



NEW APPOINTMENTS TO THE COTTON INDUSTRY'S NEW DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY PROGRAM

The Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Cotton Seed Distributors and Cotton Australia entered into a joint venture to further evolve the national cotton research development and delivery program last year. This saw the bringing together of a cotton industry Development and Delivery (D&D) team of technical specialists, most of whom had existing roles in the industry with various research or industry organisations and with various fields of expertise. Dr Ian Taylor, who is well known throughout the industry for his past roles in research and development, was chosen to lead this D&D program.

The latest development in the resourcing of the D&D program is the appointment of Regional Development Officers, who as the title suggests, have been appointed to the each of the major cotton growing valleys.

Operating under the 'CottonInfo' banner, the officers, John Smith (Darling Downs), Sally Dickinson (Gwydir), Alice Devlin (Border Rivers), Amanda Thomas (Macquarie), Kieran O'Keeffe (Southern NSW), Geoff Hunter (Namoi, Bourke, Central Queensland) and Kirrily Blomfield, (Upper Namoi), underwent an induction and familiarisation tour in early February before taking up their positions.

The Development and Delivery Program is an exciting partnership for the industry with a long term commitment that will include critical reviews every five-years to ensure the venture is meeting industry needs. This partnership represents a significant financial commitment by the three organisations of up to \$17m over the five year period.

This joint venture provides support for the effective delivery of research to the industry that supports improved practices, R&D communications and responsiveness to emerging or emergency issues.

Another key element of information delivery is the *myBMP* website which is currently being transformed as the primary information delivery platform for research information to the industry.

“While *myBMP* is already an excellent information source, we are enhancing its capability for information delivery as well as building linkages to other sites so growers and advisors are better supported in their information needs,” Ian said.

New areas have been added to the site including *myINFO* and *myTEAM* through which growers will have access to the latest research information and also have direct contact with the new Regional Development Officers (RDOs) through blogs or email. A new E-Newsletter has been developed which will be emailed to growers outlining latest research findings relevant to the particular cotton cropping phase or addressing key emerging issues.

The RDO team will work closely with the existing D&D team of technical specialists along with Cotton Australia’s Regional Managers and CSD’s Extension and Development team.

“The services offered by RDOs are fully complementary to growers’ existing information and knowledge services provided by agribusiness, agronomy consultants, state and federal departments,” Ian said.

“Most importantly as partners with a number of organisations these regional team members seek to leverage and extend the reach of cotton research and development to better meet grower needs.

“The RDOs will provide direct services to growers where this is not already met in the marketplace and in taking this direction, will seek to streamline information delivery, not duplicate existing services.”

As part of the comprehensive induction tour, the RDOs met with technical specialists from the D&D team and leading researchers at ACRI, where they gained a full appreciation of what is involved in cotton research, from soil health to nitrogen use, plant breeding and pathology.

“This gave the RDOs a chance to meet the researchers and vice versa, and to gain an appreciation of how the industry works and how the information flows,” Ian said.

“The induction also included some really good information from Greg Kauter at Cotton Australia and Philip Armytage at CSD on the roles of the various industry bodies, their responsibilities and focus.

“A visit to CSD’s operation at Wee Waa showcased the seed breeding side of cotton production and gave the opportunity to meet some of the CSD extension and agronomy team.

“It was a three-day induction aimed at giving the broadest possible overview of the industry and allow the RDOs to meet and network with people involved at various levels of industry they will be working with to provide the best information pathway between research and growers and just as importantly, growers to researchers and our D&D technical specialists.”

The new RDOs include:

John Smith: Darling Downs



John was formerly District Agronomist at Barham with NSW DPI, and has extensive domestic and international experience in both dryland and irrigated farming systems.

For the best part of two decades, John has specialised in agronomic activities as a technical officer with NSW DPI, and as an agronomist specialising in winter crops and rice.

He has a Bachelor of Applied Science (Agriculture) and has a Masters in Agricultural Science. He has worked as a facilitator with producer, industry and agribusiness groups both in Australia and Asia, using a range of multi-media formats and conduits, and is familiar with pests, weeds and diseases common in the cotton industry.

He is a strong advocate of hands-on extension activities including local trials, field days, farm walks, workshops, meetings and conferences, supported by surveys, monitoring, evaluation and feedback.

His involvement with climate change issues and the adoption of best management practices are further assets that will benefit the Darling Downs cotton industry.

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Alice Devlin: Border Rivers



A former Catchment Officer with the Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority, Alice played an important role in advising and guiding growers on native vegetation policies and legislation, and in negotiating successful social, economic and environmental outcomes.

While working with the Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA, she developed and implemented a comprehensive property vegetation extension and communications plan to deliver increased knowledge and skills to landholders.

She has extensive experience in sponsoring liaison between community, commercial and government agencies in the area of natural resource management, including Landcare.

Her background experience also includes capturing, maintaining and analysing GPS data for the preparation of major map databases for a global leader in digital mapping.

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Geoff Hunter: Namoi/Bourke/Central Queensland



Geoff Hunter has taken up the new position of Research Development Officer for the cotton industry in the Namoi, Bourke and Central Queensland regions.

He holds a Bachelor Degree in Agribusiness and has spent the past 10 years in a range of management roles in cotton, grain and livestock associated enterprises, capitalising on his background in budgeting, accounting, marketing, relationship building and new product development.

He is best known for his role as Regional Manager for Cotton Australia responsible for informing cotton growers and establishing information flows and maintaining internal and external liaison in northern NSW.

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Amanda Thomas: Macquarie



The cotton industry in the Macquarie region has access to a new Regional Development Officer, Amanda Thomas. She has been a cotton grower at Warren for the past five years and has also worked as an agronomist and a workplace safety officer with Auscott at Warren, heavily involved in education,

training, monitoring and evaluation.

Her background in cotton agronomy includes the use of geographic information systems (GIS) and analysing maps showing precision agricultural data, such as crop yields, soil characteristics, input applications, drainage patterns, and field management history; and in developing whole farm plans.

She has extensive experience in implementing BMP practices and facilitating BMP audits; managing trials; preparing annual gross margins and crop budgets; and complying with and creating OH&S protocols and procedures to adhere to NSCA 5 star Audits. Her academic qualifications include a Bachelor of Applied Science (Agriculture) at Charles Sturt University, Wagga.

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Kieran O’Keeffe: Southern NSW



Kieran O’Keeffe has spent the past decade as NSW DPI agronomist at Coleambally, has been appointed to the new position in the Murrumbidgee region. In his role as a district agronomist, he has worked closely with irrigators in the Murrumbidgee valley providing advice on a range of crops including cotton, rice, maize, soybeans,

wheat, barley and pulse crops, and organising discussion groups, regional field days and variety trials.

He was awarded a cotton production course scholarship through University of New England, completing the first two modules of the Graduate Certificate in Cotton Production, achieving a high distinction in Cotton Production and a distinction in Cotton Pest management.

His other involvement in cotton includes organisation of the Griffith Cotton Expo; conducting thin polymer film demonstrations on cotton establishment; spray drift management workshops; and IPM in cotton workshop for Riverina advisors using Skype technology. He has also conducted herbicide resistance workshops; organised carbon trading and climate change workshops; and delivered conference presentations on soil moisture monitoring and water use efficiency.

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Sally Dickinson: Gwydir



Sally Dickinson, formerly Regional Landcare Facilitator at Moree for the the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association Inc. has been appointed the new Regional Development Officer for the Gwydir region. Sally also will be providing support and mentoring for all CottonInfo Regional Development Officers.

Since the mid-1990s, Sally has been facilitating community, grower, industry and government groups to achieve beneficial change for individuals, communities, industry and organisations at both the individual on-farm and strategic industry levels. In her previous position, she played an active role in facilitating and delivering research via *myBMP* and other extension methods, including area wide management networks, supported by the Gwydir Valley Irrigators’ Association. Her information facilitation and extension

activities have included liaison with key industry researchers involved in problem solving relating to silver leaf whitefly, aphids and beneficial insects, and in organising flood recovery and national resource management forums. Sally has also been active in the Sustainable Cotton Landscapes project managed by the CRDC; in facilitating the provision of ecosystem services; nutrient management; field days; farm walks; explaining the Carbon Farming Initiative; and in facilitating and fostering the role women play in the cotton industry via her role as a Wincott committee member.

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Kirrily Blomfield: Upper Namoi



The sharing of real life, on ground grower experiences is something Kirrily Blomfield is helping to facilitate as part of her Network Development Officer role with the Upper Namoi Cotton Growers' Association and AgVance Farming. Kirrily's position encompasses the traditional extension role responsibilities such as spreading the findings of the latest research to growers and ground truthing these findings, in which her agronomic background is advantageous. The partnership between the two groups has helped to maximise the benefits of this interaction, as the AgVance Farming group of growers is familiar and comfortable with the model of openly sharing their successes and failures, which flows on to encourage others to do likewise and the result is lots of practical, relevant learning.

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