

MEDIA RELEASE 21 October - 2022

Farmers unite in push for chemical reductions in farming

Renowned Australian soil scientist Dr Oliver Knox has applauded a group of cotton growers on the Darling Downs who are using next to no chemicals for pests, natural fertiliser for soil and plant health, and minimal chemicals for weeds.

Toowoomba-based agronomist Matthew Holding gives guidance related to thousands of hectares of cotton including Insect Pest Management (IPM) and other sustainable farming practices.

“Due to timing and manure use, nitrogen applications in my region would be at least 40% lower than the industry average. They still use herbicides but less than what they used to by using more residual products proactively.”

Dr Knox, from the University of New England, said IPM and the use of manures in Australian cotton/farming systems are not new. “But having confidence in your ability to produce crops without pesticides, and with reduced reliance on mineral fertilisers, requires careful stewardship of crops and soil.

“Knowing what insects are in your crop as well as what nutrients are removed from the fields at harvest becomes crucial, but getting to this point takes time and dedication, and these farmers have given that.”

An increasing number of farmers are applying bulky organic fertilisers like manures, composts, and biosolids on their fields to reduce reliance on synthetic mineral fertilisers. Feedlots are close to Grant Porter’s Brookstead farm, meaning cartage costs are low. They started using manure more than 20 years ago, meaning consistent nutrient delivery.

“There are two things that you achieve – the first is you get those good nutrients that are slower release and better for growing a plant in, but also you are putting organic matter into the soil which helps you hold more moisture,” Mr Porter said.

Cecil Plains farmer Tyson Armitage agrees on the benefits. “We are seeing great results with soil health and there’s a big flow on effect for us as a farm. With manure you get so much more than just nitrogen or whatever you are physically applying, it gives you a greater all-round result and good soil to grow crops in.”

Darling Downs grower of the year Johannes Roellgen has also been applying manure for more than two decades, ticking off all his potassium requirements through feedlot manure. He has also made huge gains by Matt’s IPM methods, meaning less spraying.

“There are many growers doing the right thing and as much as we are driven by improving yields and economic outcomes, we know we can only achieve this by having a sustainable system.”

Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay said its further evidence that our cotton farmers are among the world’s best.

“Consumers and brands are demanding top quality, sustainable cotton and this again shows that our farmers are always searching for ways to improve environmental and crop outcomes.



“I know that cotton farmers across the country are adopting these practices and I have no doubt the outcomes for crops and the environment will continue to improve,” Mr Kay said.

Cotton Australia is the peak representative body for Australia’s cotton growing industry.

Cotton Australia media contact:

Darrin Davies
Communications Manager – Stakeholder Engagement, Cotton Australia
0428 770 237
DarrinD@cotton.org.au

