

# FASTSTART™ ESTABLISHMENT AWARDS

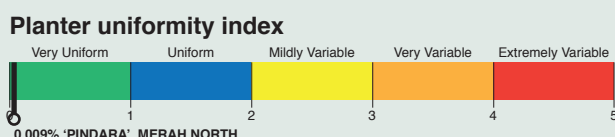
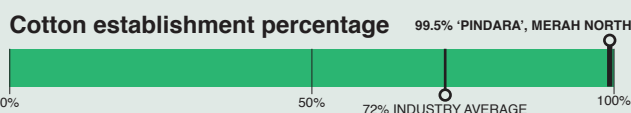
## SNAPSHOT

**Grower name:** Todd Farrer  
**Farm and location:** 'Pindara', Merah North (Namoi Valley, NSW)  
**Farm size:** 1,300 ha  
**Enterprise:** Cotton, corn, wheat, barley, chickpeas, faba beans  
**Cotton production system:** Irrigated  
**Cotton variety/s:** Sicut 748B3F  
**Soil type/s:** Grey cracking clay  
**Summer crop area:** 500 ha  
**Cotton crop area:** 380 ha  
**Average summer rainfall:** Approx. 230 mm  
**Planting equipment:** John Deere MaxEmerge 1700 with e-set plates and 20/20 SeedSense monitor  
**Planting rate:** 14.5 seeds/m  
**Average planter speed:** 8 km/hour  
**Average planting depth:** 2 cm

## CROP SUMMARY

**Planting date:** 20 October, 2018  
**Establishment method:** Planted dry, with 15mm of rain that night  
**Previous crop:** Wheat  
**Plant stand:** 14.2 plants/m  
**In-crop irrigations:** 10  
**Rainfall:** 100 mm  
**Soil applied insecticide:** 150ml/ha Talstar and 3L Blood and Bone down the seed slot  
**Nitrogen:** 280 units N - half up front, half side dressed in crop  
**Other fertiliser:** 200 kg of Cotton Sustain® spread up 6 months prior and worked in with cultivation

## ESTABLISHMENT MEASUREMENTS



## 2018 Irrigated Cotton Winner - Todd Farrer, Merah North, NSW



Todd Farrer, winner of the 2018 FastStart Establishment Award for irrigated cotton

## PREPARATION

### Describe your field preparation prior to planting

Bed and soil preparation is paramount to high establishment success. Corn stubble from the 2016-17 summer had remained, and a wheat crop in 2017 was sown directly into that stubble, with that wheat stubble left standing after that harvest. A hilling-up rig was used to re-pull the beds and anhydrous ammonia was applied in August, followed by a rubber tyre roller.

### What weed control tactics do you employ prior to or post planting?

As a result of the stubble load and low rainfall during 2017-2018, only one Roundup® application was required for weed control pre-plant.

### What is your fertiliser application strategy? Do you soil test?

We put a blanket 200kg/ha Cotton Sustain® blend on before every cotton crop, which we have found to provide sufficient phosphorus, potassium and zinc throughout the season. Anything leftover in the soil is picked up by the following winter crop. Half of the 280-300 units/ha of nitrogen is side dressed upfront and the other half is side dressed after the first in-crop irrigation.

### How do you prepare your planter/machinery?

Planters and machinery are given a full service before planting begins, and all row units are checked and retested for accuracy every year. It's a small cost to ensure a uniform plant stand.

## DECISION MAKING

### Why did you select your chosen varieties for your farming system?

We chose to plant Sicot 748B3F as we feel it suits our growing style and climate the best. It's a tough plant, and it can handle the heatwaves well. It produces a nice big plant that can achieve high yields if managed correctly.

### What seed treatments did you use, and why did you select these?

Seed treatments of Dynasty and Cruiser, along with 150ml/ha Talstar and 3lt/ha Blood and Bone down the seed slot during planting have given us our best results to date. This approach gives us the confidence that we will have no problems with wireworms and we get a nice early, vigorous establishment. Also, a capful of seed lubricant is added to each box of seed to maximize planting uniformity.

## TIMING

### When did you plant, and how did you make this decision? Did you water up or pre-irrigate or establish on rainfall?

We started planting dry in mid-October, waiting for the soil temperatures to rise and trying to take advantage of predicted rainfall events. Everything that received rainfall was very quickly followed by an irrigation to completely saturate the profile of the soil.

## IRRIGATION

### When do you apply your first irrigation, and how do you make this decision?

The first in crop irrigation was applied on 22 December, eight weeks after we watered it up. This was due to timely rainfall events during December and the soil condition. The heavy stubble load in the soil helped in storing and maintaining moisture all season.



Todd achieved a near perfect cotton establishment percentage and planter uniformity index (PUI).

## FASTSTART SUPPORT

### Did you use any of the FastStart online tools? If so, how did these assist during the planting operation?

We found the FastStart variety comparison tool very easy to use giving quick access to results before making variety decisions, which has led to us making some changes with variety selection on our farms.

We also utilised the FastStart weather stations around the valley to monitor soil temperature and rainfall events as we led into planting; and later in the season canopy temperatures which helped with making decisions related to timing of irrigations.

The FastStart cotton planting rate calculator came in handy as every season is different, and every seed lot is different. It is well worth the exercise to use the calculator to help with planting decisions.

## IN SUMMARY

- Bed and soil preparation is paramount to high establishment success.
- A full service of all planters and machinery prior to planting is a small cost to ensure a uniform plant stand.
- Seed treatments of Dynasty and Cruiser have helped to achieve early and vigorous establishment.
- A capful of seed lubricant added to each box of seed helps to maximize planting uniformity.
- The FastStart website is host to a range of useful tools, including the FastStart Soil Temperature Network, cotton planting rate calculator and variety comparison tool.

Entries for the 2019 awards open on 1 August, 2019 and can be submitted via: [www.faststartcotton.com.au/faststart-awards](http://www.faststartcotton.com.au/faststart-awards)