



# FINAL REPORT

## *Part 1 - Summary Details*

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**CRDC Project Number:** 1603

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**Project Title:** 2015-16 Grower RDE Advisory Panels – R&D  
consultation

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**Project Commencement Date:** 1/7/2015

**Project Completion Date:** 30/6/2016

## *Part 2 – Contact Details*

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## *Part 3 – Final Report*

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### *Background*

#### **1. Outline the background to the project.**

The Cotton Australia grower RD&E Advisory Panels function in providing practical advice on research, development and extension (RD&E) needs and priorities within the industry. This advice forms important guidance to CRDC for strategic R&D planning, annual operation planning, development of Expressions of Interest and resultant CRDC decisions as to project investments.

Cotton Australia facilitates 4 advisory panels that are aligned with the CRDC strategic plan priorities. The panels consist of up to 40 grower, consultant or ginning Member Representatives from every cotton growing region in Australia.

## *Objectives*

### **2. List the project objectives (from the application) and the extent to which these have been achieved.**

#### **Objective 1. The project facilitates engagement with stakeholders for prioritising and capturing advice on RD&E issues.**

Stakeholders engagement has centred around preparation for, implementation of, and provision of advice within the;

- 2015 CRDC November meeting - provision of advice to CRDC regarding project investment within the 2016/17 investment cycle; and
- 2016 CRDC Strategy Forum - provision of advice to CRDC regarding identification of key industry RDE priorities and subsequent development of expressions of interest for the 2017/18 investment cycle.

The processes around stakeholder engagement have undergone review by the CRDC Program Managers, in consultation with the Cotton Australia Policy Team. This review process has allowed identification of opportunities to ensure continuous improvement of the process for stakeholder engagement, and has also facilitated implementation of initiatives to capitalise on these opportunities.

#### **Objective 2. The project provides for the travel and meeting expenses reasonably incurred by Cotton Australia in connection with RD&E Advisory Panel consultations with CRDC.**

All travel and meeting expenses reasonably incurred by Cotton Australia in connection with the RDE Advisory Panel consultations in November 2015 and May 2016 were provided under this project.

## *Methods*

### **3. Detail the methodology and justify the methodology used. Include any discoveries in methods that may benefit other related projects.**

#### **CRDC November Meeting**

A forum was held in Coogee on 18 November 2015, to facilitate consideration and provision of stakeholder advice to CRDC on final research project proposals, against the 2016/17 Expressions of Interest. The meeting location and agenda were developed by CRDC in consultation with Cotton Australia.

The November meeting was preceded by a number of teleconferences involving panel representatives across 3 of the 4 advisory panels, to facilitate in-depth discussion of FRPs.

#### **CRDC Strategy Forum**

A forum was held in Brisbane on the 24 May 2016, to allow the RD&E Advisory Panels to consider and provide advice to CRDC on research priorities for development of Expressions of Interest for the 2017/18 investment round.

The 2016 Strategy Forum was preceded by a series of local CGA RDE prioritisation workshops facilitated by Cotton Australia. The aims of these workshops were to;

- Ensure all growers have a say on investment of statutory research levies across the Farmers, Industry, Customers and People panel themes
- Provide all Member Representatives with a list of CGA research priorities to inform discussion for the CRDC strategy forum
- Ensure CRDC investment in relevant and practicable research opportunities

Research priorities identified through this process were presented to CRDC and Member Representatives in background papers prior to the Strategy Forum.

The meeting location and agenda for the Strategy Forum were developed by CRDC and refined in consultation with Cotton Australia during an in-person meeting on 23 March 2016 in Moree. This meeting also facilitated;

- Review of consultation process for 2016/17 investment round;
- Planning for key dates and activities for the 2017/18 investment round;
- Policy and research updates;
- Research to policy discussion; and
- Feedback from CGA RDE prioritisation workshops.

An important outcome of this planning meeting was the refocusing of the Strategy Forum around the CGA prioritisation workshops, which was met with positive feedback from the Member Representatives.

### **Communication**

Cotton Australia and CRDC have undertaken reporting to the broader industry through publications, e-newsletters and social media. CRDC has directly updated growers on the strategy forum and research investment outcomes. Cotton Australia has undertaken the following to directly communicate with growers regarding the CGA RDE priority workshops;

- Ebursts/e-newsletters (e.g. Cotton Matters);
- SMS reminders to encourage workshop participation; and
- Social media.

CRDC reported to Cotton Australia and in turn, the RD&E Advisory Panels on how the advice of Member Representatives was utilised by CRDC via the following updates:

- An R&D investment update in September 2015;
- A 2016/17 EOI update in September 2015;
- A review of May 2015 progress (RAG) reports was provided in September 2016;
- A 2016/17 investment report was provided by CRDC in May 2016; and
- A summary of issues and gaps for each of the four advisory panels was provided in May 2016.

### **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.**

The project has delivered on strengthening connections between stakeholder RD&E priorities and industry investment for improved profitability, sustainability and competitiveness.

### **Advice on stakeholder RDE needs and priorities**

Stakeholder RDE needs and priorities were preliminarily identified through a series of CGA RDE priority workshops (February – May 2016). These priorities were reported against existing CRDC projects and then presented to the Cotton Australia Member Representatives for consideration and discussion at the 2016 CRDC Strategy Forum.

This revised process for identification of stakeholder RDE priorities has enabled representation of industry wide, as well as geographically specific RDE priorities across the entire CRDC investment portfolio. This has also delivered a framework to ensure that every cotton grower has the opportunity to identify research priorities for investment consideration.

Following this first iteration of the CGA RDE prioritisation workshop process, feedback has been obtained to identify opportunities to improve the process for the next investment round. Efficiency gains are anticipated following an improved familiarisation with the process from workshop facilitators. Engagement challenges will be addressed through enhanced communication and further consideration of workshop timing. Opportunities have been identified to further leverage the workshop process, to inform discussion at the Strategy Forum.

### **Advice on RDE project proposals**

Member Representatives provided advice on RDE project proposals through FRP deliberation via teleconference (8-11 November 2015) and discussions at the November meeting (18 November 2015). Advice was not provided for RDE project proposals that sat outside of the FRP process, such as projects that were directly negotiated, or funded through the Rural R&D for Profit Programme.

### **Written report**

A progress report was provided to CRDC in April 2016.

This final written report was provided to CRDC in June 2016.

### **5. Please report on any:-**

- a) Feedback forms used and what the results were**
- b) The highlights for participants or key learnings achieved**
- c) The number of people participating and any comments on level of participation**

### **November Meeting**

Informal feedback obtained by Member Representatives suggested that the teleconferences held in mid-November (immediately prior to the CRDC November meeting), were essential in providing sufficient time for discussion and consideration of final research projects, for provision of final investment recommendations to CRDC, at the November meeting.

## CRDC Strategy Forum

A revised process was developed for the 2016 Strategy Forum, based on informal feedback obtained following the 2015 Strategy Forum. Provisions to ensure a more robust process for development of industry-relevant EOIs included;

- Altering the agenda to allow CRDC Program Managers to effectively facilitate discussions across the four advisory panels;
- Inclusion of strategic RDE priorities from CRDC discipline-based reviews;
- Improved preparedness by facilitating a pre-forum meeting with CRDC Program Managers and Cotton Australia Policy Officers; and
- Enhanced integration of CGA RD&E priorities into the Strategy Forum agenda through;
  - Development and delivery of local CGA priority workshops;
  - Provision of CGA priorities through background papers;
  - Providing Member Representatives with the opportunity to present their CGA priorities to the broader group, and reciprocally hear the priorities identified by other CGAs;
  - Considering CGA priorities across all panel discussions, regardless of whether a Member Representative for each CGA was physically present for these discussions; and
  - The opportunity for Member Representatives to 'vote' on RDE priorities across all four advisory panels, regardless of which advisory panel they were primarily associated with.

Feedback from the 2016 CRDC Strategy Forum Survey was overwhelmingly positive. Participants felt they had sufficient opportunity to contribute and that the process met their expectations (Table 1). The advisory panel discussions were reported to be open and fair, appropriate in length of time, robust and well facilitated. Specific feedback received to further improve the process included;

- Provisions to start and finish the forum earlier in the day;
- Managing group size for panel discussions;
- Managing engagement of Member Representatives through strong facilitation of panel sessions;
- Managing the 'voting' process for RDE priorities to ensure that the priorities identified are representative of Member Representative priorities; and
- Ensuring that priorities identified in background papers (e.g. identified at CGA workshops, discipline reviews, research to policy discussions) were clearly flagged at the beginning of panel discussions.

Table 1 Responses from 2016 CRDC Strategy Forum Survey, where data represents the percentage of respondents which assigned a relative score for each question, where 5 was the maximum (strongly agree) and 1 was the minimum (strongly disagree)

| Survey question                                    | Score (% of responses) |    |          |   |   |
|--|------------------------|----|----------|---|---|
|  | Agree                  |    | Disagree |   |   |
|  | 5                      | 4  | 3        | 2 | 1 |
| Did today's workshop meet your expectations?       | 31                     | 56 | 13       | 0 | 0 |
| Was the background material sufficient?            | 28                     | 56 | 15       | 0 | 0 |
| Did you have sufficient opportunity to contribute? | 64                     | 33 | 0        | 3 | 0 |
| Overall did this process meet your expectations?   | 49                     | 46 | 5        | 0 | 0 |

### ***Budget***

- 6. Describe how the project's budget was spent in comparison with the application budget. Outline any changes and provide justification.**

The project budget was spent in accordance with the application budget. No changes are required.

### ***Conclusion***

- 7. 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?**

The project enabled effective stakeholder engagement for provision of advice to CRDC on industry RD&E priorities for investment.

The majority of stakeholders engaged in the process saw extremely high value in consultation around investment priorities for statutory research levies, and industry ownership of RDE processes and outcomes.

Implementation of a review process for activities undertaken in the project has allowed identification of opportunities to continuously improve the process for stakeholder engagement, and has also facilitated implementation of initiatives to capitalise on these opportunities.