



WINNER **2006 AgriRisk High Achiever of the Year**

“Bullamon Plains”, St George, QLD

“Bullamon Plains” was founded in 1928 and is owned and operated by the Willis family. Located about 65kms south of St George this 16,000 hectare mixed farming enterprise consists of 3,000 hectares of dryland cropping, 11,000 hectares of grazing country and 1,300 hectares of irrigated cotton.

“Bullamon Plains” has a major commitment to improving water use efficiency, and is particularly focussed on minimising evaporative losses. Techniques include the installation of short supply channels, water storages centrally located to reduce travel distance, deep storages with high walls and investments in a “Bankless Channel Irrigation Project.” The management team also takes utmost care in timing irrigations and applying water with precision. Attention is paid to maximising flow rates and minimising application times with the longest fields never having water on them for more than 12 hours and the shorter fields never more than seven hours.

C-probes and neutron probes are monitored closely to minimise drainage and maximise crop uniformity. A weather station captures data every 15 minutes which has helped determine the effectiveness of rainfall events and a crop’s response to them and forecasting tools are used to help schedule irrigations. A whole-farm irrigation efficiency calculation was completed for the first time this season, using WaterPak and Hydrologic and all irrigation records are comprehensive, methodical and consistent. This data is the benchmark for measuring the effectiveness of a range of planned changes and a commitment to continuous improvement.

The high importance of water management on “Bullamon Plains” is evidenced by an ongoing commitment to staff training to achieve best practice at all levels. Management have reported that an in-season workshop saw average application efficiency increase from 88% to 93%, demonstrating the value of education.

Management at “Bullamon Plains” places a great deal of importance on all their business relationships, including with field staff, contractors, consultants and agronomists. Everyone is involved in formulating the season’s plans and responsibilities are clearly communicated to all. The result is a well informed, knowledgeable, united and motivated team that participates in the wider industry and is always looking to learn from their peers.