

In Case You Missed It...

The last month or two has been quite busy with field days so here is a run-down on what was presented around the place.

Wallangra Eastern Dryland Trial

CSD and Monsanto, in conjunction with McGregor Gourley have a trial at Wallangra Station near Coolatai, to demonstrate dryland cotton as an alternative crop for the eastern side of the catchment and to trial how it goes. And apparently it goes quite well! A field day in early February showed a healthy looking crop by any dryland standards. While no one's keen to speculate too soon, it's shaping up to yield very well.

Bill Gordon gave a presentation to the local growers on best practice spraying, as there are a few nerves about having cotton growing in a non-traditionally cotton growing area.

Irrigation Field Day

A packed program saw 6 irrigation researchers visit the Gwydir as part of the Irrigation Technology Tour 2015 and the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association annual Field Day. The focus was how irrigation technologies can improve efficiencies and production for growers. The booklet provided on the day can be downloaded at

<http://cottoninfo.com.au/publications/cotton-irrigation-technology-tour-booklet>



The automation trial at Red Mill



Monitoring soil moisture using EM38

Bollgard III Crop Walk

A look at the BGIII trial at Keytah showed some promising developments. The 3 BGIII lines were at that point looking in front of the Sicot 74BRF, but the proof will be in the picking.

Warwick Stiller commented that the first release of BGIII is not expected to have any improvements in performance on 74, but unlike has traditionally been the case with a transition, there isn't expected to be a step back.

The 2015/16 cotton season is still expected to be the first release, but will be limited under stewardship. James Quinn said that CSD have not decided how they will do the limited release yet and are open to any suggestions that people may have.

The proposed new RMP has been approved by TIMS and is currently sitting with the APVMA. It includes 5% unsprayed cotton, 2.5% pigeon pea, the addition of pigeon pea as a refuge for dryland cotton, planting window 1st Aug – 31st Dec, early defoliation not needing to be pupae busted and cultivation within 30cm of the plant line. If approved, the new RMP will be the stand out difference for BGIII.

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Big Day Out

CottonInfo hosted the Big Days Out in St George and Gunnedah, I made it along to the St George day. Brendan Warnock from Boggabri, who was awarded 2014 High Achiever of the Year spoke about his farm business and how his focus is on gross margin maximisation. His spreadsheet approach to decision making was impressive, with his aim to always, “experiment, evaluate and implement.”

Host for the afternoon was Ian Brimblecombe, who has a clear passion for renewable energy and solar in particular. Ian explained how a climate change conference he attended in the 1990s prompted him to look into solar, with the Qld Government incentives helping him to do so. He commented that panels are continually getting cheaper, while grid power gets dearer.

Ian has two tracker arrays installed but has found that there is more cost benefit in getting more panels than installing a tracker. This is because he doesn't have high power demand in the early morning or evening, when the panels are less efficient. The only problem is that he has a lot of solar infrastructure sitting idle for the time of the year when he isn't pumping water. Right now, the cost of batteries to store power generated when it isn't needed is prohibitive, but as with any technology the cost of batteries will come down and this will only enhance the efficiency of his solar set up.



Dryland Crop Walk

The dryland cotton grower network (if you're not involved and want to be please let me know) kicked some tyres a couple of weeks ago. They had a look at the NDF planter and discussed planting cotton at 6 and 7 inches to access moisture.



The group also looked at a Pix experiment that Mike Bange had conducted at Myall Plains. The concept here was asking can Pix be used to hold up a dryland crop after it's established, to conserve energy until the rain comes? Mike didn't find any significant results, but didn't discount the concept as it's something he'll be looking into further.

Research Update

Dr Oliver Knox (UNE) has been investigating different methods for recovering nematodes, with the purpose of identifying type and presence. In the process of testing and comparing passive and active methods of recovery, he has made some interesting discoveries in terms of the type and abundance of nematodes.

Sampling took place on a farm in the Gwydir and a farm in the Upper Namoi, which provided for some useful comparisons. The following graph shows that in both the Upper Namoi and Gwydir there are small numbers of herbivorous nematodes (green) present in cotton fields – these are the not so great guys. They're

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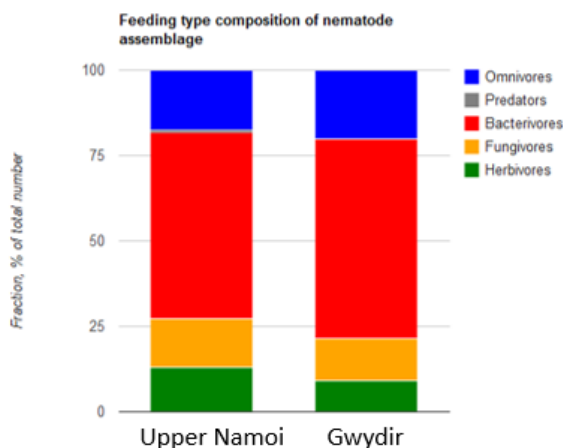


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considered the not so great guys because they are ecto and damage the outside of the root allowing fungal entry.



Acrobelus is a bacterial feeder. It is believed to not be found in clay soils in the Netherlands, but clearly that is not the case in Australia as they were found in the Gwydir.

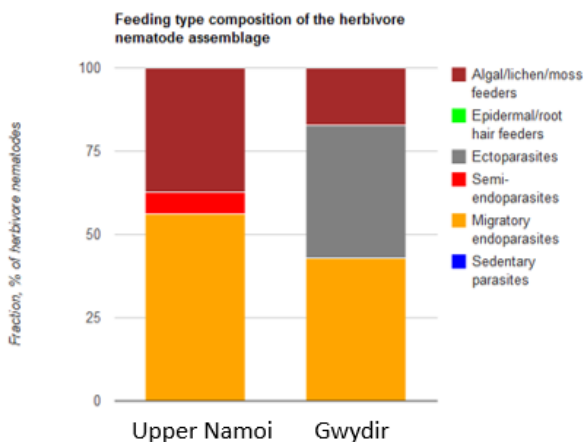
Crop Comp

The second graph breaks down the different types of herbivorous nematodes. This shows that there are differences emerging in the types found in each Valley, but no really significant differences have been discovered at this stage.

It might seem like a long time ago, but winners of the 2013/14 Cotton Competition were announced in December at the CGA AGM.

Irrigated: 'Kraal' AFF, Brett Taylor, yield 14.31 b/ha

Dryland: 'Livingstone Farm' Lawson Grains, Lindsay George, yield 3.53 b/ha



Importantly, reniform nematodes were not found in either Valley, which is very good news. And by and large, so far most of the nematodes found in the Gwydir are not considered a problem in cotton. The take home message from Oliver was that Come Clean Go Clean is still vitally important, particularly as we move into picking and traffic on and off farm increases.

Judging for this year's crop comp is underway, with the irrigated now complete. Competition will be tight, with no stand outs at this stage, all crops looked very good and it will come down to the numbers at picking.

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