

# Agskills Report



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Date: 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2012



Fund**base**

## 1. Description

A Cotton Skills Benchmarking system (<http://agskills.com.au/>) has been developed and now needs to be ground-truthed with cotton growers. This report provides feedback from 15-20 industry members about the usability, practicality and usefulness of the system.

Across these industry members included:

- husband and wife owner/manager with no staff
- growers and their staff
- corporate owner with manager and staff

Each of these different structures were able to provide different feedback to allow for the development of a system suitable to all structures in the industry.

This feedback has been grouped into:

1. Establishment/Login Phase
2. Whole of Site Navigation
3. Language Used
4. Forms
5. Reporting

## 2. Concept Feedback

It was relatively simple to secure cooperation from growers to participate in this ground-truthing process which should be a fairly good indicator as to industry take up following the launch. They readily understood the need for this tool at an industry level and could see the relevance for farm-based reporting resulting from the tool.

## 3. Establishment/Login Phase

Many difficulties were encountered in the Login Phase. Feedback from growers indicated that the need for a unique email based identity for every participant was difficult to work with. Whilst it is understood that a certain level of security is necessary it was thought that the level of confidentiality and security needed for this information was not directly proportional to the level of security measures installed i.e. the security measures were too stringent for the relatively low risk information being collected and managed.

Whilst this issue can be partly solved by the establishment of a temporary email using on-line email systems such as Gmail, this is not an ideal solution in the situation of a grower with a number of staff all whom have varying levels of computer literacy. It was believed that ideally a grower (or more usually, their wife or administration person) would be responsible for the initial establishment of the logins. This would allow staff to quickly and simply login and begin to

complete the Forms in a group (or individual) setting in the farm office. It is not ideal for this person to be establishing email addresses for a number of other people due to the possible legalities. In the situation where some staff members did have an email address, this was most often on their home desktop computers. Relying on these staff members to bring the passwords in from home on the right day drastically reduced the likelihood that the Skills Assessment could be achieved.

Furthermore the use of passwords containing a mixture of symbols, higher and lower case letters and numbers is extremely difficult to write down and transfer into the login and impossible to remember. So many problems were encountered by those staff whose login was emailed to a home computer, wrote it down and brought it into the Skills Assessment.

Most growers believed that this type of exercise would be best undertaken regularly, say, once per year. This Skills Assessment would be done in a group situation in the farm office. In this way appropriate support could be provided to those undertaking the assessment and communication could be initiated around these issues.

Therefore possible solutions to the management of login details need to cater for this approach. A suggestion made was for one nominated Site Administrator person to have one login applicable for the entire enterprise. This Administrator would then have the ability to establish new logins for each staff member with access and an ability to manage their passwords. This approach would also reduce the number of "dormant" users on the system as the Administrator could update the system when staff leave.

Alternatively, each staff member could be established as new users without the need for an entirely new login each (just the enterprise login).

The site suggests that this is the way it operates as a staff member cannot just register from the home page and participate, they have to be created by an Enterprise Owner, yet that Enterprise Owner then loses all control and ability to manage the staff member's login details from this point.

It is imperative that an unsubscribe function be added to the system to comply with regulations and allow users to no longer be part of the system if they wish.

#### 4. Whole Site Navigation

Overall the site is simple, clear and clean in its visual appeal which suits the tool and the target market tastes. The video tutorial provides a useful overview for enterprise owners, perhaps there could also be one for staff.

The home screen is simple and clean however you may want to consider using a consistent navigation bank on each page which allows a user to easily go directly to:

- "Enterprise Homepage"
- "My Details"
- "Enterprise Report"
- "My Forms"

If the suggestion of a Site Administrator is used another tab could be created for "My staff" and "Add/Edit Farms". The use of the Enterprise name or their name for these links would assist in reducing confusion and personalising their experience, in the same way the "Welcome" tag does in the header.

I would also suggest that the weighting given to headings, buttons and lists be consistent and logical. For instance, on the Enterprise Homepage, there is no strength given to the Report heading, thus it is difficult for first-time users to find.

On the Person Homepage, there is a necessity to select the farm name before being provided access to the Forms. This is highly confusing and unnecessary. On the Person Homepage there should be consistent buttons for "Complete My Forms" and "Edit My Details". Where the Person Homepage also relates to the Site Administrator they should be able to access "My Staff" and "My Reporting" (or similar language).

The use of nominating individual farms under an enterprise and having staff choose which farm they work on is awkward and seemingly unnecessary. It is also confusing that from the Person Homepage a person must choose which farm they complete the Forms for. It is also confusing that the farms are listed and next to each farm the number of Forms completed is marked, indicating that they must complete Forms for each and every Farm, when the information gathered is usually the same for the same person. The growers used for this report operated a number of farms with a number of staff but all staff operated on any of the farms as needed. Yet their skills and their roles did not vary from Farm to Farm so it is unnecessary to tally the number of Forms completed under each Farm. The suggestion is to gather the individual farm details (if required for other purposes) but allow staff to go straight from Person Homepage to the survey Forms (see suggested site flow diagram).

To add a new staff member it is presently necessary to go from Enterprise Homepage and select Enterprise Farms which brings up one of the Farms Page, then select one of the Existing Farms listed on the right hand side (not logical placement on the page). This brings up the Edit Farm page which you then have to scroll down to see the Create/Edit a Person. This is often missed by those using the site as it is not a logical flow and then is located off-screen. Once more than three staff are listed they are located out of the bordered area and therefore very difficult to read and select.

When the "People on this Farm" table is used to "Edit" a staff member, the table above is populated with their details but as the table is off-screen it appears that

nothing happens. There is no ability to delete staff members and there is no ability to resend passwords to staff members if there was a problem with the initial email sent.

Above the Create/Edit a Person table the instructions say "To add a person who is already registered, simply enter...." These people are not yet registered, that is why they have to complete this table.

In the Create/Edit a Person table the Training Levels option box doesn't include completion of high school option, which was raised a number of times as inappropriate/insulting.

In the Create/Edit a Person table it is unclear that it is compulsory to choose a Role and this caused confusion when using the Forms. This must be clearer and greater guidance must be given as to what the definition of each of these Roles is so that better choices can be made. Also instruction should be provided that multiple roles can be chosen.

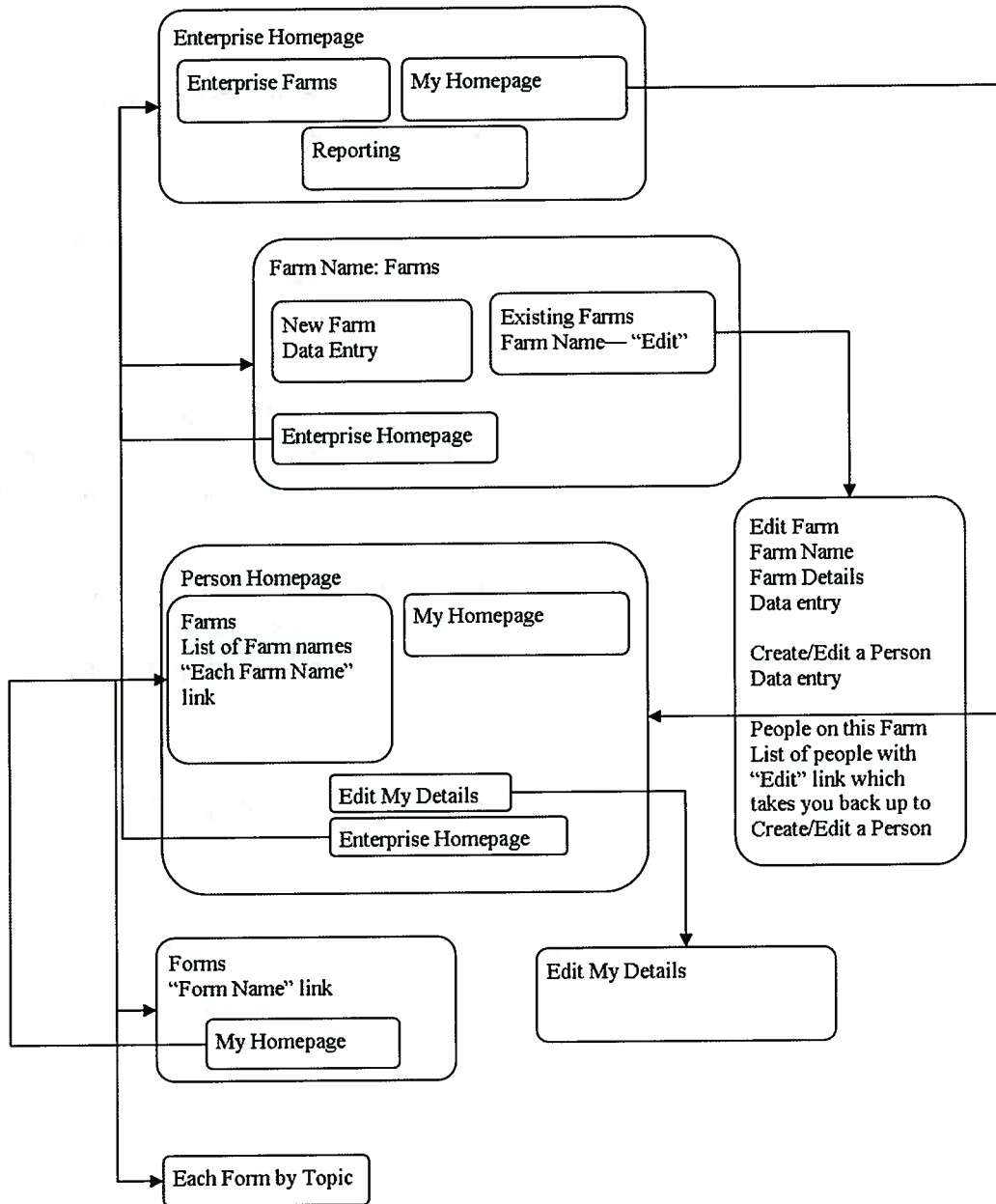
When a new Person is created and the Save button is selected there appears to be no outcome. A dialogue box explaining that the email has been sent with the username and password would help as well as an automatic population of the "People on the Farm" box.

From the "Edit Farm" page it would be useful to have the same consistent navigational buttons to be able to access Enterprise Homepage, Person Homepage, Forms and Reporting.

People on the Farm at bottom of Edit Farm screen when clicking on Edit for a person should link to Person Homepage instead of up to the table above.

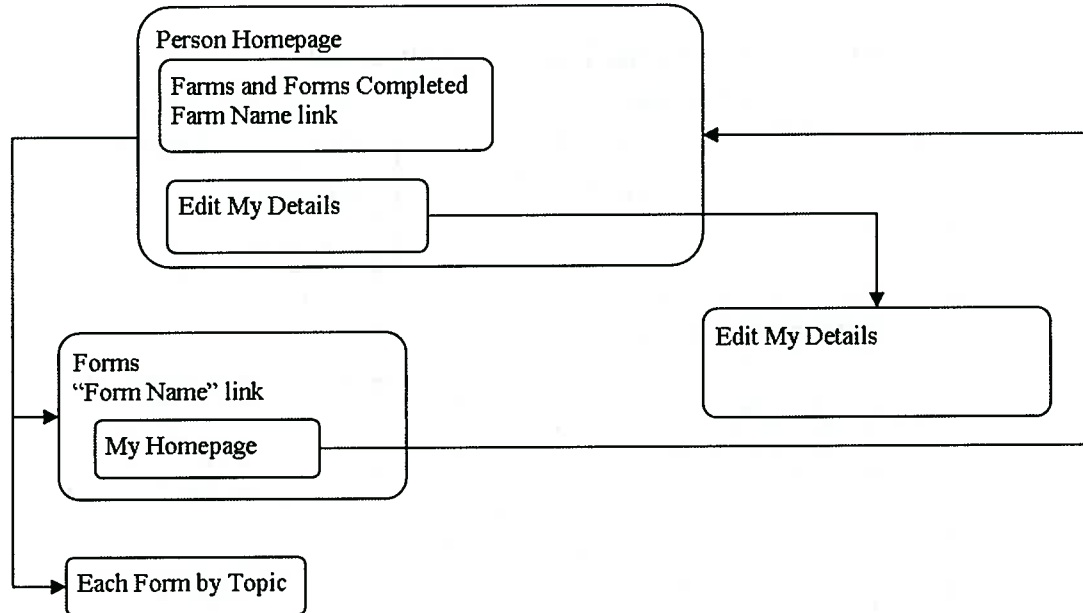
In an attempt to provide suggested solutions, below is the site flow diagram of the present site for Enterprise Owners:

Enterprise Owner Page Layout

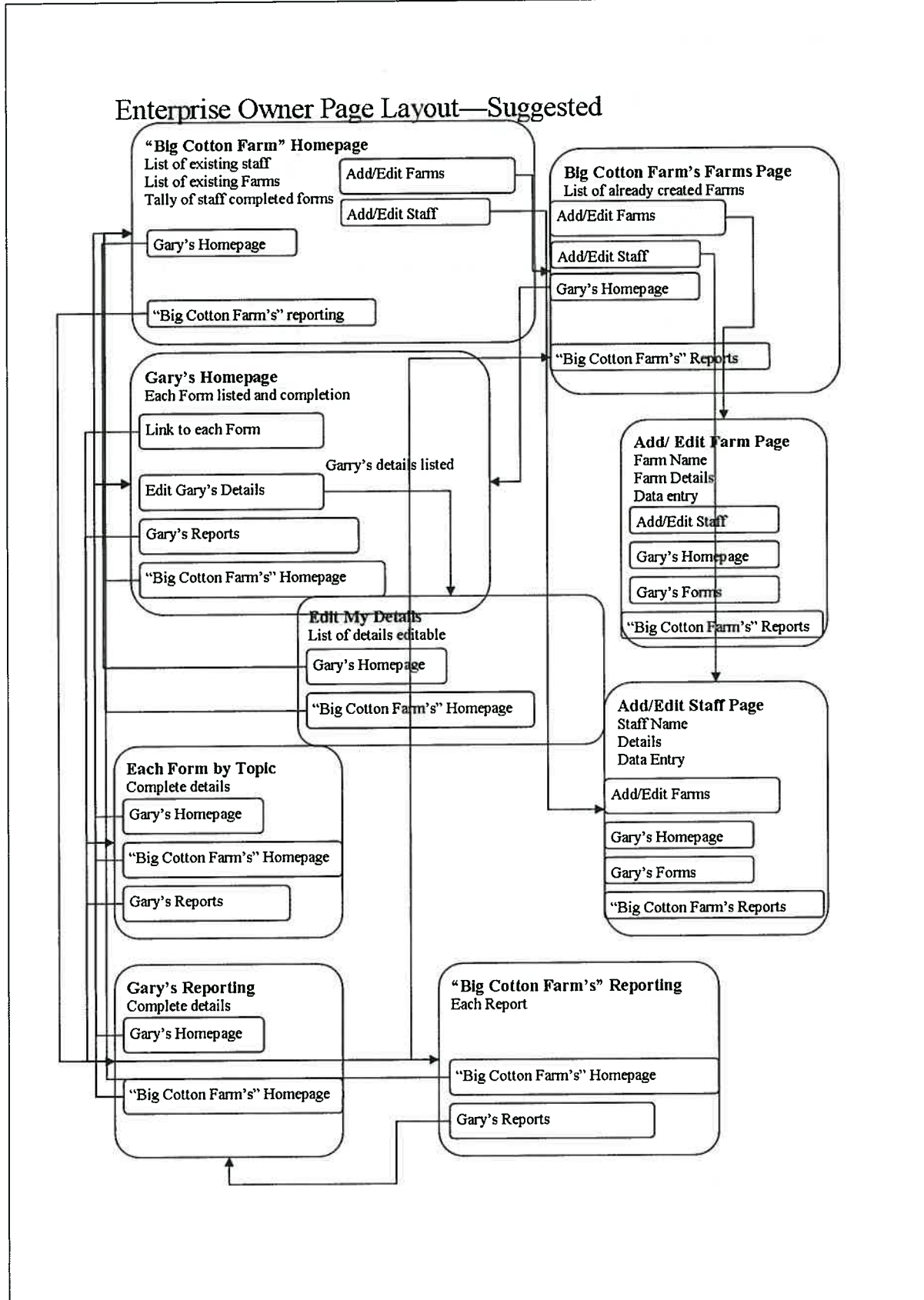


And for a staff member it is:

Staff Person Page Layout



The Suggested Site Flow is below:



This suggestion is based on the following principles:

- That every page has consistent navigation bank to allow easy access back to the person homepage and the enterprise homepage
- That the need to allocate each staff member to a particular farm is removed
- So that separate pages are used for Add/Edit Staff, Add/Edit Farms and Edit Details
- That there is a direct, quick and simple way to get to the two critical elements of the site; the Forms and the Reporting

### 5. Language Used

The site doesn't use consistent language, for instance sometimes it is referred to as "Person Homepage" and on other pages it is "My Homepage". Suggest that this be clarified by using the Username, eg "Gary's Page".

The Forms are obviously the critical part of the site, however this terminology seems a little dated, given "Forms" gives the impression of a paper-based system. Suggest that these are called Modules, or other language.

### 6. Forms

The Forms are comprehensive and seemed to cover all aspects of possible skills areas.

However, the present system is too time consuming for it to be effectively answered. It was generally thought that all the Forms should be able to be completed in an hour to be able to illicit quality responses. At most (when the most computer and English literate person answered the Forms), around half of the Forms could be completed within an hour, much less for those with lower English and computer skills.

Time savings could be found in the following ways:

1. Removal of repeated questions within Forms and between Forms
2. The removal of the voice-over guide at the start of every Form. This is unnecessary after the first one, slows download speeds and distracts people.
3. An ability for the Enterprise Owner or Site Administrator to be able to nominate which Forms they deem applicable for particular staff and be able to deactivate those they don't deem applicable. This feature should allow the staff member to override this if they choose (e.g. simple check boxes beside the list of Forms) in case they have skills the Owner isn't aware of or would like to build skills in other areas.
4. It is understood that the premise is that a person indicates the level at which they are employed (operator, supervisor, manager). However these need explanation to allow a more informed choice (i.e. a Supervisor

has at least one staff member that they are responsible for, a Manager has decision making abilities for budgets etc??). Furthermore it is understand that this selection narrows the Forms that are available to a person, however this is not made clear causing confusion (people would make a selection which was not available to them due to their response to the role question, yet it just appeared as if the Form was loading and never did). When the Form is not available for choosing it should be made transparent or not clickable.

5. A tightening of the structure of each individual question. It is suggested that each question have the following structure:

#### Task Overview

Does this describe your job	No	A little	Mostly	Yes
Does this describe your skill/ability	No	A little	Mostly	Yes
Are you interested in training	No	A little	Mostly	Yes

6. Furthermore each Task Overview needs to be carefully designed. It is suggested that each Task Overview be highly targeted at each of the following levels:
  - Operation level
  - Supervisor level
  - Manager level

In many questions, there was a blend of tasks likely to be applicable to operational level, supervisory and/or management level, making it difficult to answer.

Using this structure, priorities for training on an on-farm basis can be identified instantly for reporting purposes:

- Those who should be doing this in their job but lack the skills and have the inclination (Yes, No, Yes) PRIORITY ONE
- Those who don't need to do this in their job but do have some skills and would like to learn (No, Yes, Yes) PRIORITY TWO
- Those who don't need to do this in their job and don't have the skills but would like to learn (No, No, Yes) PRIORITY THREE

Should the Reasons for Responses box continue to be used (not seen as necessary) then the options need to be more relevant. Suggestions that this is left blank for the testing phase to allow users to enter their own reasons and thus gathering a bank of relevant reasons. At the very least there should be allowance for "other" to be typed in. The reasons are usually linked to the answers provided so some narrowing down of the reasons based on the answers already provided would be useful.

Some commented that they would like to be able to say in more detail exactly what sort of training they needed. For instance, they want training on grain handling and storage but they really wanted to know more about the chemicals used for storing it, rather than the health and safety issues around grain handling etc.

- 7. Many of the Forms had spelling errors, repeated questions and confusing wording. This is very distracting for users and devalues the system.

### 7. Reporting

Most growers viewed the reporting option with much enthusiasm and could certainly see the value of such reports. However the reporting system available was disappointing.

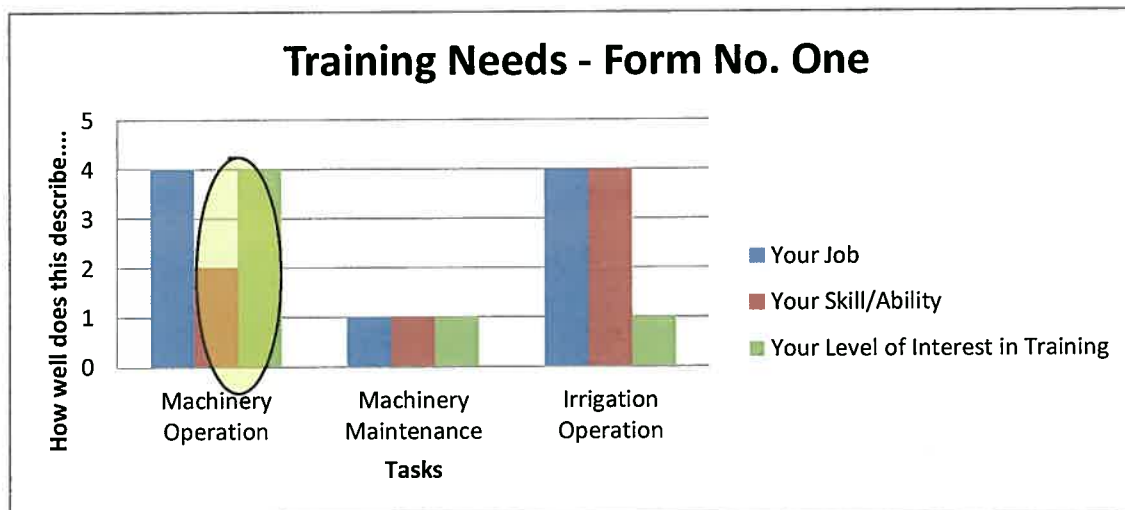
As identified elsewhere, finding the reporting function is difficult. Once found and a Form selected, it is displayed off screen. Reports should be generated on a new page.

Results are only available for each Form, by rereading the questions and looking at the results. The axis labels are confusing. It is extremely time consuming and largely unhelpful information.

If information was gathered as per the priority schedule suggested above, growers could see the reporting for just those skill areas that are Priority One to Priority Three.

Individual reports for staff members may be useful and in this case Enterprise Owners would scroll through a large amount of information to view individuals' response, however a whole-of-farm report must be concise and useful.

It would be useful to be able to pictorially identify the skills on the enterprise and where there is a skill gap where they should be doing it as part of their job. For example:



Therefore the Enterprise Owner/Manager can quickly identify where the task requires the skill (blue bar), where the person lacks these skills (yellow circle) and where they are interested in training (green bar).

This could be collated across the whole enterprise, providing extremely powerful information to the Enterprise Owner/Manager.

Furthermore this could feed into the Prioritisation system suggested above to create extremely useful and easy to read information.

This reporting must be printable, emailed, be saved and printed as a PDF file. It must also be minimised to a few pages or able to be searched or drilled down to increase usage.

## 8. Summary

The recommendations made in this report have been deemed through a process of engaging with cotton growers. Overall there is very positive response to the need and practicality of a system such as this, however a number of recommendations to improve the system have been made. These centre around three main themes;

1. the need for consistent and intuitive navigational systems throughout the site to create a pleasurable and productive experience suitable to a range of people with varying roles within cotton businesses and varying capabilities
2. the need for the Forms to be able to be completed as quickly and accurately as possible without compromising the data outputs
3. the need for useful, well presented and highly targeted reporting as the primary benefit for encouraging grower take up of the system.

These three themes have stimulated a range of suggested improvements to the site.