



# THE HISTORY OF COTTON<sup>®</sup>

The story of a modern, sustainable agricultural industry that's helping to clothe the world. Cotton Australia's Cotton Education Kit provides current, authoritative information for all teachers and students, and includes:

- Targeted Australian Curriculum outcomes for Years 7-12, and outcomes for Years 11-12 from NSW, QLD, SA, WA, NT & ACT syllabi in each of its 10 chapters.
- Case studies and multimedia that are embedded in the Kit. Additional school resources, lessons and worksheets are found online in the Cotton Classroom.



Cotton Classroom



# WORLD COTTON HISTORY

## A BRIEF SUMMARY

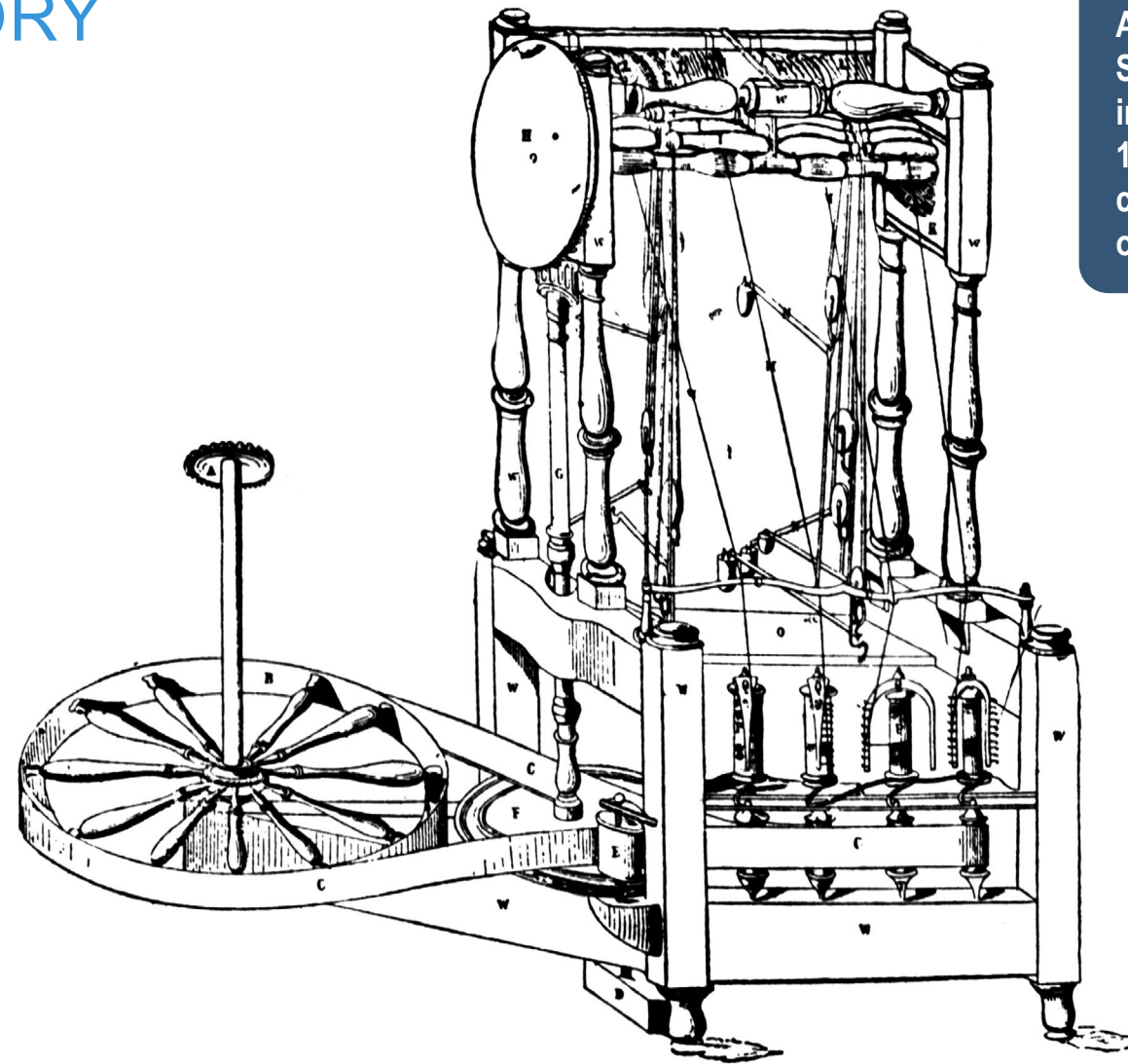
**Cotton has a very long and interesting history in the world and is one of the oldest known fibres. The word cotton comes from an arabic word 'qutun' or 'kutun' used to describe any fine textile and some of the earliest fabric relics found in excavations of ancient civilisations were cotton.**

Archaeologists found cotton fabric 5,000 years old at Mohenjo Daro, an ancient town in the Indus River Valley of West Pakistan, and similarly aged examples have been found in Egypt and Mexico.

Although the cotton plant is thought to have initially grown wild in East Africa, it was first cultivated in the country now known as Pakistan where its early uses were as a textile for clothing, bindings for sandals and harnesses for elephants. The Greek historian, Herodotus (484 – 425 BC) wrote about a tree in Asia that bore cotton 'exceeding in goodness and beauty than the wool of any sheep'. Cotton was widely used in the ancient civilisations of Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Indian sub-continent. Early Mediterranean traders, the Ionians and Phoenicians introduced cotton materials to Europe.

Over the next 2,000 years, cotton, wool and silk became the preferred fibres for fine fabrics across the developed world. In less developed and warmer countries, where cotton farming, home spinning and village industry were interlocked, cotton was dominant, and still is, 2,000 years later.

In more developed countries the surge in cotton consumption was triggered by the Industrial Revolution of the late 18th Century. Spinning mills sprang up in places like Manchester in the United Kingdom, which led to ports like Liverpool becoming major cotton shipping centres.



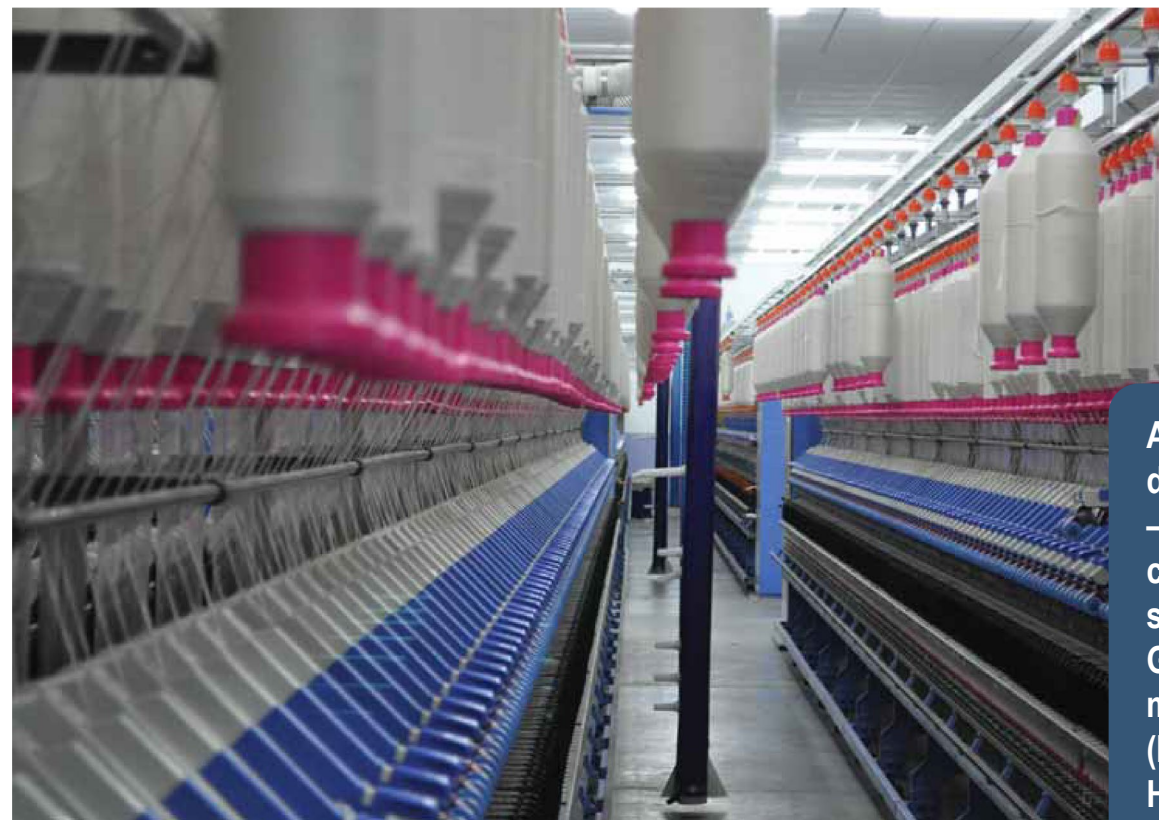
Arkwright's Spinning Frame, invented in about 1767 enabling cheap production of cotton cloth.

With access to slave labour and new types of cotton, the American colonies, soon to become the USA, provided much of the raw cotton.

With lower production costs, cotton became more affordable and its popularity soared. During this period, specialty cotton varieties including Egyptian, Sea Island (Caribbean and South East USA) and Tanguis (Peru) became highly prized for use in very soft and fine fabrics.

However, the American Civil War changed things; European nations were forced to look for other sources of supply and the British looked to their then-colonies, including Australia.

### A CONTRAST IN SPINNING TECHNOLOGY



And the modern-day version – Australian cotton being spun in Dongying Gongyuan Textile mill in China. (Photo by John Hamparsum).



Fact Sheet: World Cotton History



# AUSTRALIAN COTTON HISTORY A BRIEF SUMMARY

By Cotton Industry Legend, Ralph Schulzé

Cotton has a relatively long history in Australia – native varieties have grown here for many thousands of years. However, although cotton was introduced to Australia with the First Fleet, it did not establish itself even as a minor commercial crop until the 1850's when the American Civil War started.

Gins were built, and relatively large areas of cotton were grown around centres such as Beaudesert, Caboolture, Ipswich and Central Queensland.

But when international trade returned to normal, Australian cotton production declined, falling to a total of 15 acres in 1886. In the early 1900's it reappeared and production gradually rose to 50,000 acres in 1924, and after a temporary decline, to 60,000 acres in 1936. In this pre-war period there were cotton gins at Rockhampton, Wowan, Gladstone, Gayndah, Dalby and Brisbane.

Following World War II, production again fell to around 2,500 acres. But with the availability of better mechanical cotton pickers, and an increased Commonwealth bounty, production again rose to reach 20,000 acres in 1960. Up until this period, cotton was regarded as a low-input dryland crop, or as a pioneering crop for recently cleared land. Irrigation was rare, yields marginal, and fibre quality poor and variable. But then things changed!

The modern era of Australian cotton began.

Despite some opinion to the contrary, the modern era did not have a singular origin. Cotton farmers in various areas of southern and central Queensland concurrently began

addressing cotton as a higher input, better managed, irrigated crop. At the same time, what is now the Australian Cotton Research Institute was established near Narrabri following the completion of Keepit Dam.

Research quickly focused on cotton as an exciting possibility. In these critical first three years, and before his transfer to wheat research, a Hungarian plant breeder, Nick Derera, provided the foresight to develop those possibilities. In this pioneering effort he was assisted by the farm manager Tom Lawler, and a young agronomist, Ralph Schulzé. News of these promising early results was picked up by the media as far away as California. Two cotton farmers from near Merced, California, Paul Kahl and Frank Hadley, were so impressed that in early 1961 they came to Australia to see for themselves.

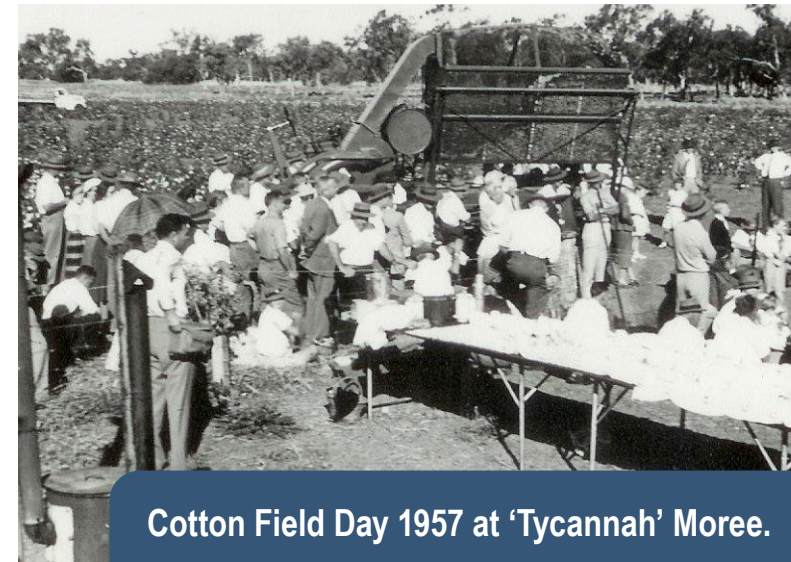
They were soon to be followed by others, and as a result, a cohort of American cotton families emigrated to the Wee Waa district and other areas. It was the unique blend of American "know how" and practical Australian innovation that made these early efforts so successful.

Meanwhile, in Queensland, progressive farmers in the Lockyer, Callide-Dawson and Condamine valleys were successfully developing irrigation and sound crop management. New irrigation areas at St. George and Emerald were also providing opportunities for successful cotton trials and expansion.



Fact Sheet: Australian Cotton History

## THE EARLY YEARS OF COTTON PRODUCTION IN AUSTRALIA



Cotton Field Day 1957 at 'Tycannah' Moree.



Early cotton farming.



Early cotton pickers.



Early cotton transport 1970.



The Moon-buggy helps move cotton modules around at cotton gins.

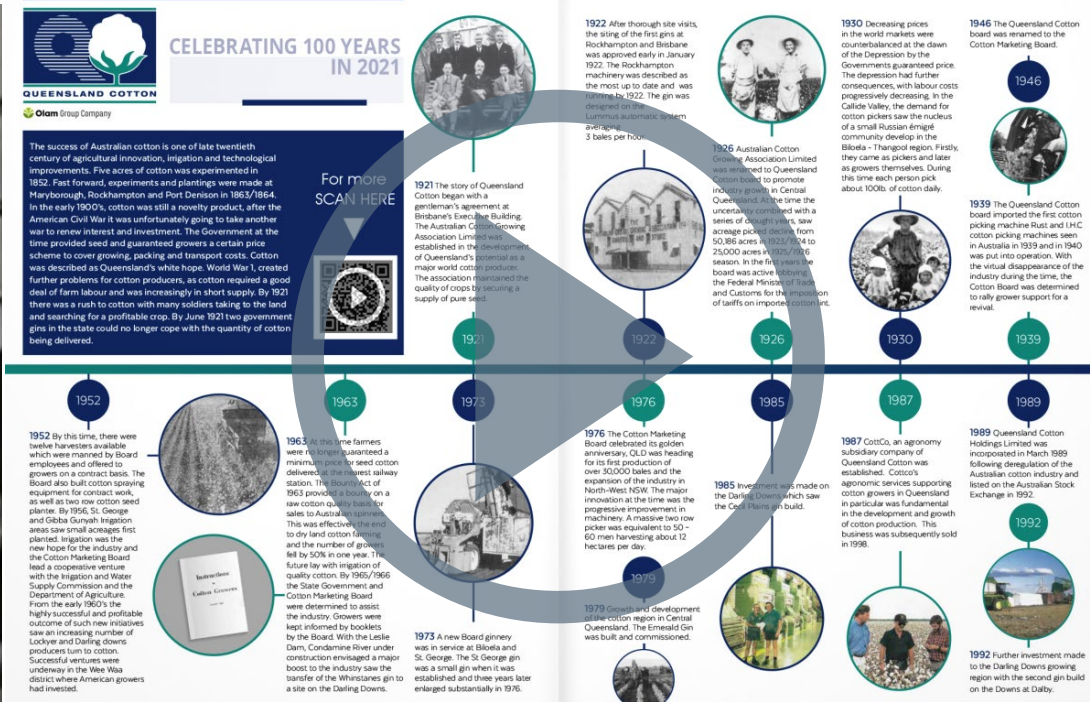
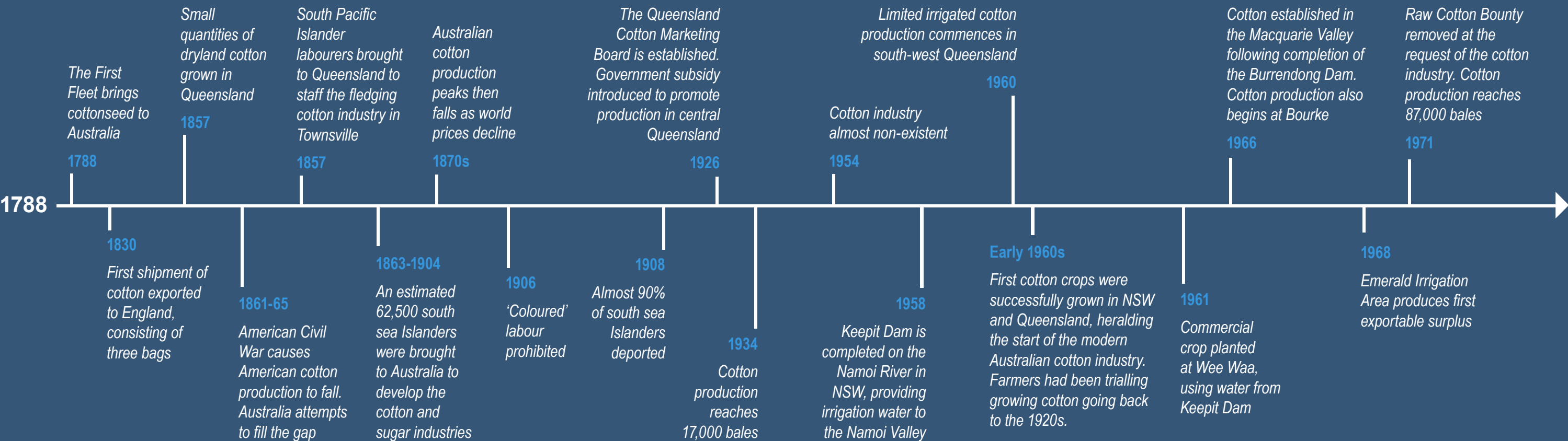


Early cotton farmers.



# HISTORY OF COTTON GROWING IN AUSTRALIA

# TIMELINE

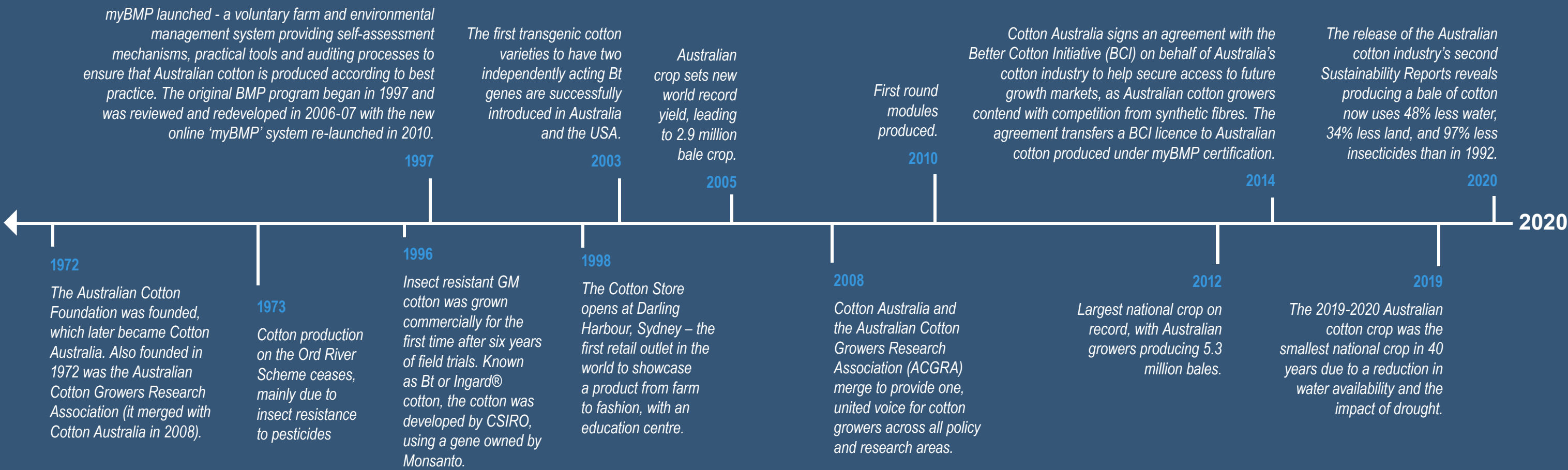


Australian Cotton Industry from the First Fleet to the 1980s

Queensland Cotton – celebrating 100 years of operation in 2021

# HISTORY OF COTTON GROWING IN AUSTRALIA

## TIMELINE



Cotton Seed Distributors look back to their beginnings.



From humble beginnings, in 1967 a group of Namoi Valley cotton growers had the vision to invest in the production of cotton for seed, rather than lint - and thus began Cotton Seed Distributors Ltd.

In an industry which has experienced ups and downs with floods, droughts, insects, pests - and now, a global pandemic (COVID-19), CSD has remained committed to the success of today's cotton growers. The industry is here for the long-run.





2012 Cotton Awards  
– 40 years of Cotton  
Australia



**A Life in Cotton: The Birth of the Modern Cotton Industry in Australia’ - a 60-minute documentary about the early development of the Australian cotton industry.**

Film by Paper Moose, made in association with the University of New South Wales and Cotton Catchment Communities, CRC. Based on a research project entitled, ‘A Historical Geography of Cotton Farming in NSW and QLD: Adaptation and Adoption’.



2018 IPF Service to Industry Recipient - David Montgomery reflects on his 40 years in the modern cotton industry and David is proud of the current industry that is inclusive of women and is set to expand into northern Queensland, the Northern Territory and possibly the Ord in Western Australia.



Emigration to the New Colony of Australia the Future Cotton Field of England – read about the first agricultural workforce and the 1861’s “Cotton Regulations” that stated that individuals and companies could lease land and receive the freehold title within two years if one-tenth of the land was used for growing cotton.



Queensland Australia, the future cotton-field of Great Britain. The Brisbane Courier 16 April 1864 – Cotton Cultivation in Queensland. This article discusses the floods and suitable land for successful cotton growing

# THEMES AND AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

The Cotton Education Kit has been linked to the Australian Curriculum for Years 7-10, and targeted outcomes for Years 11 -12 from all state & territory curriculums across Australia. A list of themes is provided for teachers as a quick guide to assist linking the content to their unit of work or syllabi in their state or territory.

A full list of the individual syllabuses that have been mapped against the Cotton Education Kit can be found in the Cotton Classroom.



## CHAPTER THREE THEMES

- World Cotton History – A Brief Summary
- Australian Cotton History – A Brief Summary
- Timeline: History of Cotton Growing in Australia

# CHAPTER THREE CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Australian Curriculum	Course	Chapter 3: The History of Cotton
State / Territory	Senior Secondary Course	
New South Wales (HSC)	Agriculture (2013)	P1.1 P1.2 P2.3 P3.1 H1.1 H3.2 H3.4
	Geography (2009)	H4 H5 H6
	Textiles and design (2013)	P3.2 P5.1 P6.1 H3.2 H5.2 H6.1
Victoria (VCE)	Agriculture and Horticulture Studies (2020)	Unit 1: AoS 1 Food and fibre industries

## KEY LINKS



Cotton Australia.



360-degree digital film of a cotton farm, the latest addition to Cotton Australia's suite of educational resources informing city and country residents about the Australian cotton industry.



Google Arts & Culture



Australian Cotton



Cotton Research and Development Corporation



Cotton Seed Distributors



CottonInfo



Primezone: Primezone provides teachers and students with access to the latest quality primary industries education resources

