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Australian Cotton Report Uncovers Stories of Giving

In a cotton industry first, a snapshot report outlining Australian cotton's significant social and economic contribution was released today.

The report, titled "[Cotton with a Conscience](#)" pulled together industry data and case studies from across Australia's cotton growing regions, with the results highlighting an industry committed to the communities in which it operates.

The report found that not only did the Australian cotton industry directly employ 12,500 people mostly on family farms in rural areas, it contributed on average \$1.8 billion a year to the national economy and was a major social contributor to regional communities.

The industry was found to be a strong supporter of women, who were well represented on-farm and in jobs such as ginning, agronomy, research and marketing. The proportion of women working in key industry organisations was 60%.

Cotton farmers made the vast majority of their business expenses (93%) in rural towns and regional centres, and 71% made regular donations to local charities and programs.

"As anyone who's lived in a rural town knows, so much of their vibrancy comes from the people who volunteer their time and resources to make things happen," Cotton Australia spokesperson Brooke Summers said.

"While this report really just scratches the surface, it is full of examples of how our farmers and industry groups are contributing to the social fabric of rural communities across NSW and Queensland," Ms Summers said.

The Cotton with a Conscience report included 25 case study examples of how the cotton industry was giving back, from donating cotton towels to WIRES during the recent bushfires and releasing more than 200,000 baby fish into rivers, to tackling issues like Aboriginal employment and rural mental health.

"For many years, the Australian cotton industry has worked hard to assess and report our environmental sustainability, but on the social side, there's a great untold story," Ms Summers said.

"We've discovered our stakeholders are equally interested in the social contributions of our industry, particularly as there are some big challenges globally around cotton, including child labour and the exploitation of women in some countries.

"It's important that our supply chain partners, and consumers of Australian cotton know our domestic industry treats its workers fairly, provides safe workplaces and opportunities, and is doing its best to contribute in a positive way to cotton communities.

“We haven’t been very good at telling the stories of cotton’s social contributions, even though our farmers, local Cotton Grower Associations and industry groups have been doing great things for decades,” Ms Summers said.

This report is just the beginning.

Cotton Australia and the Cotton Research and Development Corporation are currently working on establishing industry-wide social targets and a follow-up piece of research that will provide further evidence and hard data around cotton’s social and economic contributions.

Headline take-outs of the Cotton with a Conscience report:

- Australia’s cotton farmers produce enough cotton to clothe 375 million people each year.
- Cotton growers contribute to the economic viability of their communities and reported spending 93% of their business expenses in the local area and/or nearest regional centre.
- 90% of cotton growers are involved in at least once community-based activity, with six-in-10 involved in some way on a monthly basis.
- The proportion of women working in key industry organisations is 60%.
- The average annual gross value of seed and lint production between 2014-2019 was \$1.8 billion.
- 90% of Australia’s cotton farms are family-owned and operated.
- In non-drought years, the cotton industry directly employs 12,500 people not including those employed in agronomy, rural supplies or inputs.

View the “Cotton with a Conscience” report here:

https://australiancotton.com.au/assets/downloads/Australian_Cotton_Social_Report_-_single_pages.pdf

Cotton Australia is the peak body for Australia’s cotton growers. For more information visit:

<https://cottonaustralia.com.au/>

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