

MEDIA RELEASE 7 October 2020

Discover Australian cotton on World Cotton Day

Cotton Australia is encouraging Australians to use World Cotton Day as an opportunity to learn more about the country's cotton industry.

Australian cotton growers are joining in World Cotton Day celebrations today and connecting with farmers around the globe to celebrate the natural fibre they grow, the successes they have recorded, and the goals they still want to achieve.

Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay said World Cotton Day was a valuable opportunity to learn more about Australian cotton.

"I encourage all Australians to use World Cotton Day as a moment to discover our industry and the huge contribution our growers make to our nation," he said.

"Australia may be a relatively small producer of cotton compared to other countries, but what we lack in size we make up for in punch, as a leader in efficiency, sustainability, fibre quality and profitability," he said.

"Over the past 60 years or so, since our industry started developing in Australia, our growers have made significant improvements in the way they grow the crop, which is having a meaningful, positive impact at the farm-level.

"Since 1992, producing a bale of cotton in Australia now takes 48% less water, 34% less land, and 97% less insecticides.

"Our growers also make significant contributions to regional communities, with 93% spending the vast majority of their business expenses in rural towns, and 71% making regular donations to local charities and programs."

Mr Kay said while the Australian cotton industry has recorded significant achievements, the industry has ambitious plans to keep improving.

"I am incredibly proud of our industry and our achievements to date; but the journey is far from over and our industry can always do more to improve," he said.

"We are continuing our work in the sustainability space, and our growers and industry representatives are currently finalising our sustainability targets for the next five years, which we look forward to launching soon.

"Likewise, we want to continue sharing our story with the community, answer the questions they have, and dispel myths about our industry."

While the Australian cotton industry has been devastated by drought in recent years, Mr Kay said hope was growing for better conditions ahead.

"Our growers are very thankful for the rain that has fallen in many cotton growing areas in recent months, but we hope the drought continues to break and all farmers will get back on their feet soon," he said.

"As our world continues to adapt to its new normal, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I hope that as a domestic and global cotton industry we use World Cotton Day to inspire us and propel us forward to even greater achievements in the future."

Australia's cotton industry at a glance:

- Approximately **90% of Australia's cotton businesses are family farms**, producing about 80% of the crop.
- The average Australian cotton farm:
 - is **family-owned** and operated;
 - directly creates **jobs for nine people**;
 - is run by growers with an **average age of 47 years**;
 - grows 576 hectares of cotton, comprising 10% of the total farm area;
 - **supplements cotton with other crops** including wheat, chickpeas and sorghum; many Australian cotton farmers also graze sheep and cattle;
 - includes **natural areas** – such as native vegetation and riparian zones – ranging from between 10 - 40 % of property area.
- Cotton's average irrigation requirement is **6 to 7 megalitres per hectare (ML/ha)**.
- We have the reputation as being **the most water efficient cotton industry in the world**, thanks to biotechnology and advances in precision irrigation and timing.
- The introduction of genetically modified cotton in 1996 and the implementation of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) enabled the cotton industry to **reduce its use of insecticides by 97% since 1992**.
- Water-use productivity by Australian cotton growers **improved by 48%** since 1992.
- Cotton is **a food and a fibre crop**. Cotton seed oil is used for cooking and in products like soap, margarine, emulsifiers, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, rubber and plastics.
- One tonne of cotton seed yields approximately **200kg of oil, 500kg of cotton seed meal and 300kg of hulls**.
- The by-product of the oil-extraction process is meal, which is **used as stock feed**. Cotton seed meal is a high protein meal that can be fed to most animals. Cotton seed hulls are also a valuable feed source for livestock.

Find out more about the Australian cotton industry here: www.cottonaustralia.com.au

Media contact

Robert Virtue
Communications Manager – Cotton Australia
robertv@cotton.org.au
0401 843 018