

# CAVASO FARMING

*Monsanto Grower of the Year Finalist*



Cavaso Farming has achieved impressive results since they began farming cotton just seven years ago. On the 4200 hectare enterprise the Toscan family grow 1100 hectares of cotton, along with other crops like Durum wheat, popcorn, maize and prunes. They use siphon and bankless irrigation on a cotton, wheat rotation, employing minimum till and controlled traffic approaches. They are now achieving average yields of 12 bales per hectare. "We're focused on always going on to fallow paddocks or fallowed after wheat," Matt Toscan explains. "We think that gives us a better shot at a top yield, it also gives us a disease break, repairs the soil and any compaction damage, and that's what why we think the program and this rotation has given us the biggest advantage."

They are currently transitioning from a maize and cotton rotation, working to streamline and standardise their operation by reducing the number of crop varieties. The introduction of cotton has seen some major changes to their property, including transitioning from farming on 1.8 metre beds to 90cm hills, converting from 8-row to 12-row and the use of different types of equipment such as front-linkage on tractors to run passes at the same time. Matt has adapted planters, cultivators and attached rollers to the front of planters to allow rolling and planting to occur at the same time, cutting down on labour and diesel. "With our row-crop equipment, we've tried to stick with standard size bars for the planters, cultivators, so we can interchange tooling and it sort of future-proofs the equipment," Matt explains. "If something becomes redundant down the track you can use the bar for something else. We've been pretty picky about what equipment we buy."



## HOME PROPERTY

Cavaso, Darlington Point, NSW

## OWNERS

Tony, Joyce, Matt and Daisy Toscan

## TOTAL ENTERPRISE SIZE

4200 ha

## AREA TO COTTON 2015/2016

1115 ha

## YIELD TARGET

13.5 bales/ha

## WATER ALLOCATIONS

River (High security 768 ML, General security 4787 ML, Supplementary 1189 ML), Bore (15652 ML), Storage (760 ML)

## TYPE/S OF IRRIGATION

Siphon and some bankess

## NO. STAFF

12 full time, 1 part time, 25 casual, 2 - 10 contractors

## ENTERPRISES

Cotton, durum, popcorn, maize, prunes





The irrigation allocation for Cavaso farming is made up of ground water, river water and water sourced from the Coleambally Irrigation Co operative. Irrigation channels are controlled remotely by an automated system. "It's a constant amount of water flowing into the crop," Matt says. "You can start and stop, change your flow rates within 2 hours notice and it saves water, there's no wastage, you can cut-off at exactly the right time and you don't have to be there. It just saves a lot of travelling and a lot of time." Improvements in water efficiency have also come from improvements in yields, a big jump resulted from the release of new cotton varieties.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) helps encourage beneficial insects and protect bees, while weeds have been a huge focus in recent years resulting in a much cleaner property. Having Murrumbidgee river frontage has also meant the Toscan's have focused on environmental improvements including fencing off riparian zones, installing water troughs. "Biosecurity is really important for us because it's a new cotton area and you're starting off clean, without any weed or disease and the only way

to keep them out is biosecurity," Matt says. "So that's why we do everything in-house - we pick our own cotton, we do all our own spraying. We probably look like we've over-capitalised with some things, like picking equipment, but we can only keep the advantage of being clean as long as we can keep the disease out."

The Toscan family believe cotton has helped improve the profitability of their operation, which has allowed them to make beneficial changes to the farm overall. "It looks really good on your balance sheet and it's been yielding a lot higher returns than the crops we were growing previously," Matt explains. "I want to be in enterprises that are profitable enough that we can afford to keep updated equipment and cutting edge technology, which is going to encourage the next generation to come back because they take an interest in it because they can see the advances in technology. That's one of the reasons we went to cotton, so we could keep up with it and not fall behind."

**FOR FULL DETAILS PLEASE VISIT THE AUSTRALIAN COTTON AWARDS WEBSITE:  
[WWW.AUSTRALIANCOTTONAWARDS.COM](http://WWW.AUSTRALIANCOTTONAWARDS.COM)**

