertake some R&D or at least contribute strongly to the R&D function particularly through on-farm trials
- As they focus strongly on the trials, it means all media and on-farm advice can revolve around those functions = not sales and marketing, it is informing / synthesis – and they can anticipate key emerging issues that emerge from the trials / R&D
- CSD focus is simply on cotton and acquiring cotton seed for its many uses
- Their 65 personnel including pathologist, etc are all focused on that outcome
- They pay their E & D personnel well – all are on a package of at least \$100k – so they are happy and contented in their own personal well being.

**Key Success Factors** therefore are:

1. Core business is seed for farmers to plant for the following year – and use of cotton by-products
2. They can anticipate emerging key issues
3. Have good staff through good pay and conditions
4. Have a key reason to talk to farmers – everything hangs off discussing varieties
5. Extension and development are the key steps of the engagement process with clients.

3 December 2009

## **Attachment 6 – Notes from meeting with Adam Kay, CEO Cotton Australia**

Gordon spoke to Adam about key issues relevant to engagement with CCA:

### **1. Background**

- Note that the CSD model is very successful
- CSD has valuable links to the coalface with links between sales and 1:1 delivery of information
- They have the best people – that is why CSD model works so well
- Don't see much of a dis-connect between researchers and consultants – each seems comfortable talking to the other
- It is important for CCA members to engage with the current industry extension team members
- The Cotton Conference is a national forum – not frequented by consultants as much as one would expect – this demonstrates that the CCA focus is abit narrow – focussed on on-farm issues when there are wider issues too
- Annual survey is important conduit to get knowledge and opportunity for on-selling of data that comes out of it
- CCA function is more on-farm production, marketing falls into Dunavants, etc while NRM is more CRDC because of stewardship
- Key issue is how consultants make a \$ - can they take on land management plans – seems not
- Perhaps time for CCA and members to move outside the square – must maintain credibility with credible information provide to farmers
- See important for CCA to resolve their organisational role vs. their members ability to deliver what the organisation commits them to – noting they have varied members with varied interests / capacity / expertise
- A key issue is when researchers have to liaise with consultants – ensure they are talking the same language
- It is very useful to have researcher – consultant engagement

### **2. Future industry needs**

- Important to move away from departmental extension teams
- Recognise that the CSD, CRC and CCA extension roles are very different – need to operate on the basis of horses for courses where each operates in its area of skill / speciality
- No one size fits all with this extension function
- This includes the Landmark / Elders / CRT models too.

It was suggested that a more strategic longer discussion would flesh many of these issues out.

11 December 2009

## Attachment 7. – Survey of CCA members

### *Survey of private consultant members of the CCA*

The Cotton R&D Corporation is seeking stronger engagement with the agribusiness sector. It has identified that the CCA is a key organisation to engage with. The purpose of this interview is to gain your input into how the role of the CCA and its members might increase their role in delivering cotton industry R&D outcomes to consultants and farmers. Please note that your responses will be grouped and not linked with your name.

#### Demographics

##### *Pre-survey data (interviewers to complete)*

1. Group represented
  - Group 1 – key CCA members – largest influence
  - Group 2 – other CCA members

2. Name

3. Company/business name

#### **Survey starts**

*First off, can you please provide a little information about yourself and your business....*

4. In what type of consulting business do you work?
  - Single operator or partnership
  - Business with salaried staff
  - Aggregation of independent operators under a common umbrella
  - Other
5. How would you describe your role within this business (can be more than one)
  - Owner
  - Director
  - Paid agronomist / consultant
  - Other
6. How would you describe your main function with your clients (can be more than one – please define in priority)?
  - Crop Agronomist – dealing specifically with certain or key crops
  - Farming Systems Agronomist – dealing with whole farm production issues
  - Farm financial advisor
  - Business advisor
  - Other
7. Within what cotton regions do you operate? (tick all that apply)
  - Central Queensland
  - St George/Dirranbandi
  - Darling Downs
  - Macintyre
  - Gwydir
  - Namoi

- Upper Namoi
- Macquarie
- Bourke
- Southern NSW
- Other

8. Approximately how many cotton growers does your business work with?
9. Approximately how many total hectares of cotton did these growers plant in the 2009/10 season?
10. Approximately how many total hectares of other crops (please specify) did these growers plant in the 2009/10 season?
11. If water availability was not an issue, approximately how many total hectares of cotton do you think that these growers could plant in a so-called 'ideal' season?

### Consultant and client context

*This part of the survey is seeking your views on the future role of the CCA in research information delivery. But first, some background about the situation you and your clients are facing would be helpful in providing the context.*

#### Your clients

12. What do you see as the major agronomic or production constraints to your overall cotton clients achieving the best outcome they could?
13. How up-to-date do you consider most of your clients to be about the latest research and development information? (please rate on a 1-10 scale)  
 Not up to date 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Fully up to date
14. What are the main ways that your clients keep up with the latest R&D information? (in order of importance, starting with most important)
15. Please make any comment on their up-to-datedness or access to R&D information

#### You

16. How would you rate the importance of your role (or your business' role) in **assisting clients in business issues** (such as marketing, financial management, staff management, future development strategies)?

Not our job    Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

17. How would you rate the importance of your role (or your business' role) in keeping your clients **up to date with the latest R&D information**?

Not our job    Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

18. How up-to-date **do you currently feel** in terms of the latest cotton R&D information relevant to your clients?

Not up-to-date 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Fully up-to-date

How do **you mostly keep up to date** on the latest R&D information and technical issues? (please rate the importance of the following sources from 0-10 where 0= don't use at all and 10= very important source)

19. General Media – newspapers, television or radio

Don't use    Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

20. Research publications from the cotton industry – especially *Australian Cotton Grower Magazine* and publications from CRDC, CRC or Cotton Australia

Don't use    Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

21. Internet/websites

Don't use    Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

22. CCA Annual Forums and workshops

Don't use    Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

23. Australian Cotton Conference

Don't use    Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

24. CRDC's annual Big Day Out

Don't use    Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

25. GRDC Advisor Updates

Don't use    Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

26. Industry extension staff such as CSD, Cotton CRC.

Don't use    Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

27. Directly from Researchers

Don't use    Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

28. Other consultants or innovative growers

Don't use    Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

29. Trial work

Don't use      Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

30. Other sources for you / other comments

31. If you see these **ratings changing in the future** please comment on how they might change? (eg. some might become more important while others less important)

32. Does your business plan to offer additional services to your clients in the next season? If so, please note the general area of service

33. What more is needed to enable you to have the full range of skills and knowledge you need to best service your clients?

### **Role of the CCA**

Please rate the usefulness of the following ways (and potential ways) of receiving information from the CCA:

#### **Current**

34. Seminars – as a general catch-up on key issues

Don't use      Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

35. Workshops – with a specific focus on one topic of interest

Don't use      Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

36. CCA website

Don't use      Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

#### **Future options**

37. Downloadable audio or video

Won't use      Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

38. Webinars

Won't use      Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

39. Email alerts

Won't use      Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

40. Please make any comments about your ratings and/or how CCA can best provide you with information support – current and future.

There is a proposal that the CCA could take a much more significant role in extending information to crop consultants and their growers. The CCA could become the key extension body for the CRDC and CRC, as well as other groups in the future. The goals would be to reduce number of yearly

meetings by placing a lot more research information through a major body, mainly the CCA, to do things more effectively.

41. Do you support this as a potential role for the CCA?

Would not support      Low support 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Fully Support

The possibilities being considered at this stage include – undertaking on ground projects (some R&D and some trials); providing web based services; supporting increased extension to consultants and supporting the extension of the consultants to their grower clients.

The extent of this work has not been determined – and that is part of the purpose of this survey – to gauge interest and key issues to be addressed. Following are some examples of possible services:

42. Would you be prepared to participate in on-ground projects to deliver R&D results that might emerge from this initiative? (Examples include localised research trials or working out and trialling information delivery strategies to farmer clients for wider adoption by consultants.)

- Yes
- No
- Not sure – need more information

43. To what extent would payment by industry affect your willingness to be involved in on-ground projects?

No interest      Low influence 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Critical element

44. One possibility is that the CCA develops a new specific web 'portal' or access point with cotton-specific R&D information. Which of the following services, if any, would interest you most (tick all that apply)

- Access to summaries of research results with links to final reports
- Portal customised to allow your clients to access information direct
- Portal customised so it appears to be a CCA portal
- Portal customised so it appears to be your own portal
- Portal customised so it appears to be both your business and CCA portal
- Suite of tools to provide newsletters, forums, customised information, email alerts etc direct to clients
- None
- Other

45. What order of annual cost would you think reasonable for access to such a portal?

46. What would be required by the CCA (tools and people) in order to make these types of tasks successful?

47. What are your thoughts on how this program could/should be funded if it went ahead?

48. General comments about the proposed increased role of CCA and its members in R&D delivery and how it could be best achieved:

49. How effective do you believe that the current opportunities are in providing feedback to the CCA about improving the organisation?

Not effective    Low effectiveness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very effective

50. Please comment on how best the CCA can best provide feedback from consultants (members of CCA) on R&D priorities and key issues to industry bodies such as CRDC, the Cotton CRC, etc?

51. Please make any other comment about your needs as a consultant and/or the role of the CCA in R&D information transfer to cotton growers.

*Thanks for your input*

19 February 2009

## **Attachment 8 – CCA Survey Results**

See separate PowerPoint Report

## Attachment 9 – Notes from CCA Executive Committee meeting 24 March 2010

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Gordon Stone was invited to brief the CCA Executive meeting on 24 March 2010 to inform them about progress, the results of the CCA consultant survey and to consider the way forward.

### Meeting outcomes

These issues, in no particular order, were considered during the meeting:

- It appears that CCA is being asked to be the Extension Agency for the cotton industry. The CCA recognises that over time it can take on that level of responsibility by acting as a conduit to maximise the value of consultants to growers and strengthen the interface role with researchers.
- It is important to be able to access R&D results that are only available in journals and that have fees to access – presumably these were funded by industry money and yet are only accessible after payment. Important to resolve this.
- CRDC and other industry bodies must provide a guarantee that once CCA agrees to be a major conduit for industry R&D processes, and as long as CCA delivers on agreed milestones / outcomes, that there will be continuity of funding for up to 3-5 years (arbitrary time) to ensure that the outcomes can be delivered long term
- For this project to be cost effective, a defined business model of what is being proposed must be developed, discussed and signed off. Like CRDC, a strategic business plan and annual action plans need to be put in place – rapidly – so that this guides what CCA does and can be agreed with minimal administrative fuss.
- The role of the CCA Executive is overseeing rather than activity based – the operations are the role of the employed personnel so this element needs most attention. Similarly for implementing the business plan, the CCA Executive role is one of overseeing rather than doing due to their voluntary contribution
- Such business plan /model /annual action plan must be funded by CRDC quite rapidly as CCA does not have the resources to undertake such a function itself. However it must have strong input during the development phase (Gordon noted that the first steps are included in this project)
- It is very important for CRDC, CRC and CA to come to a discussion with CCA with very clear statements of their intent, goals, aspirations, outcomes and outputs so that a full frank and focussed discussion occurs
- This project must ‘commence at a low key level with a series of successes’ then grow from there. It should commence with a phased approach with Stop-go points built in. All the relationship building is also very important and part of the phased / Stop-go process. Similarly the inclusion of FarmPlus has to occur on that basis.
- The focus of the CCA will be to explore ‘what we don’t know’ in order to take a non-traditional / outside the square approach to this project
- As well as outcomes for CCA, CRDC, etc there must be defined outcomes for cotton growers and consultants – so that everyone is seen to win
- An Annual Research Review event run every second year is a consideration for the consultant sector – in the alternate year to the Cotton Conference – as the Cotton Conference is losing its relevance to consultants as it increases its relevance at an industry / policy level (see survey results). This could start in 2010/11 in the Cotton Collective Week and include a series of presentations that are longer than 5-mins and more interactive than the GRDC Adviser Updates with strong researcher-consultant engagement (these are some specific ideas of how the Review could be conducted)
- A core element of the way forward is thought to be to have a (most likely) 1.5 FTE Extension Specialist working in the project for CCA so that CCA can deliver meaningful high quality outcomes on-ground
- Their view of CCA is that they are already doing good work on a really low budget (survey results confirm this) – so it could easily be taken up a level at least. The aim is for each consultant

member of CCA to be encouraged to do their own extension well – with CCA facilitating the process. This is based on using the strong level of trust between CCA / its members and growers that exists already

- Critical to reduce quantum number of meetings and topic repetition during winter – so quality of meetings and contents must increase via a co-ordinated approach = high value to consultants. Likewise important to engage with GRDC to maximise value of their Adviser Updates.

### **Key issues to discuss with CRDC / CCA**

These issues emerged as a position of the Executive to recommend during a proposed roundtable discussion with CRDC and CRC suggested for early May in Toowoomba (Gordon to coordinate with CRDC / CRC and CCA):

- Need to make one version of Cotton FarmPlus containing basic R&D data available to growers at no cost – this is essentially a moral obligation to benefit the industry
- This version of FarmPlus, including the version accessible by consultants, also has to be able access all fee-for-service journal articles at no cost to the FarmPlus user
- In terms of access to Cotton FarmPlus it is proposed that CRDC ensures that a free of charge version is made available to CCA so that it can be passed on as free of charge to growers (base version) and CCA members (higher level interactive version) along with the funds to manage and update Cotton FarmPlus for their use. It is proposed that Cotton FarmPlus is also made available to non-CCA consultant members with a reduced service offering and at a minimal cost that creates income for CCA to support its management
- Must ensure confirmed funding stream for this project based on a 3 or preferably a 5 year horizon to give certainty of engagement. This is based on defining agreed outcomes that all parties will have to deliver on and a monitoring and evaluation process that demonstrates delivery of outcomes so CCA can report annually to growers, consultants and funders
- A Business Plan and annual Action Plans are key elements of moving forward – must be undertaken rapidly
- CCA regards it as important that it maintains independence of influence by CRDC whilst meeting industry needs – in other words, to meet consultant requirements it will have to be responsive, focussed on their needs, clear on grower needs, relatively un-concerned about industry politics and structures (apart from a streamlined liaison process with CRDC, CRC and CA through some form of quarterly reference group and regular liaison with Ken Flowers)
- Whatever CCA undertakes must provide demonstrable value for money and outcomes to CCA consultant members and the wider consultant community – and particularly to cotton growers
- It is proposed that a 1.5 FTE Extension Specialist with operating costs will be working in the project for CCA during 2011/12 – with a completely separate function to the CCA admin roles.

### **Proposed next steps**

It was proposed that the relationship between CCA and CRDC / CRC builds through three levels:

#### **Level 1 – Refine current CCA work and add FarmPlus**

It is proposed that:

1. The current CCA annual forums (April and July) already make a strong contribution to R&D information delivery from industry funded research to consultants and therefore to growers. However both could use further refinement based on additional resources to fine tune what is undertaken. The current forums could then be better targeted with stronger feedback processes built in to inform thinking for the 2011 forums. Part of this is to provide feedback on key issues to CRDC.

Therefore it is proposed that resourcing by CRDC would support evolution of these forums through – greater understanding about how best to target attendee needs through stronger Monitoring and evaluation based feedback from attendees; management support to ensure the program is as focused as it can be (used for program planning, program delivery,

accessing the highest levels of speakers – this could incur additional costs) and to support program innovation eg training programs, trial work that links to them, field tours, links to webinars, etc (see survey results).

2. Underwrite the cost of developing and managing an interactive Cotton FarmPlus that is managed by CCA for cotton industry consultants in close collaboration with CRDC and CRC. As per these notes and the results from the survey specific innovations include – maximising the value of email alerts, trialling webinars, developing other interactive processes based on FarmPlus capability, training CCA personnel in its use, training consultants in how to maximising its value to them and to their clients (short workshop at July forum and at subsequent forums)
3. These functions will be defined by a Business Plan and Annual Operating Plan (AOP) proposed to be undertaken in third quarter 2010.

It is proposed that Level 1 commences in 2010/11 so that the Business / AOP and Plan FarmPlus can be implemented in last half 2010. Then the planning to reinvigorate the seminars and workshops can be implemented during first half 2011 based on those plans and feedback using FarmPlus. This will commence with implementation of a monitoring and evaluation function for FarmPlus and the seminar / workshop program.

### **Level 2 – Refinement of these processes**

It was apparent from the survey that more is required to maximise the value of seminars, workshops and other interactive tools whilst minimising the time imposition on attendees. Therefore CCA could take a key role in managing the plethora of industry seminars / workshops through a coordination role, an integration role and quality control role. Resources would be required to support that management function – the aim being to commence streamlining of the cotton industry seminar / workshop program delivered by all organisations involved in cotton industry development, through a much more integrated and cohesive program.

This will also fit with the cotton industry extension plan being developed through the CRC and implemented by Ken Flowers.

After 6-months implementation of Cotton FarmPlus through CCA, a short evaluation of progress to-date would be undertaken to seek out data on the extent of use, impediments to use, training, innovations required, etc. These findings would guide fine tuning of Cotton FarmPlus or refinements made to the FarmPlus service offering and could provide a sense of the wider cotton consultant view of what has happened to-date and what is proposed.

The proposed CCA management processes would through these innovations whilst maintaining strong engagement with CRDC, CRC and CA.

### **Level 3 – Expansion of key service offerings**

The role of webinars, industry training, trial work, audio and video downloads, pest updates, etc have been flagged by CCA as being important to industry.

It is proposed that the Business Plan outlines how these will be implemented from 1 July 2011. However this will be better defined when the 2011-12 AOP is created in 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2011 for the 2011/12 year.

Possible inclusions in Level 3 are – more targeted localised forums, a re-vamped Annual Consultant Survey, very targeted adviser updates (a revised version of GRDC Advisers Updates managed by CCA), Annual Research Review, newsletters, and possibly some trials and low level R&D work that is collaborative with researchers (could be public and private) and growers. Later a valley based part-time CCA Extension Coordinator drawn from older or specifically skilled consultants (including the monitoring and evaluation function) is also proposed.

## Attachment 10 – Next Steps to Implement the CRDC and CCA Agribusiness Engagement Strategy in 2010/11

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On 21 May 2010 a meeting of key industry representatives was held to confirm key next steps in the CRDC and CCA Agribusiness Engagement Strategy. These strategies form the basis of the final report to be submitted to CRDC and to inform the across Cotton Industry Communication and Adoption Strategies.

The purpose of the meeting was to canvass options resulting from recent CCA meetings, to consider key strategies being considered by CRDC, CRC and CA and develop a consensus on the next steps.

### 1. Attendance

Present: Matthew Holding President CCA; Iain McPherson CCA Vice-President; Doug McCollum CCA Treasurer; Fiona Anderson CCA Executive Officer; Ken Flower GM Cotton Industry Best Practice & Research Implementation; Rohan Boehm CRDC Manager Communication & Capacity Investment; Yvette Cunningham Communications Manager Cotton Catchment Communities CRC; Gordon Baker, Cotton Australia QLD Regional Manager and Gordon Stone Project Manager.

### 2. Key Drivers for CCA

The key outcomes that Crop Consultants Australia (CCA) is seeking going forward are:

- Assuring CCA members and the wider industry of access to streamlined and up-to-date cotton (and grains) industry R&D results and outcomes. This includes providing feedback on R&D priorities at a strategic and operational level.
- Structuring a coordinated and results focussed 'technical information delivery meetings process'. The aim is that the plethora of industry meetings that currently occur are substituted with a coordinated, meaningful and timely adviser update / information / updating process driven by the consultant sector.
- Re-developing CCA into a professional industry support body for the broadacre consultant sector. The aim is for this body to assist CCA member organisations and personnel to access R&D information, to interact effectively, to provide feedback on key issues (in particular throughout the wider RD&E process) and support member and consultant professional development. This can only be achieved through a vibrant, viable and financially stable organisation.
- To support and facilitate structured, focussed and effective industry communications especially to and from the consultant sector.

In essence this means a metamorphosis of CCA into a new stronger business that matches the new stronger business model, focussed on Delivery and Implementation, being developed by Ken Flower on behalf of key agencies in the cotton industry.

### 3. Potential tasks for CCA

A range of tasks were defined for consideration in this new CCA business model:

- Web portal allowing access to all research results by consultants and growers – with differentiation in function for consultants
- Further develop the current 2x Annual CCA Forums to increase their effectiveness and responsiveness to industry issues. A new model may be developed with closer engagement to consultants. This would support their attendance at forums in 2/3 regional locations and by focussing on delivery of R&D results.
- Ensuring interim R&D results are available
- Trial new methods of consultant interaction / communication. These include webinars, email alerts, audio / video tools, etc.
- An Annual Research Review – an innovation proposed to build on the Annual Forums

- CCA Annual Survey
- Annual Cotton Meetings Calendar – that benefits both consultants and growers
- Supporting the structuring of greater collaboration between GRDC and CRDC with CCA
- Providing input / feedback on R&D priorities / projects
- Providing input / feedback at the development stage of R&D projects
- Supporting field trials and being able to access the results
- Benchmarking / evaluation to support understanding the effectiveness of the projects
- Support implementation of myBMP.

Two key elements of this process are to ensure the model is self sustaining over 3-5 years and that it can be demonstrated to be meeting industry needs.

#### 4. Personnel

It was proposed that initially a single Extension / Liaison Officer be appointed by CCA, with the proposed industry funding, to undertake:

- Development of a Northern Grower Alliance type of function for the cotton industry
- Manage the operations of the CCA Annual Survey and look for value adding opportunities
- Support the R&D priority setting process to ensure grower / consultant viewpoints are expressed in planning and implementation of RD&E projects and programs
- Support industry ability to react to urgent industry programs and emergent issues
- Support industry communication processes including local trials and other innovations
- Support liaison on key industry issues
- Support member engagement on key issues
- Support, undertake and drive implementation of key programs – see above – including innovations to support the overall objectives.

In addition some key CCA member functions that this person would support are:

- Input to development of communication / technology delivery tools
- Reaction to emerging problems / industry issues
- Support urgent adoption issues.

#### 5. Proposed 3-Year Plan of activities

The following process was defined as being the preferred model:

<b>Function</b>	<b>Year 1 – commencing July 2010</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>
<b>R&amp;D</b>	Short term R&D needs – help define them and provide feedback on them and advice on how to resolve	Short term R&D needs – help define them and provide feedback on them and advice on how to resolve	Short term R&D needs – help define them and provide feedback on them and advice on how to resolve
<b>Develop-ment</b>	Investigate how the NGA model might translate to the cotton industry and develop a model	Trial the model	Rollout the model more widely
	Investigate innovative communication models including GRDC interaction	Trial key innovations	Rollout key innovations after successful trials Continue trials of other

			potential innovations
<b>Delivery</b>	Appoint a CCA member to the 3xC (CRDC, CRC and CA) Development and Delivery Team for the key cotton programs. Role is to support the practicalities of engagement with the consultant sector of those key functions. Includes liaison, demystifying the processes used, representation of the sector, coordination of sector support, support thinking / actual field delivery, etc. Participates in fortnightly phone meetings and annual meetings over the year. This person would be an operational CCA member – supported by the CCA Extension/Liaison Officer.		
	Annual forum – see above re defined aims to maximise effectiveness of the industry forum processes	Annual forum – innovation	Annual forum – innovation
	Web portal to support access to R&D results and set up meetings calendar	Innovation re web portal based on feedback. Could include webinars, email alerts, etc	Innovation re web portal based on feedback
<b>Implement- ation</b>	CCA Annual Survey \$80k / yr	CCA Annual Survey \$80k / yr	CCA Annual Survey \$80k / yr
	Liaison with myBMP re implementation process and feedback on use / effectiveness and links with Annual Survey	Liaison with myBMP re implementation process and feedback on use / effectiveness and links with Annual Survey	Supporting the updating of my BMP in response to industry needs

It was proposed that there are several Commissioned Projects that are needed to support the above:

- Funding of a CCA Extension / Liaison Officer over 3-years – salary and on-costs and operational costs
- Funding of the Annual Research Review which includes updating of the Annual Consultant Forums to maximise effectiveness.

This assumes that the funding of the CCA Annual Survey over 3-years is confirmed.

## 6. Key action points

- Report to CRDC Board – Rohan – June 2010
- Submitted key Commissioned Projects – August 2010 (person TBC)
- Submit additional initiatives in PRP format – September 2010 (person TBC)
- Support enhanced communication between CCA and CRDC / CRC and CA – continuing and by all attendees.

Gordon Stone  
21 May 2010