

Popular online CottonMap is raising awareness

This cotton season has seen the launch of the online interactive CottonMap, an industry joint initiative to help cotton and broadacre growers tackle the problem of off target drift.

The new CottonMap site, www.cottonmap.com.au, is a progression from last season's popular Cotton Awareness Map produced as a poster for the Gwydir Valley which highlighted all cotton fields within the Valley to create awareness for broadacre fallow applications, with the intention of minimising drift. Such was the popularity of the poster, other valleys demanded their own 'map' and the online version was born.

Uptake of the new interactive CottonMap service has been very positive with over 1,600 fields and 150,000 hectares of cotton (approximately 90 percent of the seasonal crop total) logged in the first month of going live.

Greg Kauter from Cotton Australia has been pleased with the adoption so far, but the next step is now to ensure that the wider farming community in cotton growing regions are aware of and use CottonMap when planning to spray over summer.

"We thank distribution for being so involved and helping log cotton fields onto the website. This is now a great resource for distribution to utilise with their clients and have the discussion around correct pesticide application and management," he said.

"If we can all do our bit, this will be a great result not just for the cotton sector, but for the wider agricultural community."

CottonMap is a free service, designed so that all farmers, their agronomists and distributors can utilise the website, print a map and discuss application practices when applying pesticides around sensitive crops. Using Google Maps technology, growers or their agronomists can login to the site and add their cotton fields, which then appear in yellow. Anyone is able to view the site and print off a localised map, complete with a spray application checklist, without the need to login or register.

"The CottonMap is a great example of how a collaborative effort between grower groups, agribusiness and research organisations has the potential to make a real difference," said Nufarm's central region business development manager, Marg Castleden.

"At Nufarm, we are investing in a number of initiatives to help growers minimise drift and maintain efficacy. It's all part of our Spraywise program which has been developed for industry stewardship, leadership and protection.

"An increasing trend towards night spraying can potentially cause issues if conditions are unfavourable. Spray quality, boom height and wind speed and direction are critical to minimise the chance of off-target damage occurring."

B&W Rural Agronomist Peter Birch concurs. "The map has been a welcome addition for our broadacre farmers. Awareness of cotton fields is critical when planning for herbicide applications.

"Partnered with Spraywise Decisions, our broadacre clients are planning better, minimising drift potential and maximising efficacy with their applications," he concluded.

The map will be available on an annual basis from 1 September to 30 April.

CottonMap is a joint initiative of Nufarm Australia Limited, Cotton Australia, Cotton Research & Development Corporation and Grains Research & Development Corporation. For more information and to view the map, please visit www.cottonmap.com.au.