IMPACT EVALUATION

NQ cropping systems extension

Project: A.2.2122031
Cotton Grains Cattle Program: Extension capacity to sustain growth of North Qld cropping systems

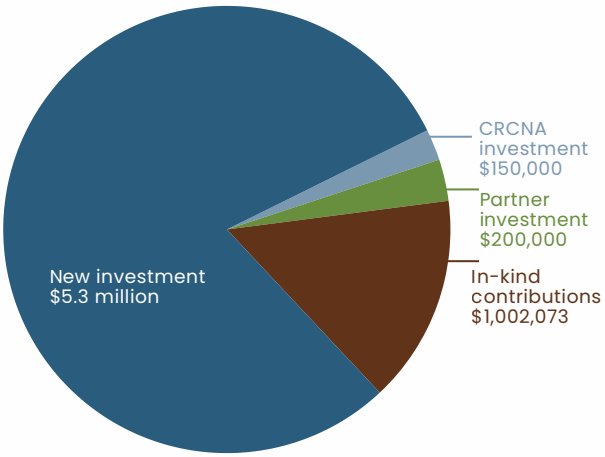
Research program:
2 – New and developing industries in northern Australia

Project timeframe:
2022 to 2026

Partners:
- Cotton Seed Distributors Ltd
- Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC)
- Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC)

Project locations:
Mareeba, Georgetown, Julia Creek, Mt Garnet

Project return on investments:



Return on investment to date has been a 44.3 times return on the CRCNA's investment of $150,000.

Jobs created:

5.25 FTE during the 4 year project

Project summary:
The CRCNA's Cotton, Grains, Cattle (CGC) program is one of its major agricultural research investments, bringing together six coordinated projects across northern Australia to improve productivity, sustainability and integration between cropping and cattle production.

Within this program, the Extension capacity to sustain growth of North Qld cropping systems project strengthened local agricultural extension services and supported the development of emerging cotton and diversified cropping industries across North Queensland.

Delivered in partnership with Cotton Seed Distributors (CSD), the project established a dedicated Extension and Development Agronomist to provide growers with locally relevant technical advice, cotton variety demonstrations, field walks and practical decision-support tools, including weather stations and soil moisture probes.

The project improved grower confidence, strengthened industry collaboration and supported better crop management under variable seasonal conditions.

Importantly, CSD has committed to retaining the full-time extension position beyond CRCNA funding, providing an enduring regional capability to support sustainable agricultural growth and diversification.



Project impacts to date:

Increases in production:

- Improved cotton production: Commercial-scale variety trials provided growers with region-specific evidence to improve variety selection, crop establishment and seasonal management.
- Improved fibre quality: Better management decisions helped reduce fibre quality downgrades and associated production losses.
- Greater crop diversification: Demonstrations supported the integration of cotton with grains, legumes and sugarcane, creating opportunities for more productive and resilient farming systems.

Reduced costs:

- Reduced production risk: Locally relevant agronomic advice helped growers manage seasonal variability, drainage and planting decisions, reducing the likelihood of avoidable losses.
- Improved input efficiency: Weather stations and soil moisture probes supported more informed irrigation and crop-management decisions, with potential to reduce unnecessary expenditure.

New investment facilitated:

- Enduring regional employment: Cotton Seed Distributors committed to retaining the project's full-time Extension and Development Agronomist beyond CRCNA funding, securing ongoing technical support for growers.
- Supporting major agricultural investment: The project strengthened regional research and extension capability, contributing to the foundations for the $53 million partnership between CRDC, GRDC and the Queensland Government to advance agriculture in Queensland's north and north-west.
- De-risking future development: Local trials, industry partnerships and technical expertise improved the evidence base for investment in emerging cotton and diversified cropping industries.





Project impacts to date:

Wellbeing improved:

- Improved grower confidence: Access to trusted local expertise and practical decision-support tools reduced uncertainty and strengthened growers' ability to manage challenging seasonal conditions.
- Stronger regional connections: Field days, farm visits and industry collaboration improved knowledge sharing and relationships between growers, researchers and agricultural service providers.
- Environmental sustainability: Improved understanding of soil moisture, drainage and crop management created opportunities for more efficient water and resource use.

Extension activities included:

- Cotton variety demonstrations: Multi-season trials evaluating variety performance under commercial growing conditions.
- Grower engagement: Field walks, farm visits and individual technical support to translate research into practical management decisions.
- Decision-support tools: Weather stations and soil moisture probes to improve understanding of local growing conditions.

Projected impacts beyond 2026

The project's enduring legacy is the continuation of a dedicated regional extension position with Cotton Seed Distributors, ensuring growers retain access to local technical expertise and established industry networks.

- Improved productivity: Continued refinement of variety selection, crop establishment and seasonal management to improve cotton yields and fibre quality.
- Expanded crop diversification: Greater integration of cotton, grains, legumes and sugarcane to strengthen whole-of-farm productivity and resilience.
- Reduced production risks: Wider adoption of monitoring technologies and region-specific agronomic practices to improve input efficiency and farm profitability.
- Industry growth: Supporting new and existing growers to expand production and make informed investment decisions.
- Ongoing research and extension: Building on established partnerships to expand regional trials, develop agronomic guidelines and support the adoption of new practices.

Access full project details and reports:
crcna.com.au/projects/enhancing-extension-capacity-sustain-growth-north-queensland-cropping-systems/







CRCNA
DEVELOPING NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

Australian Government
Department of Industry, Science and Resources

Cooperative Research Centres Program

Research for **sustainable** and **inclusive** development of **northern Australia**.

Gurambilbarra Country, Wulgurukaba and Thul Garrie Waja Country, Bindal
Suite 5/ 281 Ross River Road Townsville Qld

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This impact assessment has been developed in collaboration with the CRCNA and project partners. It draws on project reporting, stakeholder input and available evidence to assess project outcomes and potential longer-term impacts. Projected impacts are indicative and based on reasonable assumptions at the time of publication. Information contained in this assessment was considered accurate at the time of publishing.