



CottonInfo Extension Activity Report

Part 1 - Summary Details

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

CRDC Project Number: CSD 1902

CSD:

Project Title: Spray Drift Forums – St George, Mungindi, Murrumbidgee and Ashley

Project Commencement Date: 6/12/18 **Project Completion Date:** 26.3.19

Part 2 – Contact Details

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Part 3 – Final Report

(The points below are to be used as a guideline when completing your final report.)

Background

1. Outline the background to the project.

The incidence of chemical spray applications hitting non-target areas including crops in broadacre agriculture continues to be too-regular issue for agricultural producers. The ability of regulators to monitor, investigate incidents and prosecute offenders is limited by difficulty in proving the source of incidents thus the threat of restricted conditions of use and withdrawal of product has become more likely. This has resulted in a need for proactive measures from affected industries to improve spray application techniques to reduce off-target spray incidents along with other benefits. To this end, spray training workshops have become more regular industry activities as have localised organisations and groups focusing on promoting improved spray application awareness and training.

Objectives

2. **List the project objectives (from the application) and the extent to which these have been achieved.**
 - a. Improved on-target spray application.
 - b. Raise awareness and increase knowledge on spray drift issues and new label requirements
 - c. Improve grower/operator ability to make real time decisions that improve that safety and effectiveness of spray applications.
 - d. Assess support for formation of a pro-active localised organisation tasked with the above objectives.

Methods

3. **Detail the methodology and justify the methodology used. Include any discoveries in methods that may benefit other related projects.**
 - a. Group presentation and Q&A sessions with regulators and industry experts on spray drift management and best practice. *The inclusion of state and federal regulators (who attended the St George and Mungindi forums) in the process has created pathways for future communications and co-operative practices with improved understanding from all parties. An all-inclusive approach was taken with participants attending representing various production systems/industries and a range of interested parties including chemical manufacturers, resellers, contract applicators, growers, consultants, machinery dealerships, local government and industry representative bodies.*
 - b. Aim to achieve greater adoption of best practice in chemical use for improved productivity and sustainability of cotton production systems. *Use of a professional trainer with experience and expertise in the relevant field promoted awareness of issues and implications along with ability to train for, and provide guidelines to achieve, best practice. This has enabled growers to implement improved application techniques along with ability to make better decisions when spraying.*

Outcomes

4. **Describe how the project's outputs will contribute to the planned outcomes identified in the project application. Describe the planned outcomes achieved to date.**
 - a. Formation of local spray drift group to work collaboratively with regulators and industry stakeholders to achieve better on target spray application. *Forums and subsequent meetings have approved the formation of a local spray drift group (St George) which is currently in process of registering as an incorporated association. Activity to date has been limited to promoting relevant activities/training days. Funding applications to be lodged and membership notices to be sent seeking payment to that will provide funding for increased activity. Mungindi group has been included in an existing cropping group. They have undertaken a manufacturer delivered product use training day, a Spraywise workshop (run by Nufarm and Croplands) and have another scheduled for nearby area in August.*
 - b. Increased adoption of best practice in spray application via awareness and education resulting in improved on-target spray application. Meets strategic goals of improved productivity and sustainability of cotton production systems while validating social license of industry to operate

in a responsible manner. *The professional trainer promoted awareness of issues and implications. The hands-on learning environment provided practical methods growers could adopt to improve the setup of their sprayers along with guidelines to achieve best practice. This has enabled growers to implement improved application techniques along with improved ability to make appropriate decisions when spraying.*

5. Please report on any:-

- a) Feedback forms used and what the results were
 1. St George forum notes attached and are applicable to the Mungindi forum. These include a list of action items that came from participants in the forums
- b) The highlights for participants or key learnings achieved
Key learnings from forums
 1. Federal and state regulators have mandate to work collaboratively
 2. Difficult for regulators to monitor and enforce non-compliance
 3. Community approach needed = collaboration = engagement
 4. Relationships are important drivers for best practice
- c) The number of people participating and any comments on level of participation
St George Forum had 50 attendees representing a wide range of industries and associated business. Of these eight (8) made presentations with good participation in the Q&A session. Insights on topics were invited and given from a further 5 participants based on their line of business/experience in relation to topics being discussed.
Attendees from the range of participants have been approached to be involved as representatives on the committee of the spray drift group once formed. All have agreed.
Mungindi forum had 28 attendees with a number (mainly presenters from APVMA, EPA, Biosecurity Qld, GRDC, Cotton Australia, Agforce) common to both. Chaired by person who runs the Mungindi cropping group – she reported good participation and discussion.
Mallawa & Ashley Q&A sessions had 55 attendees in total, including farmers, growers, consultants, chemical reps and retailers.

Conclusion

6. Provide an assessment of the likely impact of the results and conclusions of the research project for the cotton industry. What are the take home messages?

Likely impact will take time to assess with reports of drift incidents through Cotton Australia likely to be the best measure. Anecdotal evidence provided by a guest speaker from a spray drift management group that is already functioning in central NSW was that the incidence in the 18/19 season was low with awareness of only 2 incidents at the time. Key organiser of this group has also reported this was the first season in the last decade in which he had not had any drift damage to his cotton.

A Comment by a spray trainer during the Q&A session was that the lack of understanding of inversions is prime example of why education will assist in reducing the incidence of spray drift.

Take Home messages:

- Drift is everyone's problem – community approach needed.
- The drivers of engagement need to be understood however relationships are beneficial in creating engagement.
- Collaborative approach to the problem is essential.

Extension Opportunities

7. Detail a plan for the activities or other steps that may be taken:

- (a) To tell other CGAs/growers/regions about your project.

Activities will be ongoing. Further funding to be sort. Local industries representative groups membership and reseller customer base will be the base for electronic communication of activities along with newsletters. Targeted small localised activity with peer to peer invite to be used to gain participation in activities/training workshops/awareness days.

Outcomes from the Q&A sessions at Mallowa and Ashley were distributed to attended and CottonInfo's wider network in the Gwydir, Mungindi, St George and Border Rivers Regions. Email attached.

- (b) To keep in touch with participants.

Email and website promotion, possible twitter site.

- (c) For future projects.

Awareness campaign followed by training and education events.