

# Western District Health Service



**Australian Government**  
**Sugar Research and Development Corporation**



**Australian Government**  
**Cotton Research and Development Corporation**



An Australian Government Initiative



Sustainable Cotton & Sugar Farm Families Newsletter is produced in collaboration with the above partners.

**Principal Investigator:**  
 Sue Brumby

**Principal Researcher**  
 Stu Willder

Phone 55518450 for more information.

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## Sustainable Farm Families

The Human Resource in the Triple Bottom Line



Congratulations to all who have been involved in what many believe to be a ground breaking program for sugar and cotton farm families.

A total of 63 participants were involved in the project, with 37 from cotton farms and 26 from sugar farms. A total of 26 males and 37 females represented the two industries. The average age for participants was 48, with the youngest 25 and the oldest 77 years old.

Aims for the remainder of 2006 include keeping you all motivated, maintaining accurate statistical data and reporting to you all through your second year, the results of the project.

Highlights for the project in year one included successful attainment of the following goals

- Delivery of workshops to the designated areas, Wee Waa, Dalby, Ingham and Ayr.

- Registration and data collection on all participants.
- All within budget.



Some Wee Waa participants

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and in spite of the seasonal challenges keep up your focus on good health, wellbeing and safety. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you require any further information. We all wish you a Happy Christmas! See you in 2007.

Sue, Stu, Ann and Michelle

### Upcoming workshop dates 2007

**Sugar**  
 Ingham: 6th-7th of February

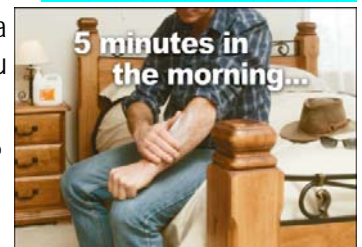
Ayr: 8th-9th of February

**Cotton**  
 Wee Waa: 14th-15th of May

Dalby: 16th-17th of May

### Stressed???

Remember that stress comes in many forms including rashes, insomnia, illness and agitation. Be aware of your body and acknowledge stressful times. Revisit the techniques from Chapter 6, "Stress" in your SFF Resource Manuals.



5 minutes in the morning...



...or 5 months off the farm



- Remember to keep your action plans active in your mind as we expect to hear about the progress you have made when we return to each of the areas in 2007.
- It's never too late to address these!



Keen sugar participants from Ingham

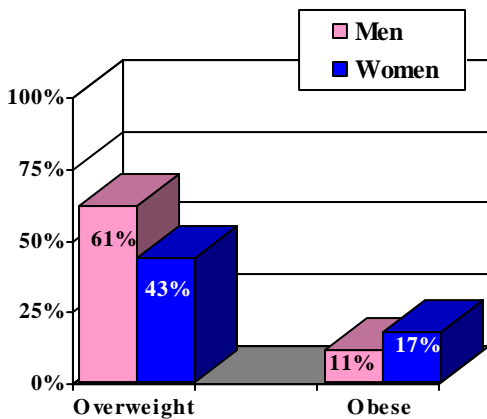
03/01/2004

# Preliminary Results from Year 1

Body mass index (BMI) is used to estimate your total amount of body fat.

Our results show that there was 72% of males either overweight (BMI>25) or obese (BMI>30) whilst there was 60% of women either overweight or obese. We encourage all participants to get into the healthy BMI range by managing their 30 minutes of exercise five times a week and maintaining a healthy diet! The results were largely the same between sugar and cotton males, with only a slight increase in the incidence of obese males in sugar farmers. Whilst the women

Percentages of participants with overweight or obese BMI Scores



showed very different results. Cotton had a 50% overweight count and a 9% obese incidence whilst sugar women had a 31% incidence for both overweight and obese participants.

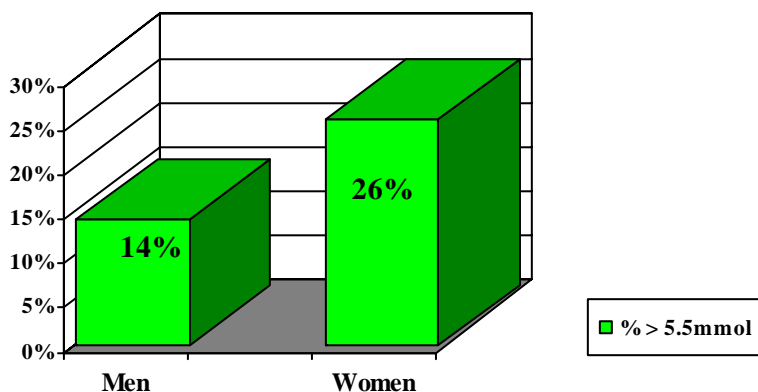
### Risks of being overweight and physically inactive

If you are overweight (BMI over 25) and physically inactive, you may develop:

- Cardiovascular (heart and blood circulation) disease
- Gall bladder disease
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Diabetes
- Osteoarthritis
- Certain types of cancer, such as colon and breast cancer.



Percentage of participants with fasting cholesterol over 5.5mmol



### Cholesterol

The graph to the left highlights the percentage of participants with cholesterol levels of greater than 5.5mmol (risky). The female participants showed a 26% incidence of risky cholesterol levels whilst only 14% of males had cholesterol levels of over 5.5mmol.

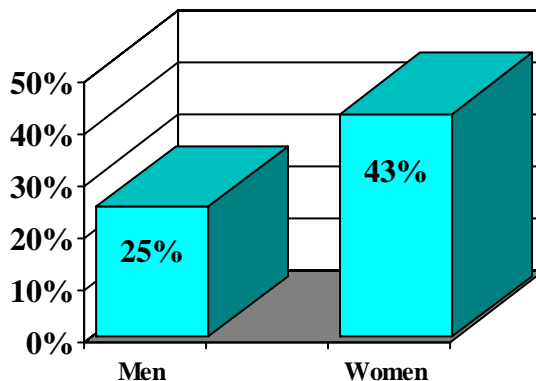
Medical specialists believe that levels above 5.5 indicate an increased risk for vascular disease such as heart disease and strokes. Remember reducing your intake of saturated fat is best for lowering your cholesterol level. Saturated fat is found in animal fats, dairy (choose lower fat options) coconut and palm oil (often used in take-aways and commercially prepared biscuits).



### Body fat distribution and health risk [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

A person's waist circumference is a better predictor of health risk than BMI. Having fat around the abdomen or a 'pot belly', regardless of your body size, means you are more likely to develop certain obesity-related health conditions. Studies have shown that the distribution of body fat is associated with an increased prevalence of diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease. World Health Federation estimates that a waist size of 88 centimetres for women and 102 centimetres for men places patients in the highest-risk category for the onset of heart attacks. However, public health officials estimate that many people, and even a significant number of doctors, remain unaware of the link between waist circumference and heart attacks. The graph to the right indicates that 25% of men and 43% of women have an abdominal measurement of high risk. We look forward to seeing how these results change in our second year workshop. Remember, a healthy balanced diet with regular exercise is the only long term measure for reducing weight.

Percentage of participants with a waist measurement of high risk  
Men>102cms Women >88cms



## Alcohol: How is it affecting your health?

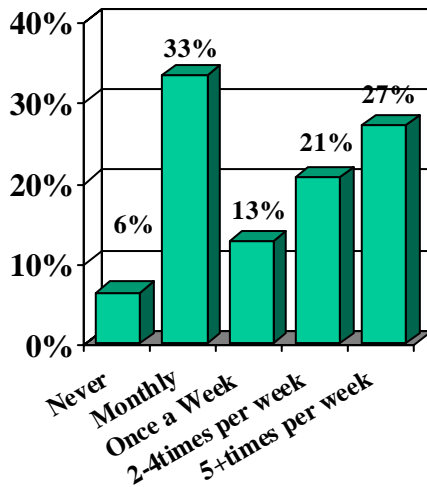
Results from the first year of the project included some interesting information regarding alcohol consumption. The Australian government alcohol guidelines state that men should avoid having more than six standard drinks and women should avoid having more than four standard drinks on one occasion. Results from year one assessments indicated that 42% of men were drinking more than six standard drinks on one occasion at least monthly. Whilst 23% of women reported to drink at high risk levels of six or more standard drinks on one occasion. Drinking at these levels can cause serious effects to your long and short term health including :

- Cirrhosis of the liver
- Brain damage and memory loss
- Increased risk of accidents
- Increased risk of male impotency

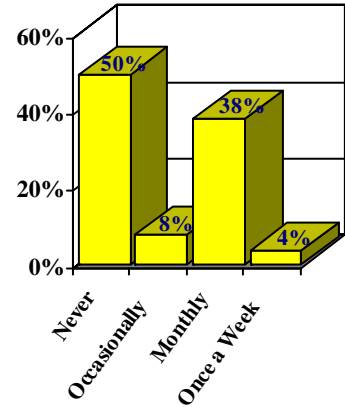
Increased stress can lead people to drink higher than usual amounts of alcohol. Please take it easy over the next few months particularly with the added seasonal stress of climate, families and Christmas

festivities. In the lead up to our final workshop we suggest all drinkers to drink at moderate levels (1-2 drinks per occasion & 2 non-drinking days per week). Drinking at moderate levels has been shown to have positive effects on prevention of coronary heart disease and stroke incidence.

How often do you have a drink containing alcohol? (all participants year 1)



How often do male participants have more than six standard drinks on one occasion?



Keeping track of how many alcoholic drinks you have is important. Men should avoid having more than 6 and women more than 4 standard drinks on any one day. Here are some examples of how many standard drinks are actually in what you're drinking:



\* NSW, WA, ACT = Middy; VIC, QLD, TAS = Pot; NT = Handie/Pot; SA = Schooner

NHMRC [www.alcoholguidelines.gov.au](http://www.alcoholguidelines.gov.au)

## Worlds first cervical cancer vaccine now fully funded

The Cancer Council Australia have welcomed the announcement that the Australian Government will fund the Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. HPV is a sexually transmitted infection usually affecting women between 20-24. Almost all irregular pap smear results are the cause of HPV. In 98% of cases the HPV will clear itself, if however it persists and is left undetected it can cause cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine (Gardasil) prevents infection of four of the many strains of HPV. Two of the vaccinated strains cause approximately 70% of known cervical cancers. As this vaccine does not protect against all types of cancer-causing HPV, pap tests will still be required every 2 years even for vaccinated women. The vaccine will be available to women aged 12-26 years of age, with a school based vaccine program to possibly commence by April 2007. <http://www.health.gov.au/>



### "A Prompt from the Professor"



Keeping track of our new healthy living plan can be a bit difficult as we attend to the daily task of running our farms. How can you keep a record of relevant information to support your Sustainable Farm Families action plans? Of course it depends on what you have set out to achieve, but how about:

- A weekly reflection with the family over a healthy dinner on what you have achieved in the past week and what you might do differently next week.
- Keep a record of actual times of planned activity (walking, catching up with friends etc).
- Take physical measures less frequently (weight, height if you need to grow!), and don't be preoccupied with them.
- Discuss how the farm safety changes are going and what you have learnt
- Most of all enjoy the modest challenges you have set and enjoy the time out from your busy schedule.

Best wishes, John.



I'm a farmer. At least I used to be until I was diagnosed with skin cancer. My whole world changed from that moment on. Weeks of chemo, long stays in hospital, I even had to get my son back to run the farm. It's been real tough on the whole family. If I have one message for farmers, it would be that it's not worth it to put things off and put themselves and their families through what we've been through. If you work outside, *always* wear a wide-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirt, sunglasses and regularly apply sunscreen". **Les Colman**



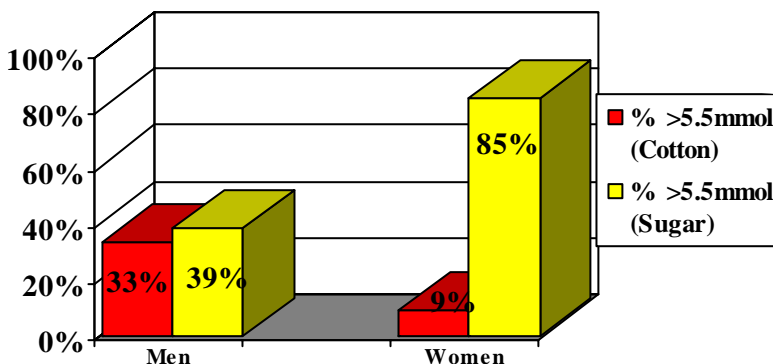
www.sunsmart.com.au

## Diabetes: The Silent Epidemic.

In pre-diabetes blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be called diabetes. Pre-diabetes has no warning signs or symptoms. Each year, in your early morning assessments we test your fasting blood glucose and people greater than 5.5mmols are referred for further follow up and/or diet advice. Remember the glycaemic index in Diet and Nutrition?

Some results can be seen in the graph to the right which is divided into each industry, sugar and cotton. The results from the fasting blood glucose levels show interesting results. From the graph it can be seen that there was a 33% and 39% incidence of 'risky' blood sugar levels in cotton and sugar males respectively. The women however showed vastly differing results, with an 85% incidence rate for the sugar farming women. It seems the sugar farmers are supporting their own industry! Research from the US, Finland and China show that moderate weight loss, and exercise reduce the risk of pre-diabetes developing into type 2 (mature onset diabetes) and help reduce your blood glucose levels. If you are one of these people, finding out about your blood sugar level gives you a chance to make some changes. In 2007, we talk about diabetes in more detail. Meanwhile, get working to reduce fat intake, watch diet, exercise more and read your food labels to make better choices!

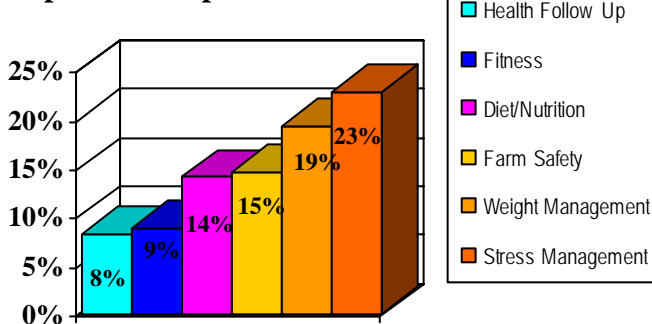
Percentage of participants with fasting blood sugars over 5.5 mmols



## Action Plans: Where are we up to?

Our summary from the action plans indicated that stress and weight management along with diet/nutrition and farm safety were the priority of most participants. It is interesting to note that 8% of all action plan choices was to have a health follow up. We hope that these varying matters have been followed up by your health professional and we await your successful reports. In year two we ask you to give a rating on the progress of your current action plan choices. We encourage all participants to review and assess their current position relative to their action plans and to push on and achieve their personal goals. It should be mentioned that we have received all but 6 action plans, a great effort! We look forward to seeing how your current action plans have progressed at the second year workshop in 2007. Until then, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a happy new year, and remember, slip slop slap!

Top six action plan choices



PROTECT YOUR FARM'S MOST IMPORTANT ASSET. YOU.



Slip on sun-protective clothing



Slop on SPF 30+ sunscreen



Slap on a hat



Seek shade when possible



Slide on some sunglasses



www.sunsmart.com.au