
Cotton Winter Nursery (CWN) Update

1 message

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To: "Eric Young (eyoung@ncsu.edu)" <eyoung@ncsu.edu>

Dr. Young;

The Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (SAAESD) have supported the CWN for many years. Your financial support has been vital for our success, and that support is still critically needed. As you know our operation in Mexico for 60+ years was undergoing substantial changes during the past 20 months. Due to the withdrawal of support from the National Cotton Council announced in January 2014, coupled with the retirement of the 40 year manager Mr. Wes Malloy, the cotton community faced some tough decisions. Where would CWN leadership and support come from, who would manage the operation, and should we relocate? These were some of the issues that needed to be addressed. I saw that if someone did not step up to spearhead the effort to answer these questions, the cotton research community would suffer significantly and US cotton growers too.

My aim was to solve the problems stated previously and move us forward as a research community. Here are the results from the past 20 months of work:

- A) Cotton Incorporated agreed on a contract with the former Assistant Manager in Mexico, Mr. Alfonso Palafox, to be the on-site manager of the new CWN. He came highly recommended by Mr. Malloy and others who have worked with him.
- B) Working with Mr. Palafox, Mr. Malloy, Dr. Richard Percy of the National Cotton Germplasm Collection (NCGC), and several others, it was decided the nursery should be relocated to near Liberia, Costa Rica. The reasons were three fold:
 - 1) it is an excellent cotton growing environment for the photoperiod sensitive accessions in the NCGC,
 - 2) field labor is affordable for our limited budget, and
 - 3) the area is safe for breeder visits. Mexico had become unsafe.
- C) We were able to secure a one-time \$500k from the USDA-ARS to help with our relocation/establishment in Costa Rica

Much work and many decisions remain as we move into our first season in Costa Rica. The

primary issues to address are identification of a suitable building and irrigated land followed by hiring and training of field staff. There are many, many other issues needing attention. For example, during the past week we met with Costa Rica Ministry of Agriculture officials in San Jose and discussed issues with Alonso Chacon, the Seed Office Inspector, and Ing Lizzy Retana, the Biosecurity Auditor. We have also received substantial assistance from Bayer CropScience staff as they have been operating in the Liberia area for several years. I am confident Mr. Palafox, after consultations with these officials and CWN users, will make the necessary adjustments to get us set up and established. To ensure the first year starts off well, we have limited plantings to ½ hectare in total.

Cotton Incorporated has invested between \$50k - \$180K annually in the CWN over the past decade, and we expect to continue in the future, though with low cotton prices and reduced acreage our overall budget is very tight. The financial condition of the CWN has been reevaluated so that users now fully pay for the variable costs of using the nursery, and this has increased user fees some 50% to \$27/hill. We believe this was necessary in order to maintain the viability of the CWN. Still, we need the financial support of the SAAESD in order to make the CWN operation solid, so I am requesting a modest increase to \$15,000/year starting in 2016. It is necessary that the Cotton Board approve any multi-year agreements Cotton Incorporated enters into with other funding sources, so I am asking for a commitment from 2016 -2020 of \$15,000/year.

Please contact me if you have any questions about the CWN and our request for support in the 2016 – 2020 time frame. I would be happy to speak to the SAAESD to answer any questions the group may have.



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