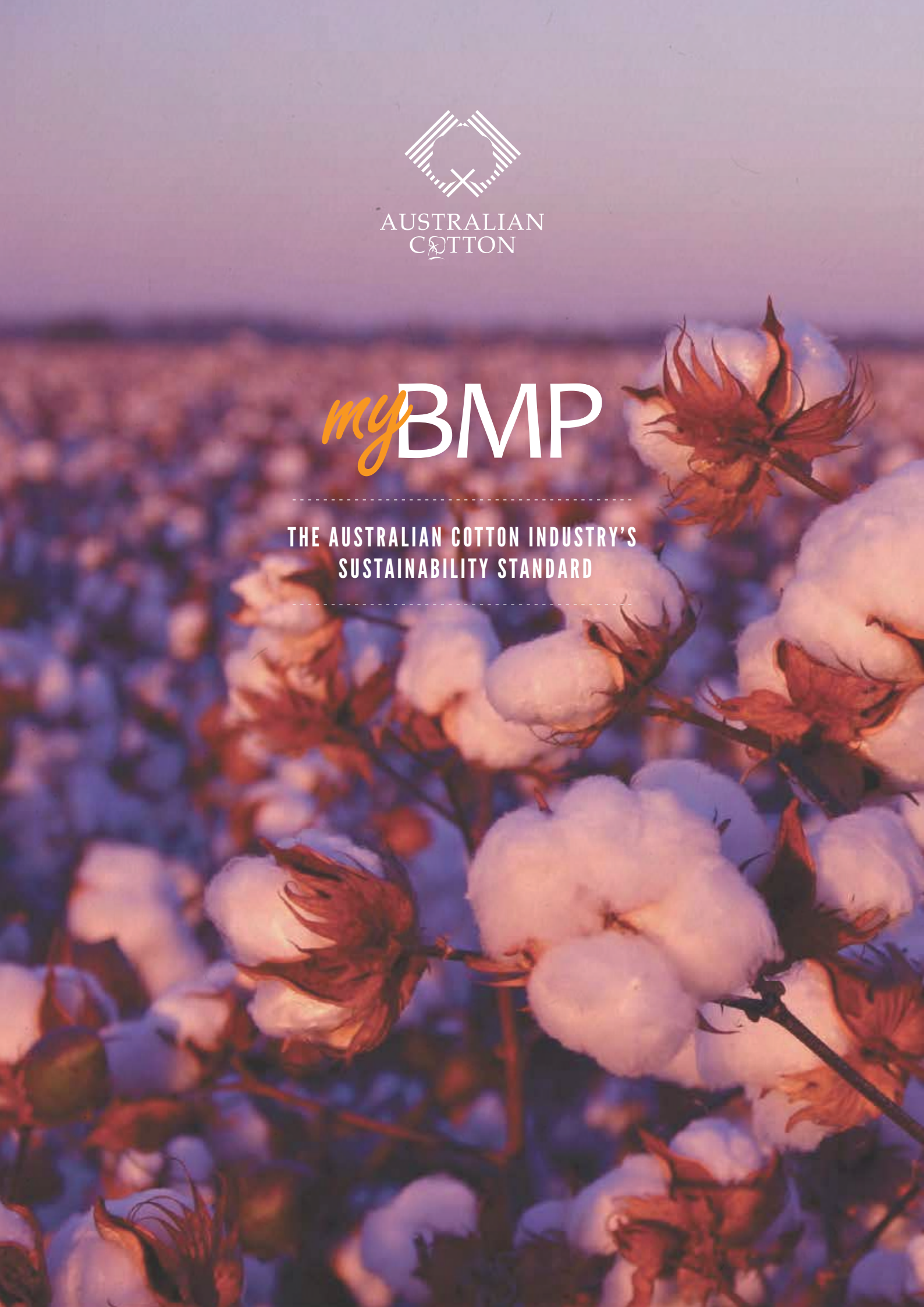
AUSTRALIAN
COTTON
myBMP
THE AUSTRALIAN COTTON INDUSTRY'S
SUSTAINABILITY STANDARD

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AUSTRALIAN COTTON

# INTRODUCTION

*my*BMP – Best Management Practices – is the Australian cotton industry's voluntary cotton production certification standard. It is a comprehensive farm and environmental management system designed to improve all aspects of on-farm cotton production. *my*BMP uses practical tools to ensure growers are implementing world's best practice to produce economically, socially and environmentally sustainable cotton.

*my*BMP provides Australian cotton growers with:

- a central online access point to the industry's best management practice standards
- technical support
- self-assessment mechanisms
- practical tools
- independent auditing
- an industry extension team to support growers on-farm

*my*BMP also acts as the industry's assurance mechanism. The program helps the industry to manage risks, and provides evidence to stakeholders and the wider community that it is committed to the highest possible social and environmental standards of practice, starting with a whole-of-industry, independent environmental audit in 1991.

# HISTORY

In the past, there was considerable scope for cotton farming practices to modernise, and become safer, lower-impact and more efficient. The Australian cotton industry was the first agricultural industry in Australia to document its environmental and social performance and practices.

*my*BMP was developed in response to the need for the industry to manage risks and to support its social licence to operate. The program originated in an extensive joint research and development program, and continues to be informed by the latest research findings. It took several years to develop and is the result of consultation with growers, researchers, industry bodies, governments and NGOs, taking into consideration the requirements of the cotton industry now and into the future.

The original BMP program began in 1997 and was reviewed and redeveloped in 2006-07. *my*BMP launched its new online system in 2010.

# ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Cotton Australia, the peak body for Australia's cotton producers, is the lead organisation for *my*BMP and works closely with key industry partners to deliver the program. *my*BMP is integrated into the corporate strategic plans for:

AUSTRALIAN COTTON — Cotton Australia

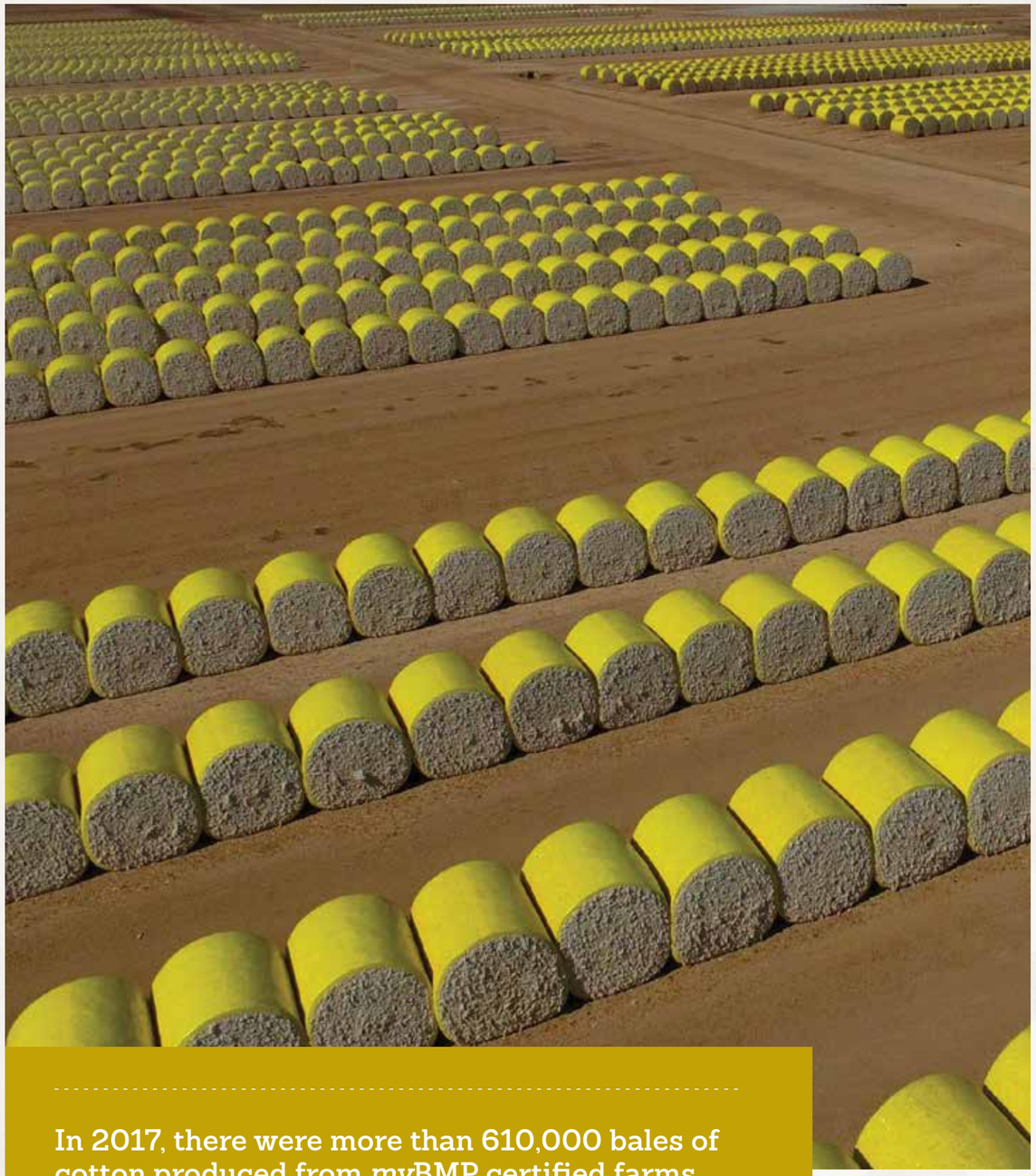
Australian Government, Cotton Research and Development Corporation — The Cotton Research Development Corporation (the statutory authority established by the Australian Government to invest in cotton research, development and extension)

CottonInfo — CottonInfo (the cotton industry's joint extension program, delivering research outcomes to industry).

*my*BMP — Cotton Australia's *my*BMP office is located in Toowoomba, Queensland, to support growers in the development and implementation of the program on-farm.

## KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

| ROLE | WHO IS RESPONSIBLE? |
|---|---|
| Standard setting and revision | Cotton Australia with involvement from stakeholders |
| On-farm implementation | Cotton Australia's Regional Managers |
| Technical support | Cotton Australia's *my*BMP Office |
| Program administration | • *my*BMP data<br>• industry-wide sustainability data: CRDC |
| Data collection | Cotton Australia's *my*BMP Office |



**In 2017, there were more than 610,000 bales of cotton produced from *my*BMP certified farms. Participation in the *my*BMP program is growing at 20% per year and the number of *my*BMP certified farms has more than doubled in two years.**

# *my*BMP PROGRAM STRUCTURE

*my*BMP is structured into 10 key modules for growers, covering all aspects of Australian cotton production

| MODULE | DESCRIPTION | NO. OF CHECKLIST ITEMS |
|---|---|---|
| Biosecurity | Avoidance, management and control of pests and diseases | 10 |
| Energy and Input Efficiency | Efficient energy inputs such as electricity, fuel and fertilisers | 18 |
| Fibre Quality | Growing the best quality cotton possible | 14 |
| Human Resources and Work Health and Safety | Supporting growers in managing employees and contractors while providing a safe and compliant workplace | 50 |
| Integrated Pest Management (IPM) | Management of pests, weeds and diseases | 30 |
| Sustainable Natural Landscape (Natural Assets) | Managing the vegetative and riparian (riverbank and wetlands) assets on your farm | 80 |
| Pesticide Management | Pesticide management, storage and use on-farm | 75 |
| Petrochemical Storage and Handling | Managing fuels and lubricants on farm | 32 |
| Soil Health | Maintaining and/or improving soil quality and fertility | 28 |
| Water Management | Water quality, efficiency of storage and distribution, both for dryland (rainfed) and irrigated farms | 67 |

Under each of these 10 modules are key areas. Each key area has standards listed that are supported by checklists, additional information and resources (See Appendix A).

Each checklist item is assigned a level. These levels are:

- **Level 1** - Identified legal requirements (what you must do)
- **Level 2** - Industry identified best practice standards (what you should do)
- **Level 3** - Innovative practices (new technology and cutting-edge practices)

All levels are updated yearly in line with Australian legislative requirements and new research coming down the pipeline. To achieve full certification, farms must meet **all** level 1 and level 2 standards of the *my*BMP program.

Cotton production post-farm gate is also covered by *my*BMP with Ginning and Classing modules available for the Australian cotton ginning and classing facilities.

# HOW IT WORKS

To get involved in the program, growers complete the following steps:

**1 REGISTER ONLINE**

Register online at www.mybmp.com.au

**2 *my*BMP INTRODUCTION**

The *my*BMP office:

- Sets up a user account for the grower, associated farm and business
- Welcomes the grower to *my*BMP
- Provides instructions on how to conduct a farm self-assessment
- Directs the grower to their regional Cotton Australia Regional Manager for assistance

**3 SELF-ASSESSMENT**

Grower works through the self-assessment for all modules (with access to numerous resources to help with best management practice)

**4 COMPLETE CHECKLIST**

Grower is invited to request an audit when all Level 1 and Level 2 checklist items are complete and then selects an auditor from a list of accredited independent auditors.

**5 ARRANGE AUDIT**

The audit is arranged with the grower (see next section for details on the audit process).

# AUDITING

## CERTIFICATION AUDITS

Once the risk assessment is completed and a grower is confident that all certification standards are met, growers seeking *my*BMP certification are audited. The auditor first reviews the grower's assessment and associated documentation and familiarises themselves as much as possible with the farm and its *my*BMP history prior to conducting the audit.

The auditor follows the *my*BMP Audit Procedure and Guidelines when conducting the on-farm audit. This pays particular attention to:

- Observing and discussing sensitive areas, for example, native vegetation, riparian zones, buffer areas, water bodies, neighbours, houses and infrastructure.
- Observing and discussing other on-farm natural resources and management practices (e.g. soil, water sources and quality, vegetation)
- Observing and discussing irrigation and drainage layout and practices.
- Observing and discussing chemical storage and application equipment.
- Observing and discussing petrochemical storage areas and management practices.

The audit report is then written to determine whether the grower has achieved all the *my*BMP certification standards and should be certified. If granted, the *my*BMP certification remains in place for five years.

## RANDOM AUDITS

To monitor the effectiveness of the certification process, random surveillance audits are also conducted across certified farms. Random Surveillance Audits are conducted by independent *my*BMP auditors and follow the same procedure as the certification audits. On successful completion of a random surveillance audit, the grower's certification period starts again (i.e. certified five years from the date of the random audit).

The objectives of the Random Surveillance Audit are to:

1) Verify that growers are maintaining or improving their practices and management during their five-year certification period, to ensure the process maintains credibility.
2) Provide feedback to the industry on the performance of growers during the certification period, to help target research and extension needs.

Both the certification and the random surveillance audits consist of five core modules and one random module, selected by the *my*BMP office using a random generator. The five core modules included in every audit are:

- Pesticide management
- Water management
- Natural assets
- Soil health
- Petrochemical storage and handling

The random module, selected from the remaining five modules by the *my*BMP office, will be assigned in a way to ensure that all modules, over time, receive enough coverage to make their results statistically relevant.



## PERFORMANCE MONITORING OF AUDIT PROCESS

The industry, through the *my*BMP Office, undertakes regular performance monitoring of auditors to assess their technical capacity, competence and adherence to *my*BMP Procedures. This is in the form of:

- **Scrutineering** - Auditors will have their audit reports scrutineered in accordance with the *my*BMP Scrutineer Procedure.
- **Annual performance review** – every year the lead auditor assesses the performance of the audit team by scrutineering individual audit reports, referring to the post audit surveys, and conducting an interview with each auditor. Biannually, each auditor has an in-field mentored audit in accordance with the *my*BMP Auditor Mentoring Procedures. This is an opportunity for auditors to seek feedback on their performance, and for the *my*BMP Office to verify performance, and identify training needs and gaps. If the mentor assesses an auditor as not competent, the auditor will be re-mentored as per the *my*BMP Auditor Mentoring Procedure until such time as the mentor is satisfied with the auditor's performance.

## HANDLING COMPLAINTS

The *my*BMP Office will investigate any complaints received by growers on the performance of an auditor. The *my*BMP Resolution of Complaints Procedure outlines the process to be followed.

## OBLIGATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF *my*BMP AUDITORS

### PROCEDURES, GUIDELINES AND ETHICS

Registered *my*BMP auditors are expected to follow the auditing process and procedures at all times when organising, preparing for, conducting and reporting on a *my*BMP audit. Whenever a procedure or guideline of relevance to auditors is updated, it will be provided by the *my*BMP Office to registered *my*BMP auditors.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Auditors must disclose and discuss with the *my*BMP Office any potential conflict of interest that exists prior to any audit activity commencing.

Auditors must not audit their current clients or partners' clients, where a client is described as someone where advice on a commercial basis is provided that is directly related to the content of the *my*BMP program.

Situations where auditors have assisted growers implement and/or complete their *my*BMP risk assessment are deemed a conflict of interest and auditors may not audit clients falling in this category. Auditors may also not audit family members (direct or related by law, e.g. marriage).

The *my*BMP Office reserves the right to determine whether a conflict of interest exists.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

It is expected that *my*BMP auditors ensure confidentiality in all aspects of their work. This includes:

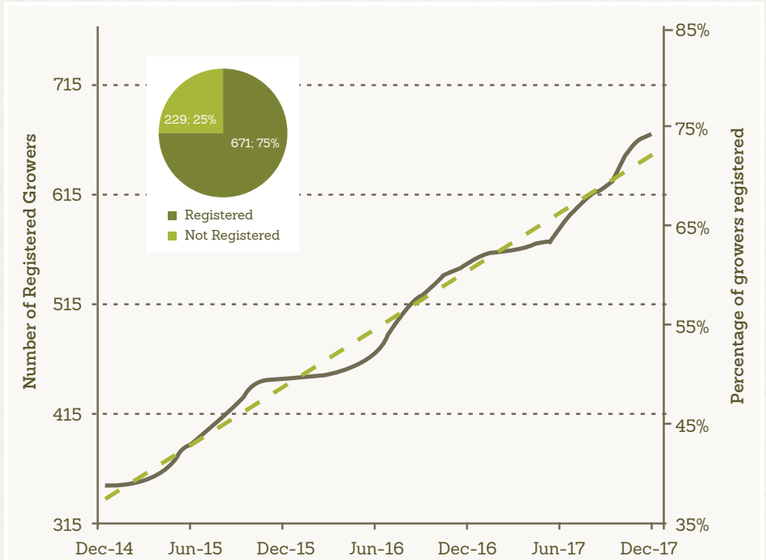
- Contractual arrangements with the *my*BMP Office
- Grower details and performance during an audit
- *my*BMP website access details (username and password)
- *my*BMP program guidelines and procedures (outside the scope of conducting audits; particularly to third parties outside the industry)

The privacy of the growers who participate is to be maintained at all times.

# PROGRAM GROWTH

In 2013, around 7% of Australian cotton bales were produced on certified *my*BMP farms. By 2017, the number of bales shipped from *my*BMP certified farms was 16% – a substantial increase that is a testament to the value the program is delivering to growers. The number of bales produced continues to rise as more farms move through the program to full certification.

*Fig 1: myBMP grower registrations 2014-2017*

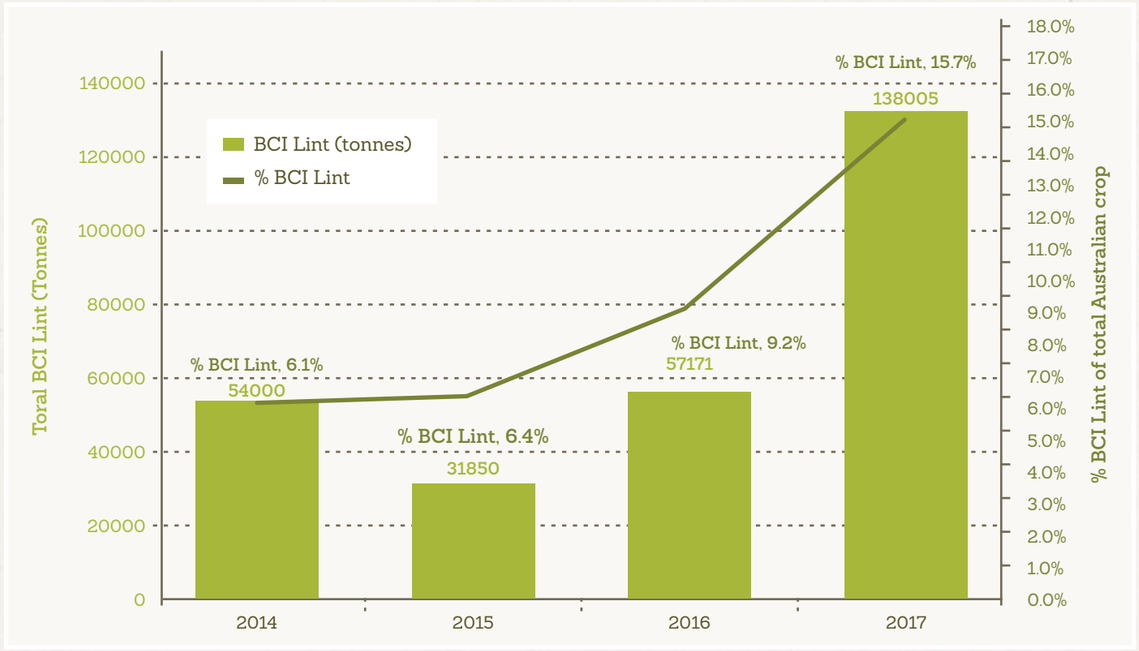



## 75% *my*BMP

Currently 75% of Australian cotton growers are participating in the *my*BMP program, representing around 1000 cotton farms. Certification occurs at a farm level, as some growers may own or manage more than one farm, and each farm may be at a different stage of its *my*BMP compliance journey. Around 170 farms, or 13%, have completed an external assurance audit for certification to the *my*BMP standard, and these numbers are growing all the time.

In 2017, there were more than 610,000 bales of cotton produced from *my*BMP certified farms. Participation in the *my*BMP program is growing at 20% per year and the number of *my*BMP certified farms has more than doubled in two years.

*Fig 2: Australian 'Better Cotton' production from 2014 to 2017*



# GLOBAL RECOGNITION FOR AUSTRALIAN COTTON SUSTAINABILITY

The certification standards of the *my*BMP program are among the most rigorous in the world and participation in *my*BMP has allowed Australian growers to access cotton markets by opting into programs such as the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI).

## BETTER COTTON INITIATIVE

BCI is a global sustainability program focused at farm-level improvements. BCI has members throughout the supply chain that are committed to the production and supply of cotton to a set of on-farm BCI standards covering social and environmental issues like pesticide management and child labour.

BCI is a global, multi-stakeholder organisation that operates at many levels in many countries.

Generally, BCI:

- Partners with organisations (such as Cotton Australia) to facilitate cotton farmers to use BCI best practices, then audits them to ensure compliance
- Partners with brands and retailers to encourage demand for BCI cotton
- Channels funds from membership and public-private partnerships back into the supply of Better Cotton through farm-level training and verification
- Facilitates Better Cotton into the supply chain using a mass balance model

In 2012, Cotton Australia contacted BCI to begin the discussion about producing Better Cotton in Australia. This led to Cotton Australia joining BCI as a member organisation and embarking upon a benchmarking process to align *my*BMP with the Better Cotton Production Principles and Criteria.

In June 2014, following a resolution on the alignment of *my*BMP with Better Cotton, a formal partnership agreement was signed on behalf of Australia's cotton industry. Now cotton produced under Australian *my*BMP certification can be sold into the global market as Better Cotton.

**AUSTRALIAN COTTON GROWERS MUST DO THREE THINGS TO QUALIFY AS A BCI GROWER:**

1. Achieve *my*BMP certification
2. Pay their full Cotton Australia levy
3. Register with BCI (through Cotton Australia)

*my*BMP growers who are also accredited as BCI growers receive Better Cotton Claim Units (BCCUs) when selling their cotton, which can be worth an extra $2-$3 per bale.

Cotton Australia will continue to manage the industry's relationship with BCI and has recently secured a seat on the BCI Council (its global Board).

# COTTON LEADS™ PROGRAM

Cotton LEADS™ is a joint program, initiated by Cotton Australia and The Cotton Foundation (United States), that offers manufacturers, brands and retailers a reliable cotton supply chain solution and confidence that their raw material is responsibly produced and identified.

*my*BMP's certification standards and continuous improvement-centred approach dovetails neatly into the Cotton LEADS™ objectives.

Cotton LEADS™ 500-plus program partners include manufacturers, brands and retailers that have supported the program by signing The Commitment to Cotton. Cotton LEADS™ partners have the opportunity to be active participants by supporting research projects, helping to disseminate information on best practices, or creating partnerships for continual improvement. Partners who choose to donate funds support activities under the Cotton LEADS™ program and contribute to continuous improvement in cotton production.

## TEXTILE EXCHANGE'S PREFERRED FIBER AND MATERIALS MARKET REPORT (PFMR)

Textile Exchange is a global non-profit seeking to drive industry transformation in preferred fibres, integrity and standards, and responsible supply networks. The goal of the Preferred Fiber and Materials Market Report (PFMR) is to help brands, retailers, educators, NGOs and everyone participating in the textile supply chain understand the preferred fibre and material market. Textile Exchange researches and consults with all sectors of the textile supply chain in preparing the report.

The PFMR identifies the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) and *my*BMP among its preferred fibre programs.

## PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE TEXTILES

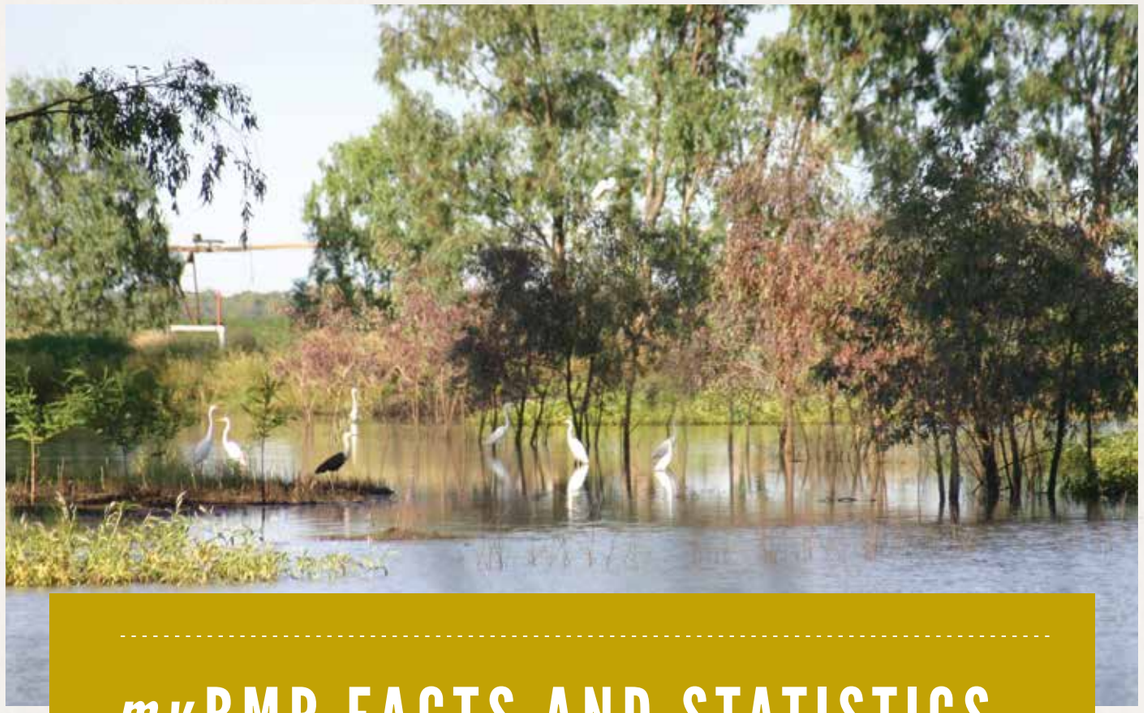
The Partnership for Sustainable Textiles is a multi-stakeholder initiative with around 150 members from the fields of economics, politics and the community. Together they are striving to improve conditions in global textile production – from the production of raw goods to the disposal of textiles. Today, members of the Partnership already cover more than half of the German textile market. By 2018 they are expected to cover 75%.

In December 2017, the myBMP Certification Standard was accredited by the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles, a multi-stakeholder initiative comprising representatives of business, civil society, the German Government, standards organisations and trade unions. The Partnership is committed to bringing about social, environmental and economic improvements all along the textile supply chain.

**WITH A FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY, THE PROGRAM IS BUILT UPON FIVE CORE PRINCIPLES:**

1. **COMMITMENT** to sustainably balancing social, economic, regulatory and environmental factors.
2. **RECOGNITION** that we cannot stop improving, investing, researching and sharing best practice.
3. **UNDERSTANDING** that working at a national scale drives international improvements.
4. **BELIEF** in the benefit of working cooperatively with similar programs to advance sustainable cotton.
5. **CONFIDENCE** in traceable cotton identification systems.





# *my*BMP FACTS AND STATISTICS

**75%** of Australian farms participating in the *my*BMP program.

More than 400 certification standards.

Full independent auditing.

More than 610,000 bales produced from *my*BMP certified farms in 2017.

Program participation growing at 20% per year.

Number of *my*BMP certified farms more than doubled in two years.

# APPENDIX A

FARM SELF-ASSESSMENT MANUAL - LEVEL 1, 2, 3 CHECKLIST ITEMS

| MODULE 1: | | |
|---|---|---|
| **KEY AREA: People** | | |
| STANDARD: People are made aware of biosecurity | | |
| AA101 | Level 2 | All farm personnel, consultants, contractors and visitors are made aware of farm biosecurity requirements (e.g. signage, staff communication) |
| AA102 | Level 2 | All farm personnel, consultants, contractors are briefed on action to be taken in the event of identifying unusual pests or plant symptoms or a potential exotic pest / disease / weed |
| AA103 | Level 3 | A documented biosecurity plan has been prepared for the farm which assesses the risk of insect, weeds and diseases entering the farm, and how these risks are minimised / managed |
| AA104 | Level 3 | The farms biosecurity plan is communicated to all staff |
| **KEY AREA: Crops** | | |
| STANDARD: All crops and farm inputs are monitored | | |
| AB101 | Level 1 | All crops are regularly monitored and unusual symptoms or pests must be reported to the relevant industry expert or state department officer. Pests include: insects, mites, snails, nematodes, pathogens (diseases) and weeds |
| AB102 | Level 3 | Ensure all farm inputs (seed, fertiliser, stock fodder) that are brought onto farm are pest free. Records are kept of farm inputs and where they came from |
| **KEY AREA: Vehicle, machinery and equipment** | | |
| STANDARD: Manage movement and cleanliness of vehicles, machinery and equipment | | |
| AC101 | Level 2 | A wash down facility is available |
| AC102 | Level 2 | All machinery, vehicles and equipment entering cotton production areas are inspected for any soil and plant debris and, if found, cleaned in the wash down facility before they are moved both on and off your property |
| AC103 | Level 3 | A sign posted designated parking area is provided for visiting vehicles and contractor equipment that is away from paddocks or production areas. A record of visitors is kept |
| AC104 | Level 3 | Farm vehicles are used to transport visiting people around the farm |
| **MODULE 2: ENERGY AND INPUT EFFICIENCY** | | |
| **KEY AREA: Farm energy inputs** | | |
| STANDARD: Monitoring farm energy usage | | |
| BA101 | Level 2 | Electricity bills and meter readings are reviewed to ensure readings are correct and tariffs are appropriate for your farm situation |
| BA102 | Level 2 | When purchasing liquid fuels consideration is given to:<br>• buying strategy,<br>• storage life of fuel (e.g. old fuel),<br>• fuel quality |
| BA103 | Level 2 | Energy inputs for the cotton season are kept for diesel, electricity, petrol, fertiliser and gas to coarsely monitor high energy use (e.g. total diesel usage per season) |



# APPENDIX A

FARM SELF-ASSESSMENT MANUAL - LEVEL 1, 2, 3 CHECKLIST ITEMS

| ACTION PLANS | | |
|---|---|---|
| Code | Check List Item Notes | Action Plan Items |
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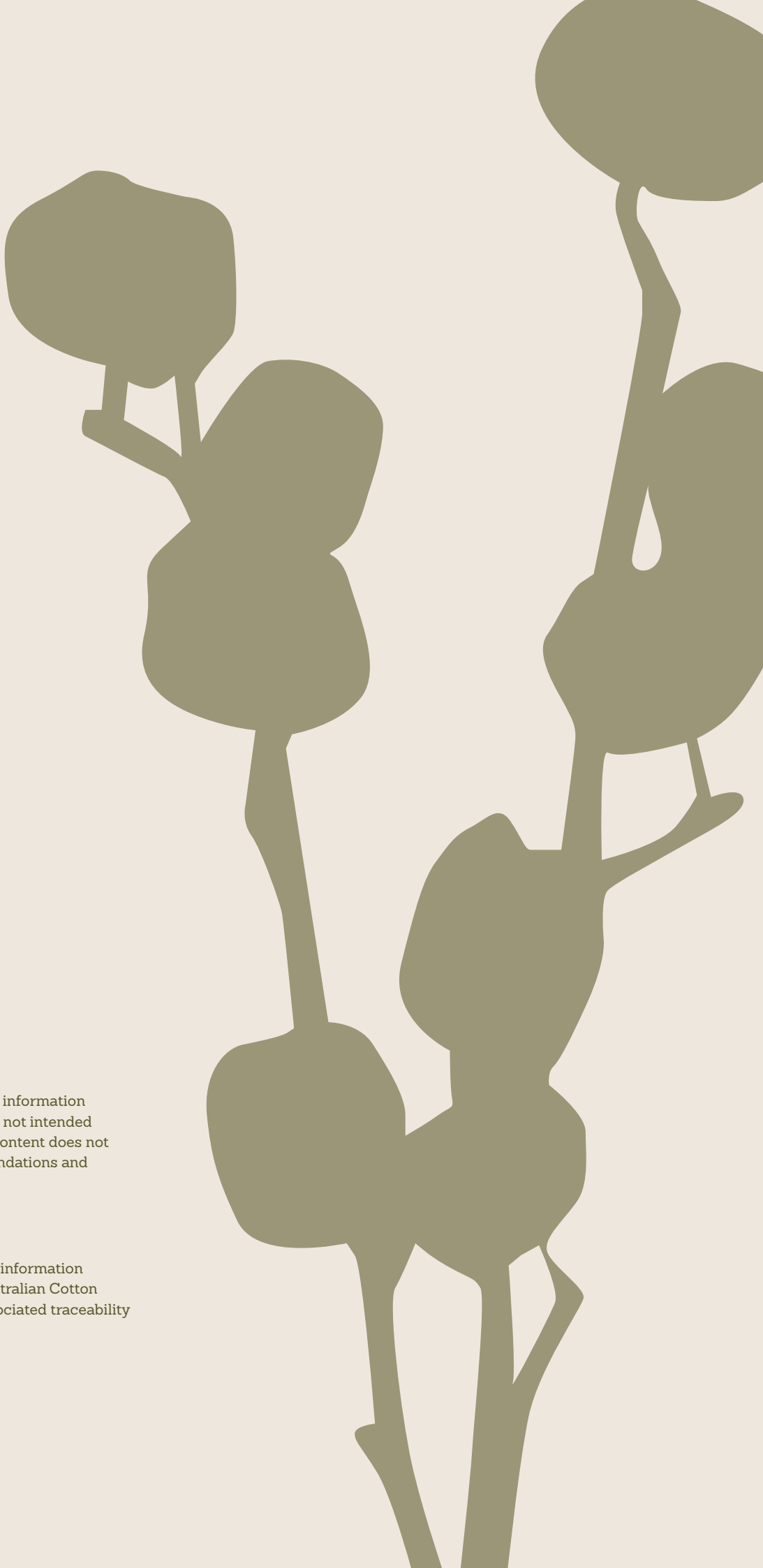

AUSTRALIAN COTTON

DISCLAIMER

This material has been prepared for information and educative purposes only, and is not intended to provide traceability advice. The content does not constitute legal advice or recommendations and should not be relied upon as such.

MORE INFORMATION

If you have any questions about the information contained in this document, the Australian Cotton Mark Application process or its associated traceability requirements, please contact:

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