

FIONA NORRIE

ADAMA Chris Lehmann Trust Young Cotton Achiever of the Year Finalist

Fiona grew up on a mixed farming operation near Narrabri, Northern NSW, and was attracted to cotton operations from a young age. Fiona started out spending her summers bug checking while studying a Bachelor of Rural Science at UNE. She now works as an agronomist with Integrated Crop Management Services in Moree, helping many local growers improve yields, sustainability and business performance. Day-to-day she drives from farm to farm, inspecting crops for weeds and insects, assisting with water decisions and monitoring for disease. She has now been working as an agronomist for seven years. "I try to take a scientific approach, communicating with researchers all the time about different topics," she says. "It's about trying to be that step ahead and coming up with slight increases in yield or productivity or sustainability, giving that back to our growers, which in turn helps the valley."

Fiona is also committed to improving support networks in agriculture, becoming the inaugural Young Aggies Committee Chairperson in 2016. The Young Aggies Network has been highly successful, hosting social events, informative workshops and raising much needed funds for suicide prevention services. "We just want to provide that network base for new people to the industry so that we can help keep them engaged and enjoying agriculture," Fiona explains. "Over time we've managed to hold quite a few professional events where we've had that one-on-one contact with experts and industry leaders. Young Aggies has really given me something to focus on, outside of work, and it's something that I'm really passionate about."

In 2016 Fiona was named the Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association Young Achiever of the Year recognising the significant contribution she has already made in agriculture. She enjoys working with growers in both corporate and family run environments, and collaborating



through trials on property. In recent years Fiona started doing agronomy work further afield and has enjoyed success in varied and challenging growing environments. "Over the last couple of years we've done some work out at Bourke and down at Hay and it's really fascinating to see the way the crop grows in those different climates and in those different environments, the way the plant behaves," she says. "There are some lessons in the Gwydir that can be applied to those areas and I think that there's some lessons from those areas that we can bring home to our growers here, so it's this exchange of ideas and information and those incremental yield increases which are really satisfying to see when you're looking at a new area. As an industry we're pushing the boundary south and it will be interesting to see where the cotton industry may go next."





In the future Fiona hopes to continue learning about the physiology of the cotton plant and how it adapts to different climates. "The cotton season's not easy, it is hard work but I love it," she says. "I think some of our yield objectives and sustainability objectives that we've managed to achieve over the years have been quite exciting depending on the season. I have been referred to as a bit of a fanatic about the cotton crop, but I think you kind of have to be." She hopes to increase Young Aggies membership and expand their work in the community. "I want to see it go from strength-to-strength. To be honest it has been in its infancy, it's only about two years old, but we formalised our committee this year, so really my drive there is just to keep the momentum up and make sure our members are engaged and enjoying what it is that our committee of volunteers is trying to do for them."

**FOR FULL DETAILS PLEASE VISIT
THE AUSTRALIAN COTTON AWARDS WEBSITE:
WWW.AUSTRALIANCOTTONAWARDS.COM**

