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A new and innovative approach to assist 'in field' decision making is being explored by the Cotton Catchment Communities Cooperative Research Centre (Cotton CRC) and CSIRO.

With mobile devices such as Personal Digital Assistants (PDA) increasingly playing a significant role in our day to day activities, it's no surprise that they present ongoing opportunities for decision support in the cotton industry, a well recognised means of providing responsible, timely and specific information to assist with crop management decisions.

To assist in developing focused mobile solutions CSIRO, Cotton CRC and Telstra Country Wide® has recently embarked on a new project titled 'New Generation Scouting Tools'.

CSIRO Principal Research scientist Dr Michael Bange said "The New Generation Scouting Tools project is a unique opportunity to increase information available 'in-field' to assist in decision making for growers and consultants"

The participation of Telstra Country Wide in the Project, as a Cotton CRC supporting partner, provides a unique opportunity to develop and promote innovative solutions for cotton production through the use of new technologies such as Telstra's NextG™ network and recent advances in wireless handheld devices; like internet access and voice recognition.

The Cotton Decision Support Group has already developed two products to evaluate the technologies. The first is the Pest and Beneficial e-guide which contains information and images for all cotton pests and beneficial insect. The e-guide can be taken into the field where its application is most relevant and beneficial.

The second application being the Mobile Day Degree Calculator which runs on both PDA's and NextG mobiles phones, allowing users to track their crop development and compare Day Degree accumulation with previous years and between regions.

Dr Michael Bange said "Technologies such as NextG wireless broadband have opened up new opportunities for in-field decision support. The latest information (like weather data) needed to link with information collected in the field can now be delivered to the field with relative ease and more importantly with speed".

"We have probably only scratched the surface of what we can deliver to crop managers in the future to help with decision making with these tools"

"Technology can assist with complex decision making by providing integrated information that optimises production and gives results that are sensible, profitable and have the lowest impact on the surrounding environment" Dr Bange concluded.

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Participants

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. Cotton Seed Distributors Ltd. CSIRO . NSW Department of Primary Industries
. Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries . Department of Agriculture Western Australia
. The University of New England . The University of New South Wales . The University of Sydney
. University of Technology - Sydney