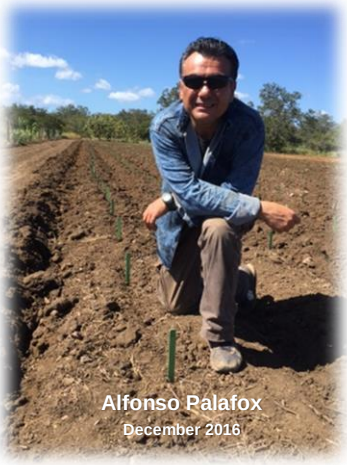
ESTABLISHMENT OF COTTON WINTER NURSERY IN COSTA RICA



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 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. A key decision for him 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 included: 1) identifying an office that had working space adjacent to a suitable field for the nursery, 2) installing an irrigation well and drip system, 3) hiring and training a field staff to plant, self, harvest, gin, delint, and ship seed to US customers. 4) learning the nuances of import/export permits, phytosanitary certificates, and commercial invoices of Costa Rica, 5) purchasing a plethora of office, field, seed processing, and ginning equipment, and 6) building an acid delinting system so that seed returned to US customers would not be ‘fuzzy’ but ‘black’ for the first time in CWN history.

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 in November, 2016. Even with this obstacle, the CWN is up-and-running and able to once again provide an environment for characterization of the critically important National Cotton Germplasm Collection.