

Cotton Winter Nursery Update

The Cotton Winter Nursery (CWN) has been a vital part of the cotton research community for over 60 years. It serves to advance genetic gain by allowing for two growing seasons per calendar year. Until two years ago it was located in central Mexico, but it has now been relocated to Costa Rica 9km northwest of Liberia. The relocation involved building the operation from the ground up for Dr. Don Jones, Director of Agricultural Research at Cotton Incorporated. His most important task was identifying and hiring a site manager, and he selected Alfonso Palafox who had 10 years of previous CWN experience in Mexico.

Alfonso and Don invested countless hours during 2015 and 2016 visiting several countries and gathering input from private and public sector cotton scientists before deciding northwestern Costa Rica was the best location. This area was chosen primarily because it has a suitable cotton growing environment, affordable labor force, available water, and reliable flights. However, this positive combination did not make for an easy relocation. There were numerous tasks that had to be completed for the relocation to be successful. These include: 1) an office that contained sufficient working space was secured that was adjacent to a suitable field for the nursery. 2) An irrigation well and drip system was installed. 3) A field staff was hired and trained to plant, self, harvest, gin, delint, and ship seed to US customers. 4) Alfonso and Don had to learn the nuances of import/export permits, phytosanitary certificates, and commercial invoices of both Costa Rica and the US and introduce themselves to a whole new group of customs inspectors and government officials. 5) A plethora of office, field, seed processing, and ginning equipment was purchased, oftentimes shipped across borders, or built. 6) Alfonso and Don built an acid delinting system so that seed returned to US customers will not be 'fuzzy' but 'black' for the first time in CWN history. This aids in significantly cutting the time required to import seed into the US.



Many challenges were overcome to reestablish the CWN in Costa Rica, one of which was the first hurricane to hit the country in 150 years last November, but the cotton research community is already benefitting from the new operation. Twelve breeders have materials in the 2016-17 CWN, and the USDA-ARS is once again characterizing a portion of the National Cotton Germplasm Collection that is critical for its use by the greater cotton community.

None of this would have been possible without funding from the SAAESD, USDA-ARS, and Cotton Incorporated. General costs and income for 2016-17 were:

Fixed costs (building & land rent, salary, auto, telephone, travel, misc) – \$103,000

Variable costs (maintenance & supplies, crop production, labor, freight, misc) – \$156,000

Base income (ARS, SAAESD, Cotton Inc.) – \$90,000

User Fees (12 at \$27/hill) – \$157,509