

# Cotton CRC

Qualitative Analysis of the  
BMP Trial Evaluation Project

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## Background

A review is currently being undertaken by the Cotton Catchment Communities CRC of the BMP program so that it focuses on a more whole of farm business rather than on cotton alone. The vision is for every element of the program to make practical business sense to cotton growers.

This report forms the qualitative analysis of the BMP Trial Evaluation Project. Half-day workshops were run with key stakeholders of growers (8 workshops involving approximately 80 growers in total) and RD&E personnel (5 workshops with a total of approximately 50 people in total) to gain their feedback on the BMP program. RD&E staff attended meetings where the new BMP program was demonstrated.

Workshop/RD&E attendees were asked to fill out individual feedback forms (surveys) – capturing both quantitative and qualitative data. Group discussions to be held also present an opportunity to collect input – although no tool has been developed yet.

## Respondents

The initial report submitted February 2009 collated the qualitative responses of 42 growers and 4 consultants from feedback sheets. Responses from 10 people in the RD&E sector were added July 2009.

## Analysis methodology

Responses were organically analysed to capture themes falling out of the collated answers to each qualitative question. This allows for nuances to be captured and subtle differences in respondent answers to be better reflected than if solely relying on word recognition software programs.

## Key messages

- Growers, consultants and the RD&E sector are positive about the potential benefits of the new BMP program to the cotton industry.
- Growers generally think the new BMP program provides good current information, helps with decision-making, is relatively easy to use and a big improvement on the previous version. All agree that it is important to maintain the currency of the online information and ensure that it is correct.
- Consultants and growers believe that the positive marketing of the new BMP by focusing on the benefits (economic and farm business management) will be an important factor to sell it to the industry.
- Key benefits of the new tool and process identified by growers include the BMP:
  - being easier to complete,
  - providing easier access to up-to-date information,
  - giving the ability benchmark against others and regional/state criteria,
  - providing the ability to self assess and review farm business practices, and
  - regular use improving the currency of farm record keeping.
- Keeping the program simple and easy to use is crucial to encourage uptake.
- The program is seen as a way of gaining credibility - for growers through accreditation (although not important to all growers) - and for the industry to prove that it is cutting edge and united.
- All agreed that education and training as well as ongoing support for growers – particularly those who are less computer literate – are integral to the successful uptake of the new BMP program.
- Growers generally agree that accountability, outside checking and verification of the system is needed for program credibility as well as a way to keep people honest.
- Consultants see themselves as being able to provide one-on-one support or training for the BMP program.

- RD&E staff are interested in practice change data out the BMP program and see extension staff as playing a role in the adoption of new management tools. They see a possible way for them to more involved in the program is in its ongoing review and development and the inclusion of their research.

## Results

### Q8. Please make any comment about your BMP experience, ratings you gave it and/or differences in ratings (if any):

#### Consultants

Overall, consultants were quite positive about the potential of the new BMP with one commenting that the ginning and marketing info will be useful and another saying that it was *very detailed with plenty of information. [It] needs to be simple for growers to take the time and an interest.* The templates in the HR system and other program resources were pointed out as a huge benefit. There was also an observation that work needed to be done on the *on the cultural change required to get non-BMP involved.*

One consultant noted that the BMP had been designed around pesticide applications and had lost direction since then.

#### Growers

Generally, growers felt that the new BMP provides good current information, is flexible, helps with decision-making and is a massive improvement on the previous version (10 comments). It was commented that the internet format was useful and user friendly - making it easier to become BMP accredited (7 comments). A couple also thought that the new topics were of great value (2 comments).

There was some caution expressed, however, about the need for all players to participate, the need for promotion and education and the computer literacy of users.

A few had questions about the content (3 comments) and the applicability of criteria in relation to farm operations as well as the economic benefits. A couple of growers said that the BMP was low on their list of priorities (2 comments) and another couple felt that it was a time consuming process (2 comments).

Growers' comments about their BMP experience	No. of mentions
<p><b>The new BMP provides good current information, is flexible, helps make management decisions and is a massive improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will allow us to show our operation is sustainable and generally up to standard</li> <li>- Provided good info on how to do the right thing...be a responsible cotton grower</li> <li>- Made me lift farm management</li> <li>- The cost of being BMP accredited is worth it when considering ongoing cost of trying to get growers be audited</li> <li>- A massive improvement</li> <li>- Gives more back and more flexible</li> <li>- Ability to maintain currency / updated with current issues</li> <li>- Good support and resource features</li> <li>- Helps make management decisions for bettering of farm whether in actual production, managing resources or personnel</li> <li>- Benefits us as growers</li> <li>- More practical and worthwhile</li> <li>- A very useful tool</li> </ul>	10
<p><b>The internet format is useful</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Easier to become BMP accredited</li> <li>- Useful for those who are computer literate</li> <li>- If all players participate</li> <li>- Will need promotion and education</li> <li>- More user friendly</li> </ul>	7

<b>Questions about the content</b> - Some of the criteria in the levels will not apply to some operations and so reaching some levels would be quite difficult - Content needs a more 'practical evaluation' - Needs some economic benefits to make it work better	3
<b>Addition modules / topics of great value</b> - To farm business	2
<b>Low on list of priorities</b> - No benefit to farm output - Quite useful, but not a priority	2
<b>Time consuming</b> - To write and follow manual - Long and drawn out	2
Old system was time consuming and it was hard to get audit personnel into the region	2
Frustrating and disappointing	1
Limited exposure	
We need to become certified again	

**Comments include:**

*It's now more practical and worthwhile. It can now help to achieve better markets and also combine with OHS systems.*

*Previously the benefit from actually being certified was outweighed by the cost of that particular process. An updated process over the internet should be good in terms of incorporating new updates. The cost of being BMP accredited is worth it when considering the on-going cost of trying to get growers to be audited etc. The internet version will make it easy to do this.*

*Has been low on my list of priorities because I saw no benefit to the output of the farm.*

*We have always had difficulty with chemical manifests, and this will allow us to show our operation is sustainable and generally up to standard.*

*It has made me lift farm management but need some economic benefits to make it work better for me.*

**RD&E staff**

Generally RD&E respondents were positive about their BMP experience, with one respondent commenting that myBMP may encourage more farmers to be involved as well as linking with R&D. Another said that the *new' program needs to be properly resourced by Cotton Australia* as best practice needs to be kept a priority. It was also noted by one respondent that their response was based on limited exposure and they needed to use it more to be more definitive.

One respondent particularly commented positively on the ability of the new BMP to direct users to web resources on certain topics and liked the comparative graphs showing where growers sit in relation to each other...*a bit of healthy competition can help change practice.*

**Q.16 How would you change (if a change is needed) the format or the way the tool is set up to make it easier for people to use?****Consultants**

One consultant felt that the product was pretty much ready to go, another agreed saying that the new BMP ...*looks reasonably easy to navigate around will obviously become easier with constant use.* A couple of suggestions for changes included *when viewing an module only letting the grower see that section to reduce confusion and combine some of the points to make the process quicker.*

## Growers

Specific tabs (for headings) and clear navigation were suggested by a number of growers (5 comments) as important with specific mentions of templates and action plans. Others said that the pathway to certification and what should to be completed needs to be clear (5 comments). Suggestions for a clear pathway in the program included using a special font, larger print and colour coding.

There were a few (3 comments) who said they needed more time to use the system while others were happy with the current format after some practice to get used to navigating around the site (3 comments).

A couple of growers mentioned that it was important to explain the new scale as it is opposite to the current scale (2 comments).

How Growers would change the format or setup of the tool to make it easier	No. of mentions
<b>More specific tabs / navigation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To templates</li> <li>- Make the "action plans" for compliance purposes more prominent on the web page where the growers log in</li> <li>- Navigation got hung up at a point</li> <li>- Use tab layout for the headings to show which area you are in</li> </ul>	5
<b>Make the pathway to certification clearer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Important links that lead to certification need to be either in a special font or larger print or both</li> <li>- An explanation of how the program works may be useful (i.e. certification, how to go about BMP, the process etc)</li> <li>- Separate level 1,2 to achieve certification. Keep 3,4 for higher achievements, maybe a higher recognition.</li> <li>- Ensure awareness of what is needed to be certifiable – maybe a colour code?</li> <li>- Where the certification standard is and the optional units.</li> </ul>	5
Need more time to use the system / difficult to asses	3
<b>Good / format is fine</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- But more use could lead to small changes</li> <li>- Will make my life easier when it's completed</li> <li>- Will take practice to get used to navigating around the site</li> </ul>	3
<b>Explanation of scale</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where 1 used to be the highest, it is now the lowest</li> <li>- Do we really need to change the number ranking to the opposite to what it is currently?</li> </ul>	2
No change	2
List existing BMP documents	1

### Comments include:

*The important links that lead to certification need to be either in a special font or larger print or both so that the pathway to certification is more clear. I still think that certification should remain the important goal. Otherwise the whole BMP program will fall by the wayside.*

*Maybe make the "action plans" for compliance purposes more prominent on the web page where the growers log in - that way the growers can access their action plan updates and new plan creations quicker - it can also aid in making growers more interested in using e-BMP as a web based tool in future.*

*Difficult to assess at this stage when all the content is yet to be loaded in. No significant changes at the moment to suggest.*

*Use tab layout for the headings to show which area you are in.*

**RD&E staff**

There were no negative comments about the tool's format from RD&E respondents. One mentioned that the format was good but noted the importance of ensuring the availability of resources to help *the growers in the initial stages; this demand should steady off as more people become better at using the site*. Two others had not experienced the tool enough to make any comment. One respondent commented that the incentive to use the tool is the issue rather than the format.

**Q18. Please make any comment about your rating and, if you have concerns about any of the content, please note what these are – including any advice on what needs to be changed or added:**

**Consultants**

One consultant wanted to have a more in depth look at the program before commenting on any concerns. Another thought that growers who used the program once would be keen to use it again. *Problem is getting them to use it the first time and having them attend meetings, may be able to encourage this through consultants.*

**Growers**

A number of growers provided suggestions of content that could be added (6 comments) including a spray damage database, more visual aids, more compliance information and definitions of terms. Others were happy with the content and had no problems with the format or navigation (6 comments). One person commented that this could be a very good compliance tool for the cotton industry.

Some growers gave advice about the content including the need to keep it simple and the need to keep the language from being too 'research' orientated (3 comments).

Comments about rating of content quality, any concerns and advice on what needs to be changed or added	No. of mentions
<b>Content that needs to be added:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adding a spray damage data base to monitor areas of concern</li> <li>- Add visual aids</li> <li>- Add more compliance information re the legal requirements of employment e.g. contractor obligations regarding Workers Comp.</li> <li>- Highlight the scale egg: 1 start and 4 excel. Different to the existing program.</li> <li>- Definitions / glossary of terms may be needed.</li> </ul>	6
<b>Good, well done</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will take practice navigating around site</li> <li>- Compared to guidelines given, I would say that this e certification scheme is very good. If used properly by farmers/growers, this can be a very good compliance tool for the cotton industry today and in future.</li> <li>- I'm not great on the computer but had no difficulty navigating this system as it stands.</li> <li>- Format is good and should have a good chance of being understood and taken up.</li> </ul>	6
<b>Advice on content</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Content will only be as good as information put in</li> <li>- Keep it simple</li> <li>- Old material is ok, but new material needs to be evaluated from a practical viewpoint, language is very 'research speak' and needs to be translated to 'grower speak'.</li> </ul>	3
<b>Needed more time using the program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To become familiar with program navigation.</li> <li>- Not sufficient opportunity to adequately assess the quality of the content for each topic. Will require a longer period of review</li> </ul>	3
There is more info to be input / not all content on site for pilot	2
<b>Format advice:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Add search functions to resources, links and grower forum if possible to minimise time finding information.</li> </ul>	1
Some of the certification standards are very high and hard to attain, especially in the L&W module	

**Comments included:**

*Quite good but will take practice to get used to navigating around the site.*

*Very good - compared to guidelines given, I would say that this e certification scheme is very good. If used properly by farmers/growers, this can be a very good compliance tool for the cotton industry today and in future.*

*Not sufficient opportunity to adequately assess the quality of the content for each topic. Will require a longer period of review.*

**RD&E staff**

There were a few different views expressed by RD&E respondents. One commented that although the tool provides *rungs on a ladder of improvement* they were a little more concerned about if the farmer will climb the ladder. Another noted the importance of regularly reviewing and revising the R&D information aligning with a further comment about the need for more time and investment in ensuring the tool's alignment... *It will not be a substitute for traditional and reactive information transfer.* One more respondent said that they required further use of the tool to provide anything beyond preliminary ratings.

**Q23. Please make any comments about the BMP program/tool in relation to your ratings above (Q 18-21) and what could be changed (if anything) to improve its value to growers:****Consultants**

Overall, consultants felt that the program had good potential. *Looking good Vern!!!* One observed that it should provide Cotton Australia with valuable information and allow them direct management of areas requiring attention. Another thought that growers would be attracted by benchmarking and performance type ideas.

One consultant commented that they weren't sure that the program *will give a good indicator as a practical assessor of farm practices unless the grower goes for certification.* They did however believe that the program could be an extremely useful tool to help improve farming practices ... *with the links and resources that the program provides.* The same consultant also noted that a *grower Forum would be very good for the transfer of information between growers as to improved farming practices between other growers and researchers.*

**Growers**

While some growers felt they needed more time to assess the program (6 comments), others were positive about its potential (4 comments).

A number provided suggestions about possible program improvements (9 comments) which included giving examples of practical solutions on other farms, reiterating the need to keep it simple and modifications of the level criterion.

Five respondents mentioned the importance of selling the advantages, merits and tangible benefits of the program. Observations were made about growers needing to see benefits before they committed to making changes. There were also a couple of comments about the need to recognise growers who excel in the program. One person mentioned linking in with the Cotton Growers Awards program.

Comments on ratings about tool's ability, potential, capacity and practical guidance for growers and what could be changed to improve its value.	No. of mentions
<b>Changes / suggestions to improve value</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Examples of practical solutions on other farms</li> <li>- Keep it simple (to maintain interest)</li> <li>- Encourage farms to benchmark themselves</li> <li>- Level criteria needs some modification / some things are not relevant but still need to be ticked to be compliant.</li> <li>- Content needs to be correct and relevant</li> <li>- Make that compliance meter even more prominent</li> <li>- A rep could come out before certification and make sure the farm is ok to</li> </ul>	9

pass	
<b>Need more time looking at it</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Although looks good</li> <li>- To fully assess/evaluate whole program</li> <li>- To navigate practical uses</li> </ul>	6
<b>Selling the advantages / merits / tangible benefits of the program is important</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A commercial benefit or competitive advantage needs to be linked to the levels of BMP attainment.</li> <li>- Don't believe that growers will make improvements (other than legislative) until there is some tangible benefit</li> <li>- I think that farmers will implement BMP if they can see some sort of benefit to maximise their profit.</li> <li>- BMP still needs real rewards for its use and relevance to growers such as financial returns i.e. bale price</li> </ul>	5
<b>Good potential</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good having links and benchmark</li> <li>- Good stuff keep it up</li> <li>- Still being fine-tuned, looks like it will be very good when 'finished'.</li> <li>- Easy to use</li> </ul>	4
<b>Recognition is needed for growers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognition for growers who excel</li> <li>- Incorporate into the Cotton Grower Awards program as the basis for entry in to the competition. Perhaps have a recognition site for those growers achieving the highest level (4) in all categories?</li> </ul>	2
Program is one of many tools used by growers to improve farm practices	1
Correlate and integrate it with other quality control program e.g. grains and cattle	
When the industry gains momentum again the will be a great benefit but until then it won't be utilized to its full benefit.	
Good luck with getting all the negative BMP growers to look at the new BMP site.	
The benchmarking potential is hinged upon grower uptake. You won't be able to benchmark if everyone doesn't put in their information.	

#### Comments included:

*Would like to see it incorporated into the Cotton Grower Awards program as the basis for entry in to the competition. Perhaps have a recognition site for those growers achieving the highest level (4) in all categories? Must keep it stupid-simple to keep growers interested.*

*Excellence in farm performance will only occur if the content is correct and relevant.*

A commercial benefit or competitive advantage needs to be linked to the levels of BMP attainment. At the moment it's probably the perceived legal imperatives that are mostly driving the adoption.

*The potential to benchmark is hinged upon uptake of growers i.e. garbage into the program will mean that garbage out. if not everyone wants to put their information in then you won't be able to benchmark and improve your own practices or share the information.*

*I think that farmers will implement BMP if they can see some sort of benefit to maximise their profit.*

#### **Q25. Growers - In your view what can be done to reduce any potential barrier? Please list your ideas in order of most beneficial.**

##### **Consultants - In your view what can be done to reduce the web format being a potential barrier?**

To reduce the web format being a potential barrier, suggestions included keeping the format simple and easy to use as well as including ...*general reading info like weather, markets etc.* One consultant thought that it would only be a barrier to ...*"older" growers who do not use computers.* Another commented that support for the program needed to be spread across the industry including consultants. *Make sure that growers have many options to be able to use the new bmp...In plain terms, help/support me to help get growers on board.*

## Growers

Most growers indicated that education and training (8 comments) as well as strong support (7 comments) was needed to reduce any potential barriers to using the site. Suggestions for training included shed meetings and workshops. There was also a call for staff to be available for one-on-one support of those who are not so proficient with computers.

Others mentioned that a good marketing campaign would help reduce potential barriers (4 comments). Particular mention was made of using grower stories to promote the benefits of the new BMP. A couple said that it was important to keep the program easy to use and navigate (2 comments).

What can be done to reduce any potential barrier	No. of mentions
<b>Education /training on how to use the site</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Educate how to use the site</li> <li>- If there is a barrier will be hard to overcome because have to first teach the person to work with a computer and then come up to speed with BMP</li> <li>- Small shed meetings to roll out program</li> <li>- Demonstration workshops</li> <li>- Individual tuition for those who are not computer literate</li> <li>- Training workshops for those who are not so computer literate achieving confidence in using the web based program.</li> </ul>	8
<b>Strong support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Office staff need to understand process and requirements</li> <li>- Support for farmers getting involved</li> <li>- Enlist wives to use it</li> <li>- Time and guidance needed for older generations</li> <li>- CA to employ person to sit with computer illiterate people</li> <li>- Staff on the ground to help / phone help for immediate assistance</li> </ul>	7
<b>Good marketing campaign</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote benefits of focus of new BMP with stories on growers who were skeptical who have applied it successfully</li> <li>- Good marketing campaign in the community</li> <li>- There needs to be some way of reminding growers to continually update.</li> <li>- Grower information</li> </ul>	4
<b>Easier to use</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anyone with a basic understanding should not have any problems.</li> <li>- Keep it as is for computer proficient users</li> </ul>	3
<b>Ensure easy to use and easy navigation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure that it is easy to use and growers are able to navigate around it easy</li> <li>- people that do not use computers often will easily be intimidated with web sites that require a fair bit of navigating to get things done.</li> </ul>	2
<b>Internet speed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure everyone involved is connected to broadband</li> </ul>	2
Growers not computer proficient possibly unlikely to use BMP in any form	1
Non computer literate growers could print it out	
Grower peer reviews	
As younger farmers get into the industry the computer glitch will subside	
Make sure less time consuming	
Correct content	
Do not release until ready	
Make it always available	

## Comments included:

*Ensure that it is easy to use and growers are able to navigate around it easy. Should also do training workshops for those who are not so computer literate achieving confidence in using the web-based program.*

*Older generations may have trouble following the new program (more time and guidance in the initial stages probably required), however anyone with a basic understanding should not have any problems.*

*Promote the benefits of the new BMP focus - run stories on growers who were skeptical but who have applied it successfully. Enlist the female office-admin/wives to use it.*

*To ensure that all people involved are connected to broadband, and educated in how to use the site.*

**Q27. Please comment on your rating: (from Q26. How important do you believe that the verification/certification is to the credibility of the program? [Please rate on a 1-10 scale where 1=not necessary and 10= essential])**

### Consultants

One consultant believed that *...certification is the only way...* for the program to gain credibility. Another commented that certification doesn't matter for some growers *...as they are meeting their requirements in managing the farm.* Adding to this, one consultant noted that certification was important if the growers' see it as important. They argued that a new start with a new focus and emphasis on practice change *...will perhaps lead growers to getting certified because it's not that painful since they have done little chunks along the way.*

### Growers

Growers generally agreed that accountability, outside checking and verification of the system was needed (9 comments). This was thought to be important in adding credibility to the program as well as a way to keep people honest.

This desire for credibility extended to an industry level with respondent commenting it was needed to prove that the cotton industry is cutting edge and united (7 comments). One respondent said that the industry continually needs to verify that 'best practices' are happening. Another said it is the way of the future and provides competitive advantage.

A few respondents noted that it was the process and the practice that was important - not just the certification (3 comments).

Comments on ratings about verification/certification to the program's credibility	No. of mentions
<p><b>Needs to be outside checking and verification of the system / accountability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being able to be assessed by a Cotton Australia rep is very important.</li> <li>- Needs to be some 'checking' of the system by someone outside the business to maintain the credibility of the program</li> <li>- Needs to be some form of verification to have credibility otherwise it is self assessment alone</li> <li>- With no accountability what would be the point of doing it</li> <li>- To be truly credible then verification is a must. BMP is seen as credible outside the industry but is a major problem to the industry with current uptake levels.</li> <li>- Some growers with current certification are obviously not complying in some areas but still have certification</li> <li>- Most people are honest but if real rewards are available there is more incentive to stretch the truth.</li> <li>- If you want succeed you have to have compliance in the program</li> <li>- Still need to ensure that on farm site verification is completed to ensure the quality of the BMP program is maintained and upheld.</li> </ul>	9
<p><b>Need credibility to prove that the industry cutting edge and united</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- BMP has had more positive impact with community and govt than growers.</li> <li>- To show Gov we are at "cutting edge" of sustainability in environmental, WUE and farm management by having industry data collection</li> <li>- Essential to prove to local communities, govt, marketers and non-cotton growers that the whole industry is united.</li> <li>- The industry needs to continually prove the 'best practices' are</li> </ul>	6

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- happening and are verified.</li> <li>- Gives public acceptance.</li> <li>- It is the way of the future and an area of competitive advantage</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Inclusion in the process is key</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Don't get caught up in idea of developing pathways to certification as priority</li> <li>- If practices are honestly being followed this is more important than a certificate</li> <li>- I believe it is something to attain to but other growers might just enjoy doing the self assessment</li> </ul>	3
Need to have benchmark to make it worthwhile	1
Some modules are not of great importance to family farms e.g. any thing to do with employment	
Don't have to be certified to be a good farmer	
Seems like a good starting tool	
I have put many hours of work into the accreditation and hopefully this will be reflected in the rating of the farm	
Don't forget to tell growers they can still talk to someone on the end of a phone.	
It largely depends on 'to what end' or 'who' do you wish to satisfy in terms of verification of a robust and proven system. i.e. regulators, community, environmental groups, marketers, customers, other interested stakeholders, including grower skeptics	
Without it there would be little use in spending the time needed to use the program.	

#### Comments included:

*Being part of the process is the most important thing. Don't get too caught up in the idea of developing the pathways to certification as a priority, inclusion in the program is key.*

*Given we are looking for tracking BMP from paddock to product, it is the way of the future, and an area of competitive advantage. Don't forget to tell growers they can still talk to someone on the end of a phone.*

#### **Q28. Based on your previous experience with BMP and in view of what you have experienced in this pilot, what would you describe as the key benefits to a farm enterprise getting involved with the new program and using this tool?**

##### Consultants

The templates and resources area were noted by one consultant to be excellent with another commenting on the easier access to information and the keeping of relevant data off the farm. It was also noted that there would be benefits to growers' thought processes.

It was also commented that growers needed a spread of support services. One consultant said that some small group or one-on-one assistance would be needed to start off with...*but after that, lots will be right to go alone.*

##### Growers

A number of key benefits of the new tool and process identified by growers included the BMP being easier to complete (7 comments), providing easier access to up-to-date information (7 comments), giving the ability benchmark against others and regional/state criteria (7 comments), providing the ability to self assess and review farm business practices (6 comments) and regular use improving the currency of farm record keeping (6 comments).

Others valued the ability to use the program at their own pace, whether it be faster or slower (4 comments) and a couple of respondents (2) commented that it was a marketing opportunity for the cotton industry particularly in terms of water use efficiency.

Description of the key benefits to a farm enterprise getting involved in new project and using this tool	No. of mentions
Easier to complete	7

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Less paper work</li> <li>- Better efficiency and time</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Ease of access to up to date information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Availability of having other information sources and links available at your finger tips.</li> <li>- Easy to quickly find the info instead of wading through a manual.</li> <li>- Extension support in farm office</li> <li>- Full access to resources without leaving the farm, more relevant and up to date info.</li> <li>- Gives you details of what is required by law.</li> <li>- Full of information without having to sift and find it your self</li> </ul>	7
<p><b>Ability to benchmark</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Against others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Especially with the Regional/State benchmark criteria</li> <li>- Whether it be on the regional or industry level.</li> <li>- Keeps you in check with the industry</li> </ul>	7
<p><b>Ability to self assess and review business practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ability to self assess and accept own level and set own bar</li> <li>- Opportunity to review business practices in an ongoing &amp; individualised nature</li> <li>- Opportunity to look at whole farm from a holistic point of view but also allows to go into detailed areas</li> <li>- Placing themselves in a position where they are aware of risks and knowing how to minimise these</li> <li>- Very good management tool</li> <li>- A guide for where to start to improve practices</li> </ul>	6
<p><b>Regular / daily use keeps farm information / record keeping current</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Currency will be important - at any point it will be a current model</li> <li>- It will become a daily exercise with some real benefits - not a book on the shelf. Needs ACSA involvement.</li> <li>- Increase in documentation on farm activities</li> <li>- Having an instantaneous picture of ones farm quickly</li> <li>- It can be updated more often and maintained as things are updated on farm without having to have an industry representative visit multiple times to verify</li> <li>- It provides a more whole of farm business approach and its ability to remain up-to-date</li> <li>- Improved record keeping of farm practices and procedures</li> </ul>	6
<p><b>Ability to go at own pace</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A grower can move at a pace that suits</li> <li>- Speed of execution</li> <li>- Can do this at any time and only parts if you want</li> </ul>	4
<p><b>Marketing opportunity for the cotton industry</b></p> <p>Ensuring that the public perception of the cotton industry/irrigators is improved particularly in water use efficiency. i.e. through media outlets.</p>	2
It's practical and now has meaning. e.g. new markets with the potential for better prices.	1
Recognition of sound practices.	
New levels allow for a higher level of accreditation to be achieved.	
Land stewardship as an industry.	
You are not told you have got to do it.	
Able to get more staff involved in some practices.	

**Comments included:**

*Speed of execution, and ability to self assess and accept own level. Ability to set own bar and not be governed by such as endo guidelines when no endo used.*

*It's a very good management tool. Gives you details of what is required by law. Gives you a benchmark to aim for, especially with the Regional/State benchmark criteria.*

*Ensuring that the public perception of the cotton industry/irrigators is improved particularly in water use efficiency. i.e. through media outlets. The BMP program will also allow growers to benchmark themselves whether it be on the regional or industry level.*

*Gives you an opportunity to look at your whole farm from a holistic point of view but also allows you to go into detailed areas.*

*It provides a more whole of farm business approach and its ability to remain up-to-date and the ability to benchmark practices across the industry.*

#### **RD&E staff**

RD&E staff described a number of benefits for RD&E staff getting involved with the program and using the tool. These are summarised below.

- Continuous provision of updated 'best science' to maintain relevance and currency / link to key resources
- Ideal framework for extension delivery (if tool regularly used) and the chance to influence uptake of research
- Clear communication on intention for research dissemination
- Practical application for research outcomes on farms
- Generation of practice change stats – important for project M&E

**Q29. What, in your view, are the likely main barriers that would work against farm enterprises becoming involved in the BMP program [please check (only) the 3 main barriers]: If other please note**

#### **Consultants**

The one consultant who responded to 'other' in this question thought that the lack of one-on-one support could be a barrier to farm enterprises being involved in the program.

#### **Growers**

Those who selected 'other' provided the following barriers that could work against farm enterprises being involved in the BMP program:

- lack of water = less interest (motivation) for cotton growers to be excited.
- Small family farms don't have office staff to help do this program and all the other audits such as OH&S, workcover, amps spray records etc.
- Trust in confidentiality of their information being on the Internet site.
- No-one to help them get started, GSM etc.

#### **RD&E staff**

There were two respondents who selected 'other' main barriers to them being involved in Phase 2 of the BMP program. One was concerned about the uncertainty of their employment situation and the other commented that if industry doesn't support BMP with strong participation it will be difficult for researchers to justify time input either.

**30. In your view, what is needed most to encourage growers to become involved in the BMP program? Please list your ideas in order of most beneficial.**

#### **Consultants**

It was commented by one consultant that growers need to see the value of BMP. *This has been the single biggest barrier.* Two others agreed, adding that the benefits of improved time management should be promoted and resources should be allocated to help growers start the process. One of these consultants also noted that using farmers as pin-ups once they have worked through the new program could help encourage growers. They also advocated a choice of support mechanisms for growers. *Making sure that growers have choice on who helps and encourage all forms of support.*

It was also noted by one consultant that there is a need to focus on the wives ...*as they are more often than not the most computer savvy in the business and [we] have begun to see more interest from wives within the area.*

## Growers

Overall, grower respondents thought that growers would be most encouraged to become involved in the BMP program if they could see the marketing, business and financial benefits / advantages for the time spent on gaining BMP accreditation (21 comments). These benefits could be in monetary form including premium pricing for BMP products and the flow on financial effects from improved business management decisions.

A number of growers also mentioned that the new BMP program needed to be marketed as very different to the growers as well as to swing consumer perception about the cotton growing industry (6 comments).

There were a few who commented that growers should receive recognition or reward for the time and effort spent to implement the BMP (6 comments), with one respondent suggesting a fee discount for those who participated.

A couple of people noted that BMP was currently not the highest priority for some growers with the current water issues. Another two commented that on ground and one-on-one support would also be appreciated.

What is needed most to encourage growers to become involved in the BMP program	No. of mentions
<b>Need to see the marketing, business and financial benefits / advantages for time spent on producing BMP product</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial benefit / bottom line.</li> <li>- Tangible benefit.</li> <li>- A perceived benefit - a financial gain. e.g. maybe the consequences of not having it down the track? Maybe a prestige factor?</li> <li>- To gain a premium for the product.</li> <li>- Financial value for the time spent on becoming accredited in BMP.</li> <li>- Premium paid for BMP products, including grains.</li> <li>- Info on how it benefits management decisions.</li> <li>- Getting them through to start using it will be the hard part.</li> <li>- Farmers need to get value back for time invested.</li> <li>- Use the program as a way to ensuring that efficiencies and general good farm management practices are established and maintained.</li> </ul>	21
<b>Demonstrate / market new system as very different</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- User friendly</li> <li>- Revitalise and promote BMP because of the eBMP</li> <li>- Positive marketing campaign.</li> <li>- Maintain quality assurance in the industry and in turn manage public perception.</li> <li>- A tool to swing consumers perceptions to the cotton growing industry.</li> </ul>	6
<b>Receive recognition / reward for time and effort spent to implement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fee discount</li> </ul>	6
<b>BMP not currently the highest priority for some growers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More water would mean more enthusiasm with higher farm viability.</li> <li>- Water - no cotton no interest</li> </ul>	2
<b>Support for implementation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On-ground help</li> <li>- One on one assistance with computer</li> </ul>	2
Less pressure i.e no big stick approach	1
BMP accreditation does not always mean profit or a good farmer. BMP farmers do not always make good business decisions	
Needs ACSA so Marketing can be included in the program. Makes it an everyday must look at.	
Tell them that the industry is paying too much for them not to put the half-day required to finish their accreditation. They should now finish it and the Industry could spend more money on other things such as water reform work.	
More feedback through cotton magazines and more field days.	
Make it dependent on being able to buy certain technologies.	
Ability to benchmark.	

*Financial value for the time spent on becoming accredited in BMP.*

*A ready Marketing advantage in participating. Info on how it benefits management decisions.*

*A BMP program must be able to maintain financial advantages for the cotton growers. Must also be a tool to swing consumers perceptions to the cotton growing industry.*

*Basically some type of benefit not just a feel good type thing as some of the benefits from BMP are pushed on different agendas to farmers.*

#### **RD&E staff**

RD&E staff were asked what is needed most to assist themselves and/or RD&E staff to become (even more) involved in the BMP program. Their suggestions included:

- More time or extra resources
- Need to be made a priority
- Hands on experience
- Involvement in ongoing review / development (x2)
- Feedback on issues with the 'targets' for relevant areas e.g. IPM

**Q31. What support or other tools are needed for farm enterprises to gain the most out of the new BMP program. Please list your ideas in order of most beneficial.**

#### **Consultants**

One consultant thought that some dollar support to get growers going could be used although they indicated that they needed to think more about the question. Another mentioned one-on-one training ...*though impossible*...and winter meetings / workshops. Continuing the idea of personal contact, one consultant noted using area managers to get growers talking. They also mentioned using support tools in the program. The web was mentioned by one consultant as a possible tool...*maybe a website with other links that make it a first point of call for growers.*

#### **Growers**

Access to some kind of support, whether it be online, over the phone, face to face or introductory workshops was important to a number of respondents (10 comments). There was no seeming preference for one type of support over the other, with suggestions ranging across the proposals. Proposed tools (6 comments) included templates (regarding spraying, weather monitoring and chemical usage), the ability to build a farm report specific to your own operation, photos of farm improvements and updated industry tools. One respondent pointed out that it was important to keep the site user friendly and regularly updated and improved.

A few commented that it was too early to tell what support or tools were needed (3 comments) although further use of the system would reveal the gaps.

Support or other tools needed for farm enterprises to gain the most out of the new BMP program.	No. of mentions
<b>Support with computer program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Phone support</li> <li>- Online support</li> <li>- Experienced facilitator</li> <li>- Someone to talk to face to face if needed</li> <li>- Small, area based information workshops</li> <li>- Staff support</li> <li>- Proper induction to program</li> <li>- Reps that can come around from time to time when asked and let you know how you are going with it</li> </ul>	10
<b>In program tools and user friendly updated website</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Industry tools loaded and kept up-dated</li> <li>- Perhaps a section within the program to guide people towards the step by step links that need to be used</li> <li>- It must be a user friendly site and well supported It must be a "living site"</li> </ul>	6

regularly updated and improved	
- Other templates in regards to spraying and weather monitoring maybe and chemical usage possibly linked to verify that BPM is working	
- Building own farm report specific to your own operation.	
- Photos of farm improvements	
A bit early to say - further use of the system will identify gaps	3
Working with other industry groups (Grain industry)	1
Keep it cheap and quick	
Local council groups	
Still need CA to push	

*Probably not realistic to have individual support at all times, but phone support would be good. Younger people more at ease with programs.*

*Training – don't know how. Probably regionally but in small groups. The size of this workshop is ideal.*

*A proper introduction to the program and how to use it. Staff to help growers without computer access and/or skills.*

*A bit early to say. These will be generated after more growers have had opportunity to use the system and identify any important gaps or areas for enhancement.*

#### **RD&E staff**

RD&E staff were asked what support or other tools in their area of expertise are needed for them to best assist farm enterprises in applying the BMP program. Respondents were looking for assistance in terms of on ground extension staff *to assist growers in adopting new management tools* and proactive GSM's *to get the job done and support the growers to adopt new ways of thinking*. They're also looking for assistance to update support packages.

In addition, RD&E staff are looking for access to *relevant reference technical information*, how their research can be included in BMP and *how I can support this information*.

Another mentioned the importance of one-on-one consultation with the irrigators on farm.

#### **Q22. RD&E staff – Please provide details on data that would be particularly useful to you.**

Data about practice change was mentioned by almost all respondents including - *types of practices Changes in KASA Stats ... at a regional level and national level*. One mentioned that they would like to see this data *as a result of research undertaken and extended*.

One respondent who didn't mention practice said they would like to see *information compliance with the targets at each level will be valuable in assessing research and CRC impact*.

#### **Q35. Consultants - How would you feel you could support a client to use the tool?**

All consultants seemed to feel that they could support a client to use the tool at a one-on-one level. One commented that they had good computer and training skills, while another said they could sit down with one or two growers at a time. One consultant said they could guide growers through the modules *...where my knowledge is appropriate*. Another said that they could get together with growers and discuss *...operation performance through things like SWOT analysis' etc*.

#### **Q33. Please provide any other feedback on the proposed BMP program and web-based tools and ideas on how this can be improved to benefit growers and the broader industry:**

##### **Consultants**

Overall, consultants seem to be positive about the new BMP program noting that it needs to be kept simple and user friendly to keep growers involved. One commented that it will be easier to maintain the upkeep of certification and another said that they were happy to be involved as... *it will help me with current clients waiting for [the] new system before they employ me*.

*I think my ideas have already been commented on. Happy to be more involved since*

*Was very impressed with the program, will be a lot of work for the administrator but will be easier to maintain the up keep of the certification electronically rather than hard copy.*

*Keeping the program simple and user friendly and make sure that it is a time saving when growers are using the program.*

*Keeping it simple and quick. This is always the way to keep growers involved.*

### **Growers**

Overall, it appears that growers are quite positive about the new BMP online system, believe it has potentially strong benefits for the industry and is relatively easy to use. There is recognition of the work that has gone into upgrading the system from the paper based manual and a general feeling that content is good. A couple of respondents note that the content needs to be continually updated and correct.

A number of growers also comment that the marketing of the new system will be important and a challenge in terms of getting the right messages across and convincing growers to be involved.

Respondents' full comments are below:

*Reporting on industry change of practice.*

*Looks good but still need to talk farmers into it.*

*BMP has been a saviour of our industry, even though not taken up by growers. we are fortunate that we have not been put on the wood by the lack of uptake. I think the non- certification option is good even though it is not the perfect ideal we always aspired to.*

*Could be used as a tool for all farming enterprises.*

*Include marketing. Data is posted by gins after your cotton is ginned so we can sell online etc (example GrainCorp).*

*By sending emails when legislation changes and making the annual re assessment cheap and quick.*

*I think that the program has been given a lot of thought and with multi media instruments they need ongoing maintenance for many years ahead. The funding could be helped by selling advertisements to companies servicing agriculture.*

*I think it is great and has obviously had a lot of thought put in. I am concerned about some of the certification levels and hope that there will be some significant checking with end users before rolling out as if some of this goes out as it is and growers don't like it, it will be very hard to get them back. I am also still concerned and I believe some consideration needs to be given to industry (marketers) getting hold of certification status for their own benefit with growers having done all of the work.*

*The refinement carried out from the old manual to this system is excellent. The access to information and ease of use are things that should be promoted. Must get the content right – perhaps a workshop with targeted input from individuals with experience in each module subject to check off on the practicality of the program.*

*I like the idea and the ease of use probably better than the paper model, possibly promote as legal requirements not a this is what you should do.*

*Ensure information is regularly updated when changes occur, especially with legislative issues, this may need a content manager or several managers responsible for each section.*

*I think that it will be a better system than the old one but how you sell it to growers will be a challenge.*

*I prefer the web based approach, it seems easy to use, however, I still don't feel I have a reason to sit down and go through the process instead of other jobs. It may just be my dislike for office work.*

*Clearly a huge effort gone into the development so far. The enhanced benefits to growers in terms of flexibility, additional practical resources etc. is evident.*

*Looks easy to use.*

*Not enough experience to comment.*

*If it helps get past the previous lack of follow up accreditation audits, it will be very positive*

#### **RD&E staff**

*The key will be to demonstrate how this phase 2 BMP will add value to the business. The what's in it for me factor.*

*Not sure what you mean by supporting RD&E sector.*

*Is there any process in plan to keep BMP in growers minds – e.g. to encourage involvement and ongoing participation?*