



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**10 July 2023**

## **LATEST COTTON SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE SHOWS TARGET GAINS AND ROOM FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT**

The Australian cotton industry's 2022 Sustainability Update released today reveals the complexity of sustainability in farming systems, and the extent of the industry's investment in collaborative initiatives to accelerate positive impacts.

A 52 per cent improvement in water use efficiency since 1997, reductions of 91 per cent and 66 per cent respectively in the hazard of pesticides to bees and algae since 2004, and an increase in the proportion of female and Indigenous workers since 2016 are some of the mainly positive trends reported, while annual data shows a decrease in yield and increase in greenhouse gas emissions from 2021 to 2022.

Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay said the 2022 Sustainability Update provides evidence of an industry seeking to give its stakeholders a transparent and balanced review. "Since becoming the first Australian agricultural industry to independently assess its environmental impacts in 1991, the Australian cotton industry is proud of long positive trends in many areas but also knows it needs to keep looking at ways to improve," Mr Kay said.

"Our latest update clearly shows what we're doing well, but just as importantly it shows what challenges we have and what we're doing to address areas where we can better manage risks and opportunities.

"The data shows we have more to do in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and while we have witnessed a significant decline in the negative impact of herbicide use since 2004, there has been an increase in herbicide hazard over the past two years and as an industry our goal is to minimise the environmental impact of herbicide use."

The 2022 Sustainability Update also reveals the five-year average irrigated yield of Australian cotton increased by 55 per cent from 1994 to 2002, compared to an 8 per cent dryland yield increase in the same period.

This highlights how efficient use of irrigation water, within sustainable river and groundwater system limits, can meet a growing global call for sustainable intensification' of agriculture: to produce more food and fibre while reducing negative impacts and increasing positive impacts on people and nature.

Cotton Research and Development Corporation Executive Director Dr Ian Taylor said collaboration and coordination were key parts of the cotton industry's work to deliver sustainable intensification.

"The PLANET. PEOPLE. Paddock. framework is the Australian cotton industry's tool to deliver sustainable intensification by improving the resilience and productivity of farming systems while maintaining nature's contributions to people," Mr Taylor said.

"Collaborating with others inside and outside the industry to get the environmental, social and economic balance right is absolutely essential, and we are investing time and money to make this happen.

"Working with Natural Resource Management Regions Australia to develop regionally appropriate native vegetation targets, supporting the work of the National Soil Strategy to improve soil health, and advocating for a whole of agriculture approach to promoting human rights on Australian farms are examples of the collaborative approach the industry is taking."

The 2022 Australian Cotton Sustainability Update and Data Pack are available on the industry's online sustainability hub, <https://cottonaustralia.com.au/sustainability-reports>.

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See following page for additional background to PLANET. PEOPLE. Paddock.

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**BACKGROUND: PLANET. PEOPLE. Paddock.**

PLANET. PEOPLE. Paddock. is the Australian cotton industry’s sustainability framework created to coordinate a whole-of-industry strategy to manage sustainability, and to engage effectively with stakeholders on actions and progress.

PLANET. PEOPLE. Paddock. is focused on-farm cotton production. Through a process of consultation and review, nine topics have been assessed as being most important to customers, cotton growers and other stakeholders:

- PLANET: Water, greenhouse gas emissions, pesticides, native vegetation, soil health
- PEOPLE: Workplace and working conditions, wellbeing
- Paddock: Productivity, profitability.

PLANET. PEOPLE. Paddock is delivered by the cotton industry’s Sustainability Working Group (SWG), which consists of representatives from Cotton Australia, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation, myBMP, CottonInfo, the Australian Cotton Shippers Association and growers. The SWG reports to the Boards of Cotton Australia and the Cotton Research and Development Corporation.

