



TOM AND CHARM ARNOTT

"Fairfield" and "Tambalaka"
Boggabilla, NSW



Fairfield Farming Co Pty Ltd comprises two properties, "Fairfield" and "Tambalaka", just north of Boggabilla, NSW on the Macintyre River. With a total farm area of 1,430 hectares, in the 2018/19 season, 232 hectares of dry land cotton and 539 hectares of furrow irrigated cotton was grown. In 2018, Fairfield Farming Co were the recipients of the Macintyre Valley Cotton Grower of the Year.

Tom and Charm's highly disciplined approach to farming and business management lie at the heart of their year-on-year growth and success. They are committed to a methodical program of continual improvement, which they achieve by measuring and benchmarking every aspect of their operation. Ensuring their farming practices are efficient and sustainable whilst achieving an increasingly consistent yield year-after-year are their key goals. They are enthusiastic proponents of myBMP and the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI). Both believe that their accreditation clearly demonstrates their commitment to business excellence and to upholding their social license with not just their local community, but to the whole supply chain.

Their efficient and effective farm management strategy is underpinned by a clearly defined five-year plan in which integrated technology and other systems play a key role in measuring performance. Charm explained 'We draw in expert advice and systems including an agronomist and we use Agworld for our field records. An external consultant advises on marketing, while Boyce Chartered accountants do our annual financial statements.'

There is no doubt that the Arnott's desire for continuous improvement lies at the heart of how they approach every aspect of their business. Their readiness to embrace technology has delivered extremely positive results.



Tom credits the implementation of yield mapping, elevation and grade data generated through a Green Star GPS system, a telemetry weather system, moisture probes and storage gauges that allow for real time data and measuring of the volume of water going on and off the field as key elements of what has enabled them to achieve improved and consistent profitability, along with the enhanced ability to nurture their land.

Tom explained 'Cotton is planted on a long fallow basis with the aim of only planting fully irrigated cotton for what we have available water. Any remaining area will be planted to dryland and/or semi-irrigated as water becomes available. For the past five years our cotton harvest has averaged an estimated yield 12.70 bales per hectare for the irrigated crop. Results for this season look set to be similar.'

In place is a strict 50/50 crop rotation schedule that incorporates wheat, barley and chickpeas. This rotation program is focused on achieving constant improvement in soil health and soil sustainability as well as smoothing out the fluctuations in production area, staff workload and ultimately, large fluctuations in financial returns from low water allocation years.

Tom and Charm took over "Fairfield" in 2002 and purchased "Tambalaka" in 2016. Over this period an extensive whole-of-farm redevelopment program has taken place. This included utilising the Sustaining the Basin Program to double the height of their largescale storage facility, resulting in a significant reduction in evaporation, improved ability to be able move water on and off fields and around the farm, efficiently.

Significant investment was also made modernising the largescale irrigation scheme infrastructure that is operated in collaboration with neighboring irrigators.

Charm manages the scheme, with a dedicated pump manager employed to ensure reliable delivery of water to all farms by well-maintained infrastructure.

Located a short distance from the towns of Goondiwindi and Boggabilla and close to the local sale yards, Tom and Charm are vigilant about their adherence to spray drift prevention.

Similarly, their strong farm hygiene and, successful integrated pest and disease management focus, ensures their properties are clean and immaculately presented. Fusarium identified in 1990 was brought under control through their stringent management protocols.

Tom and Charm's inclusive staff management practices, training systems and work health safety culture, have ensured their long-term staff retention record.



They are active members of their Area Wide Management group, as well as members of the MacIntyre Valley Cotton Growers Association and Border Rivers Food & Fibre.

That sense of "community" is clearly something that the Arnotts value greatly.

Together Tom and Charm have built an impressive farming enterprise, each bringing to the partnership a valuable skill set and a shared commitment to excellence in all they do.

