

MEDIA RELEASE



From: Australian Cotton Cooperative Research Centre
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Gwydir Valley Ecosystems Valued

Services provided by ecosystems across regional Australia may be largely unrecognised and undervalued says a research team coordinated by the Australian Cotton Cooperative Research Centre (Cotton CRC).

The Cotton CRC is undertaking a collaborative research project to quantify the economic value of ecosystems in the Gwydir Valley, NSW.

“Ecosystems provide us with a multitude of services” says Associate Professor Nick Reid of the University of New England. “They manufacture the air we breathe, create and maintain healthy soils, break down our waste and clean our water”.

“We depend on these services for our own welfare and economic viability, but unfortunately we take these services for granted, or we undervalue them”.

“Policy decisions made about our natural resources need to include the full range of functional and economic values. In order to make these assessments and make the value of ecosystems explicit, we need a better idea of the economic value of the services coming from ecosystems” Dr. Reid says.

“We expect to find value coming from all ecosystems in the catchment, including native as well as modified ones” said Dr Reid.

“We also anticipate that the benefits from healthy local ecosystems will impact positively on both farms and towns” he added. “For instance, one aspect of the project could involve looking at farm management systems that preserve ecosystem services, and estimating the costs and benefits to the farm business of such management.”

The Gwydir Valley study is a collaborative partnership between scientists from the University of New England, NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation, Centre for Agricultural and Regional Economics, and CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems. The study is funded by the Australian Cotton Cooperative Research Centre, the Natural Heritage Trust, DLWC and the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association.

The Gwydir Valley study is part of the Australia-wide Ecosystem Services Project that describes and values Australia’s ecosystem services. The national project receives core funding from The Myer Foundation and is being coordinated by CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems.

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•• Photo available on request ••

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The Australian Cotton Cooperative Research Centre (Cotton CRC) commenced operations on 1 July 1999 when it secured a second round of funding under the Commonwealth Cooperative Research Centre Program. It succeeds the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Cotton Production, which was established in 1993.

The Cotton CRC combines the research and educational capabilities of CSIRO, NSW Agriculture, Department of Primary Industries Queensland, Agriculture Western Australia, NT Department of Industry and Fisheries, The University of New England, The University of Sydney with the industry expertise of the Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Cotton Seed Distributors, Queensland Cotton and Western Agricultural Industries.

The Cotton CRC's mission is to enhance the development and growth of the Australian cotton industry through the application of collaborative research, education and the adoption of sustainable farming systems.