



## The Impact of Cooperative Research Centres on the Australian Education System

### Cotton Catchment Communities CRC

Providing education opportunities is a critical role of the Cotton Catchment Communities CRC. These opportunities provide a flexible path for learning, skill and knowledge development for all levels of the community and cotton industry.

This paper shows examples where the Cotton Catchment Communities CRC is having an impact on the entire Australian education system: from Primary schooling right through to university and beyond.

#### Primary School

The Cotton Catchment Communities CRC:



- Has partnered with Primary Science Matters and provides science kits and training for teachers in primary schools in Northern NSW. Training has been provided for teachers and follow up visits have also been made to the Australian Cotton Research Institute by all the Narrabri and Wee Waa Primary Schools. Kits have also been provided to Warren, Trangie and Narromine Primary Schools in the Macquarie Valley. See [primarysciencematters.com](http://primarysciencematters.com)
- Supports various home schooling groups by hosting visits and field trips.
- Scientists have been involved in promoting 'Science Week' within the local primary schools in NSW and Qld.

#### Secondary School

The Cotton Catchment Communities CRC:



- Has been involved with Moree Rotary for a number of years with an annual youth camp promoting career opportunities for year 10 students.
- Sponsors several prizes for science and agriculture in local schools.
- Provided sponsorship for the 'My River Darling' program, involving schools along the Darling River participating in water quality monitoring.
- Hosts many school visits in surrounding communities such as Narrabri, Wee Waa, Dalby & Toowoomba.
- Provided sponsorship for the 'Go Agro' program in Emerald 2005 & 2006, which enables students to see the range of agricultural career opportunities available in Queensland.
- Sponsors students to attend science summer schools and one international tour.
- Provided sponsorship to the Rotary North West Region Science & Engineering Challenge 2006.
- Has invested in a schools coordinator position (3 days a week) to enhance activities that foster science and agriculture in schools in cotton communities.

## TAFE / VET

Cotton Australia has developed an industry specific Skills Recognition, Training and Career Pathway Program known as "Cotton Basics". Cotton Australia were the lead organisation of the Department of Agriculture, fisheries & Forestry funded project, to which the Cotton CRC contributed. The pathway comprises 5 levels aligned to the Australian Qualifications Training Framework (AQTF) from pre-vocational training through to Diploma level qualifications. Delivery of the pathway has commenced in 2006 with NSW Farrar Memorial Agricultural School as part of the VETiS program. During the pilot of the program 105 participants were trained across the various pathway levels.



The Cotton Catchment Communities CRC:

- Has aligned national competencies where appropriate to industry targeted short courses for both producers and commercial consultants. Workshops focused on managing soil health are expected to commence in 2007.
- In collaboration with the CRC for Irrigation Futures, CRDC, GRDC and NPSI has developed an innovative irrigation training course for cotton and grain growers and consultants. In excess of 120 participants will be trained per year.
- In collaboration with Cotton Australia, CRDC facilitated the recognition of a Diploma in Agriculture for Cotton BMP accredited farm managers.

## Undergraduate Students

The Cotton Catchment Communities CRC:

- Runs a formal cotton production unit for undergraduates at The University of New England, The University of Queensland and The University of Sydney, which also includes a field excursion. Over 350 undergraduates have completed this unit.
- Sponsors a prize for 3<sup>rd</sup> year students at Sydney University in the Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources.
- Awards summer scholarships to 3<sup>rd</sup> year University students. The Cotton CRC invests approximately \$32,000 p.a. to six projects each year, in order to foster student development and create opportunities for young people in the cotton industry.
- Supports Communication students from Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, providing them with practical experience as part of their Communication Exchange program.



## Postgraduate Students

The Cotton Catchment Communities CRC:

- Currently supports 40 PhD and masters students in a wide variety of projects.
- Has been running for 11 years a cotton production course for industry personnel as an external course through The University of New England. This course, which takes two years to complete involves four study units and includes a course residential. About 130 people have completed the course. The course is taught by 40 people from 15 organisations as well as industry presenters.



## Vocational Training

The Cotton Catchment Communities CRC:

- In collaboration with CSIRO Division of Textile Technology (CTFT), The International Fibre Centre (IFC) and Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) have presented 5 three day Cotton Field to Fabric Training courses since August 2005 at CTFT in Geelong. To date 137 participants have attended the course of which 11 % were international participants from China, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Brazil and South Africa.



The formal three-day course, gives participants an opportunity to interact with leading researchers on the cotton production pipeline, in such areas as global perspectives, fibre properties, agronomy, picking, ginning, classing, marketing, yarn formation, fabric formation and dyeing and finishing. A strong emphasis is placed on the impacts of fibre quality on textile processing. Information is presented through lectures and practical demonstrations using the modern commercial processing equipment available at CSIRO. Participants also use the testing laboratories to verify the importance of cotton quality on the production of end products.

The training program has been aligned with six national competencies for vocational training and education, allowing participants to experience a short course and at the same time gain a formal qualification from the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF), which is administered by Department of Education, Science and Tourism.

## Community

The Cotton Catchment Communities CRC:

- In conjunction with the CSIRO, NSW DPI and QDPI&F the Cotton CRC have run community days on biotechnology and other scientific disciplines.
- Supports the Narrabri Community Education Trust at Federation Farm by providing soil and water monitoring, with NSW DPI.
- Provide an annual contribution of \$1500 to the Cotton Consultants Australia to fund an education bursary as part of the Chris Lehmann Trust.
- Contributing to community knowledge of cotton farming systems by ensuring the Australian Cotton Exhibition Centre displays are innovative and up to date.
- Provides sponsorship for Wincott (Women in Cotton) to assist in the delivery and availability of information to women within cotton communities.



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