



ANNUAL REPORT
2019–20

GROWING AS ONE





COTTON
AUSTRALIA

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Over the past year, the Australian cotton industry has continued to endure one of the toughest periods in its history.

The long and devastating drought continued its firm grip on our environment and farms, and many were forced to make very difficult decisions about their operations. Australians were collectively shocked by the images of dry, dusty paddocks and struggling communities as the drought wore on over the year; and for those of us who have lived and worked in the conditions shown in those images, it cannot be understated how challenging it has been.

The drought's devastating effects on the environment have been concerning for us all. Our industry, like all Australians, has been deeply saddened by the impact drought has had on our river systems, animals and vegetation. Farmers care deeply about the environment, because without a thriving ecosystem, our ability to do what we love is greatly impacted.

From our industry's perspective, we have not been immune to the destructive impacts of the natural disaster, with our 2019/2020 crop the smallest this nation has seen in 40 years.

While some regions received desperately needed rain in early 2020, the drought is far from over. We continue to hope that more rain will arrive soon across all regional communities and drought-affected environments, so everyone can return to normal production.

In conjunction with drought, our industry's social licence continued to come under scrutiny and was questioned in the media and public conversation over the past year.

Our industry listened to the concerns of the community and accepted there are portions of the community that have serious questions and deeply held views about our industry.

We also accepted that as an industry, we needed to be better at sharing information about what we do, how we do it and why we do it.

I am pleased to report that Cotton Australia has recorded a number of significant achievements over the past year to address these community concerns and to achieve the goals of our 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, which will ensure our industry is valued, viable and advanced.

Our team's implementation of our Rebuilding Trust Strategy saw significant results, including engagement with key stakeholders, the development of new communications platforms, and events to help share our story with city audiences.

In the water policy space, our team worked to ensure our industry's voice was loudly heard, particularly when a Bill was put forward to ban the export of cotton. Thankfully, the Bill was no longer on the agenda in the year after the 2019 federal election, but it was a significant achievement for our team to ensure the political attack's goal did not come to fruition.

I am also pleased to report our team achieved success in helping address the issue of off-target spray drift. The implementation of a new platform to map fields and log crops, SataCrop, saw significant uptake and helped reduce the impacts of spray drift damage by increasing growers' knowledge of the crops around their and their neighbours' farms.

In the education space, I am pleased to report our team achieved meaningful results in increasing the depth and breadth of education about our industry in classrooms across the country. New resources were created to ensure students received the latest information and engaging activities about Australian cotton. This will help ensure the next generation will be familiar with and value our industry.

I want to thank all of Cotton Australia's levy payers who have contributed financially to the operations of Cotton Australia over the past year. Without your support, our organisation's achievements on behalf of the industry would not be possible.

Thank you too to those growers who served their respective Cotton Grower Associations as member representatives. The time you took to engage with Cotton Australia, attend our meetings and events, and provide insight and feedback to us was invaluable.

Our organisation's financial statement can be found at the end of this Annual Report, which illustrates that, even despite the drought, we remain in a strong financial position. Consequently, the Board decided to retain the voluntary levy fee at \$1.50 per bale for the coming season – unchanged on last year.

I would like to thank my fellow Board members, Deputy Chair Nigel Burnett, our CEO Adam Kay, and Cotton Australia's staff for their efforts during what has been another challenging year for our industry. I join you in hoping that drought-breaking rain will continue to fall soon, and that we can improve our production levels.

I wish you all the best for the coming year and thank you once again for your support and commitment to our industry.

Hamish McIntyre
Chairman, Cotton Australia



CEO'S REPORT

Throughout the past year, Cotton Australia has worked on behalf of our growers to ensure our industry is valued, viable and advanced.

This goal was enshrined in our 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, and I am proud to report that over the past year, our team has made considerable steps towards achieving this objective.

A core focus of our work over the past year was implementing our industry's Rebuilding Trust Strategy and addressing public concerns about Australian cotton. The strategy is our plan for boosting transparency about Australian cotton and ensuring the broader public and key stakeholders are accurately informed about our industry, with the aim of earning back their trust and support.

I was proud to attend key events that were held as part of that strategy, including our inaugural Cotton Open House in Sydney, briefings with key stakeholders, as well as a number of Cotton Community Catchups.

We were proud to launch Cotton Australia's new website in early 2020, which is an important tool for us in sharing our industry's story and informing around our practices. The new website's improved navigation and design has been a hit with visitors since the site went live.

Our industry's *myBMP* program continued to ensure we operated at the highest levels over the past year. I was thrilled to see a 10% increase in grower involvement in the program over the year, which is testament to the strength of the initiative, the desire of our growers to be the best they can be, and the support of our Regional Managers on the ground.

The 2019 Cotton Collective was another highlight of the year, when growers and industry personnel gathered in Griffith for two days of forums and discussions on how our industry can continue to grow and adapt, particularly in the face of challenges like climate change and complex water politics.

In a year where drought and public pressure shoved our industry's back against the wall, I would like to make special mention of our growers and their families and thank them for their resilience and determination in the face of huge challenges. Without you, we would not have a cotton industry, and without your support and feedback, Cotton Australia would not have been able to achieve all it has this year. Special thanks too to those growers who took the time to attend Cotton Australia's events, appeared in media and social coverage, and provided their valuable feedback at our general meetings. Your voices play a valuable role in guiding our industry's decisions and research and development direction, and it is vitally important the voices of our growers continue to be heard.

I am proud to present to you this Annual Report, which showcases Cotton Australia's key achievements over the past year. Our team has done a stellar job advocating for our industry, and I thank them for their work and dedication.

I wish you all the best for the coming season, and I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure Australia's cotton industry remains valued, viable and advanced, now and into the future.

Adam Kay
Chief Executive Officer, Cotton Australia

ABOUT COTTON AUSTRALIA

Cotton Australia is the peak body for Australia's cotton growers, representing up to 1,500 cotton farming families in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, and a developing industry in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. The organisation strives to foster a world-class agricultural industry that's sustainable, valued for its economic and social contributions, and produces very high-quality cotton in demand around the world.

Cotton Australia exists for its growers. Its resources, human and financial, are directed to initiatives and programs that benefit cotton producers directly and indirectly.

For well over 40 years, Cotton Australia has grown alongside an industry that demands the highest standards, and during that time, has delivered a series of sustained wins for its growers.

Cotton Australia was established in 1972 (as the Australian Cotton Foundation) and in 2009 merged with the Australian Cotton Growers Research Association (also established in 1972). Led by a Board of up to 10 mostly cotton growers, the organisation is funded by a voluntary levy paid by growers on each bale of cotton produced.

Cotton Australia provides a united voice for cotton growers across research and development, stewardship, natural resource management, biosecurity, and cotton production issues such as water. This is achieved through policy and advocacy, education, communication and grower services.

Cotton Australia has offices in Sydney, Narrabri, Toowoomba and Brisbane, and field staff based in most cotton production regions. The activities of the Board and Staff are directed by an Annual Operating Plan, underpinned by the organisation's 2018-2023 Strategic Plan that sets out priorities and core areas of business.

Cotton Australia is a member of, and works alongside key partners to align messages and coordinate efforts. Affiliate organisations we work with include the National Farmers' Federation, National Irrigators' Council, Queensland Farmers' Federation, NSW Irrigators' Council, cotton grower associations, Cotton Seed Distributors, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation, CottonInfo and a number of valley-based organisations that all contribute to supporting our industry.

THANK YOU TO OUR LEVY PAYERS

Cotton Australia's success and effectiveness is only possible with the support of our levy payers.

To those growers that contributed the full Cotton Australia levy for the 2018-19 year, we thank you for your continued support, particularly during what has been a challenging year with drought.







REBUILDING TRUST STRATEGY

Working to improve transparency, support for, and trust in Australian cotton.

- Cotton Open House event places industry under the microscope.
- New communications platforms developed to share industry's story.
- Proactive media stories improve perceptions of Australian cotton.

In January 2019, the Australian cotton industry was thrust into the national spotlight when it was unfairly blamed for a large fish death at Menindee in far-west New South Wales.

The fish death was a sad and horrible sight brought on by severe drought, and was an incident that distressed our industry, as it did all Australians.

Despite the worst drought in a century seeing little to no water in the Barwon-Darling river system and large tracts of New South Wales and Queensland crippled by drought, media coverage and public debate on social media alleged the cotton industry was to blame for the fish deaths due to irrigators' water take and our crop's reliance on water to grow. These allegations were made despite most growers not receiving any significant water allocation in years.

This unfortunate incident had significant ramifications on our industry's public standing and the levels of trust the community had around Australian cotton was reduced.

Market research funded by Cotton Australia and the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) found those who were familiar with the cotton industry had high levels of trust in Australian cotton; while the more unfamiliar people were with Australian cotton, the less trust they had in the industry.

As an industry, we acknowledged and recognised we needed to be better at sharing our story and allaying the concerns of the community through clear explanation of how we operate and conveying our positions on important issues of concern.

As such, Cotton Australia formulated a strategy for the whole industry to support and work towards, to rebuild public trust in Australian cotton.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY

- Improve the reputation and social licence of Australian cotton;
- Restore trust in Australian cotton;
- Broaden support for Australian cotton.

The initiatives in the strategy are broad ranging, and over this past year, Cotton Australia, spearheaded by our communications team and with the involvement of growers, achieved many successes while implementing the strategy. Below are some of the key achievements and activities we have undertaken to help rebuild trust in our industry.

COTTON OPEN HOUSE

In March 2020, Cotton Australia staged its first Cotton Open House stakeholder engagement event in Sydney. The event brought together a diverse range of stakeholders – supporters and opponents of the industry – for a day of conversational information sessions about Australian cotton.

Growers and researchers joined Cotton Australia staff in hosting presentations, panels and Q&A sessions, as the industry placed itself under the public's microscope and opened itself up to questioning about what we do and why we do it.

Cotton Australia also hosted journalists at the event, including the ABC's NSW Country Hour program for an outside broadcast, which ensured the cotton industry's story was shared with a broad audience.

ENHANCED DIGITAL STORYTELLING

In January 2020, Cotton Australia launched its new website. The website was designed with enhanced and mobile-optimised navigation to allow information about the industry to be found more easily, and with improved storytelling capability as a key objective. This enabled Cotton Australia to share the industry's story – including news, information and features on growers and research – in new and engaging ways. All content on the website was comprehensively updated to ensure the community received the latest information about the industry.

From launch day in January to March 31st 2020, the new website had attracted about 100,000 pageviews.

GROWING ADVOCATES – SOCIAL MEDIA WORKSHOPS

Throughout the early months of 2019, Cotton Australia ran social media workshops for growers in most cotton growing valleys of New South Wales and Queensland. The objective of the workshops was to support growers in becoming advocates for the industry on social media.

The workshops provided growers with insight around each social media platform's purpose and function, and shared advice around how they could engage with the digital conversation about their industry.

VIRTUAL REALITY

Educating about our industry was a core component of the Rebuilding Trust Strategy, and as such, Cotton Australia invested in a new virtual reality resource to help share our industry's story in an engaging way.

Virtual reality has become a central engagement tool for many industries and companies, with the platform's interactivity and versatility providing an exciting experience for the audience.

The objective of our investment in virtual reality was to:

- Showcase the work and positive impact of Australian cotton farmers;
- Educate, inform and improve understanding of the Australian cotton industry;
- Create a connection for the general public with Australian cotton growers.

The video featured Emerald-based grower, and Cotton Australia's deputy chair, Nigel Burnett and his family. Nigel shared his story as a grower in the industry and provided information about the

industry's water use, land management and connection with community.

The result was the production of an engaging 360-degree virtual reality video; and, at the time of writing, Cotton Australia looked forward to launching the resource after the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions had been eased.



Nigel Burnett during filming of the virtual reality video.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

During 2019, Cotton Australia and the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) commissioned Roy Morgan Research to undertake a significant market research study into the perceptions of and sentiment towards the Australian cotton industry. The research involved 2,147 phone surveys, 36 stakeholder interviews, and 12 focus groups in urban and rural locations. This research helped direct the communications and stakeholder engagement activities listed in the Rebuilding Trust Strategy.

Over the past year, Cotton Australia engaged with a wider audience to share our story with, and instigated and participated in meaningful, two-way conversations about current challenges and opportunities. This engagement with influencers, scientists, non-government organisations, environmental and social groups, educators, politicians and local government helped build a broader network of informed supporters of the Australian cotton industry.

Cotton Australia's Communications team has worked hard to ensure journalists and media outlets were properly briefed on the cotton industry and were made aware of its achievements and challenges, in an effort to positively inform public opinion and debate. This proactive and reactive media engagement from Cotton Australia achieved more fair and balanced coverage of cotton issues when compared with the previous year, and this initiative helped to recruit supporters of the industry, particularly in urban areas.

In mid-2019, Cotton Australia was involved with the inaugural Bush Summit event, held in Dubbo, New South Wales. This event was an opportunity to unite rural industries and ensure the cotton industry's voice was heard, particularly around hotly debated topics like water management. The event was attended by the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, politicians, industry, business, non-government organisations, the media and community groups.

The Rebuilding Trust Strategy was designed with the whole industry in mind. It was important that growers and industry members were aware of the work being undertaken and given the opportunity to be involved in the strategy's implementation. This information was provided through regular engagement

and briefings with growers. Over the past year, a series of Cotton Community Catch Up events were launched in regional communities to ensure the industry was in a position to advocate for itself and unite in times of crisis. The events, held in Moree and Gunnedah, New South Wales, brought growers, industry representatives and community groups together so areas of community and individual concern could be better understood, and so an update on the strategy's implementation could be provided. Community Catch Up events were planned for other growing regions in early 2020, but had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other industry organisations, including CRDC, CottonInfo, Cotton Seed Distributors, Australian Cotton Shippers Association and the Association of Australian Cotton Scientists, were also armed with relevant, current, engaging and useful resources to support the strategy. We would like to thank all of the organisations and individuals that have supported our strategy to build trust, understanding and appreciation of Australian cotton.



The Cotton Open House brought a variety of stakeholders together.

WATER

A challenging year where intense water debate continued amid severe drought.

- Drought and minimal water allocations shrink cotton crop's size.
- Defence of cotton industry from political and media attacks continues.
- Early rain provides hope to drought-ravaged irrigators, but relief limited to just some areas.

Advocacy around the water policy portfolio remained one of the most important areas of focus for Cotton Australia over the past year.

With drought and media scrutiny of issues around our industry and the viability of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan continuing, our efforts to share information about cotton's water use and to defend ourselves from ill-informed attacks continued.

The intense drought and lack of water meant our industry's crop size shrunk dramatically this year to be one of the smallest in

almost 40 years. This brought significant challenges for our growers, with many facing the reality of having low or no income.

Rainfall in some cotton regions in early 2020 provided hope that the drought may have been finally beginning to break, but at the time of writing, most cotton growing regions remained firmly in the grips of drought.

Detailed below are some of the key developments from the past year around water policy, and a summary of Cotton Australia's achievements on behalf of our growers.

WATER POLITICS

Over the past year, water politics in Australia saw many reports and inquiries announced and completed, yet very little tangible action in the space.

For Cotton Australia, the early part of the past year was dominated by the fallout from the Menindee fish deaths, where hundreds of thousands of fish sadly died due to a lack of flow in the Darling River due to drought, and the deoxygenation of the stagnant water that was in the system around Menindee. Much of the public commentary surrounding the issue unfairly and incorrectly blamed the Australian cotton industry, and accused our growers of over-extraction, despite most growers not having received a water allocation in years.

Cotton Australia strongly defended the industry from the attacks and inaccurate public commentary, and we received support from affiliate organisations such as the National Farmers' Federation, the Queensland Farmers' Federation, NSW Irrigators Council, the National Irrigators' Council, and valley-based irrigator groups. A central tenet of our defence was that northern Murray-Darling Basin irrigators had not had access to new water since late 2017, and therefore had not contributed to the lack of water in the river system. This position was verified by the official federal government Vertessy Report into the incident.

The Australian cotton industry came under further attack when federal Senator Rex Patrick, whose home state of South Australia does not grow cotton, moved a Bill to ban cotton exports, which then became the basis of a Senate Inquiry. Cotton Australia advocated that the Bill was a politically motivated stunt by a Senator whose constituents are not cotton growers, therefore mitigating the risk of him feeling pain at the ballot box.

The subsequent Senate Inquiry petered out in the wake of the

2019 Federal Election; but Cotton Australia was heartened by the overwhelming support the industry received through the 150 submissions to the Inquiry that were lodged by industry and community supporters. These submissions outlined to the parliament the social and economic value of Australia's cotton industry.

While the Ban Cotton Export Bill was no longer on the agenda in the year after the federal election, Senator Patrick was instrumental in establishing an Inquiry in the new parliament into the management of the Murray-Darling Basin.

In other political developments over the past year, new water ministers were sworn-in in both the New South Wales and federal governments. Melinda Pavey was made the Minister for Water, Property and Housing in NSW, and Keith Pitt was sworn-in as the federal Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia. Cotton Australia looks forward to continuing our engagement with both ministers over the next year.



MEDIA COVERAGE AND PUBLIC DEBATE

Water issues and criticism of cotton continued to regularly feature in media coverage over the past year.

Cotton Australia's Communications team worked to proactively engage with journalists on these issues and shared with them our industry's story and facts about our operations and water take. A key focus of our team's work was also in the digital space, where we actively engaged in the online conversation about cotton and water use. Cotton Australia also produced material to assist in the sharing of our industry's story with a broad audience, including a new website, social media tiles, animations, and online brochures.

Over this past year, Cotton Australia also took a lead role in calling out and correcting inaccurate and unbalanced media reporting. Our team worked with the National Farmers' Federation to engage directly with a number of media organisations, including the ABC, to inform them on our industry's perspective on water issues, and to seek improved quality in their reporting – through including key facts that had been omitted from coverage and in requesting balance and impartiality. Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay, along with the National Farmers' Federation's President and CEO met with the ABC's Managing Director, David Anderson, and senior staff to deliver a formal complaint about the broadcaster's coverage of irrigation, and agriculture in general. We requested this in order to better inform the audience about irrigation and water issues, and to empower the community to determine their own position based on the balance of facts. These meetings culminated with the Director of ABC News, Gaven Morris, presenting at Cotton Australia's General Meeting in November.

QUEENSLAND DEVELOPMENTS

At the start of July 2019, Fairbairn Irrigation, formerly the Sunwater Emerald scheme, formally came into existence. Cotton Australia congratulated the irrigators of Emerald for taking on the responsibility for the scheme, joining those irrigators from Theodore and St George who had similarly done so.

In the Dawson Valley, irrigators started to reap the rewards of being able to access the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Water set aside for Nathan Dam. Temporary access to this water had long been a policy aim of Cotton Australia, and one which we had strongly advocated on. Cotton Australia congratulated the Queensland Government for acting swiftly to allow the access to and distribution of this water.

In 2019-20, the Queensland Government commenced the process of updating its policy for the measurement of Rural Water Use. Cotton Australia strongly endorsed this process in-principle, being very supportive of a transparent, effective and cost-effective measurement framework.

In the past year, the Queensland Government rolled out its four-year water pricing proposal, a process managed by the Queensland Competition Authority. After strong advocacy from Cotton Australia and its partners in the Queensland Farmers' Federation, the government decided to not include Dam Safety Upgrade costs in water prices - appropriate recognition that these should be viewed as community costs, not irrigator costs.

Cotton Australia has also been managing a \$100,000 per year Farm Water Futures grant program on behalf of the Queensland Government, which has included making grants of up to \$10,000 available to individual irrigators to invest in water use efficiency projects.

NEW SOUTH WALES DEVELOPMENTS

Over this past year, Cotton Australia continued to work with partner organisations to ensure the New South Wales Metering Framework was both effective and cost-effective. The roll-out in NSW had been delayed due to the ongoing drought conditions, meaning most areas had no water to use to certify meters. The delay in no way meant a backing away from the need for a transparent, effective and cost-effective water measurement network, but it did provide the government more time to work out the technical details of the framework.

In July 2019, the NSW Government's Natural Resource Commission released its draft report into the Review of the Barwon-Darling Water Sharing Plan. From Cotton Australia's perspective, the report was very biased and included an assertion that the way the Murray-Darling Basin Plan operated had induced hydrological drought in the system three years earlier than what would have otherwise occurred. Cotton Australia advocated that this point was senseless, as three-years before the report was released, the river enjoyed significant flows from rains in 2016. The content of the report represented to Cotton Australia a worrying direction from the Natural Resource Commission, which will eventually review all of NSW's Water Sharing Plans.

In early 2020, rainfall provided the first significant river flows for many areas of north-west NSW and south-west Queensland. The flows resulted in good irrigator access on the Lower Balonne and Moonie Rivers. An extended embargo in NSW severely limited access to water until it was lifted in early-to-mid-March, at which time flows had reduced in the tributary streams, but significant access was available to irrigators on the Barwon-Darling. The embargo was not unexpected, and it was accepted that a 'first-flush' was required after the prolonged drought; however, Cotton Australia along with all irrigator groups, advocated our disappointment around how the flow was managed and the delays in lifting access, even when downstream targets were assured.

OUR THANKS

Cotton Australia worked closely with a range of other irrigation groups to affect positive change this past year. This year we were active members of the National Irrigators' Council, the National Farmers' Federation's Water Taskforce, Queensland Farmers' Federation, and NSW Irrigators' Council, and we also worked closely with a large number of valley-based irrigation groups across our growing regions.

We thank all of the above groups, along with the individuals, local governments and community groups that recognise the importance of irrigated agriculture, and who advocate on behalf of their industry and communities.



DROUGHT

One of the worst Australian droughts in a century continued to ravage cotton producing regions.

- Australia's cotton crop size shrinks to a record low.
- Cotton Australia works to support growers through challenging times.
- Widespread rainfall provides a glimmer of hope for an end to the drought.

Throughout the past year, drought has continued to grip much of eastern Australia. New South Wales was declared 100% in drought, while all key cotton growing areas in Queensland were also drought-declared.

It was since the second half of 2017 that the drought had tightened its grip, particularly in the largest cotton growing regions.

Over this past year, the Australian cotton industry's crop size shrank dramatically, which brought with it many challenges for our growers to navigate.

In the 2019-2020 year, the only valleys to receive a general security/medium priority water allocation were Murrumbidgee and St George, which both received 6% allocations, and the Dawson Valley which was granted a 100% allocation.

At the time of writing, the 2019-2020 cotton crop was expected to yield less than 600,000 bales – a record low. At the start of the season, the production forecast had been higher, but the drought continued to deepen, meaning the crop estimate continued to fall throughout the year.

However, in early 2020, a glimmer of hope appeared. Significant rain events in February and March provided the first positive signs of a move towards improved conditions and a more positive outlook.

But, with the general exception of the Barwon-Darling and Lower Balonne systems, actual water reserves remained extremely low.

The positive news was that most catchments in New South Wales were well primed as a result of the rainfall, and a significant rainfall event later in 2020 should generate good inflows into the system.

Cotton Australia worked to support our growers over the past year, as we collectively navigated the strains of drought.

A key part of our support was through partnerships with the National Farmers' Federation and the Queensland Farmers' Federation to ensure growers could access up-to-date information around targeted drought assistance.

Some of the assistance measures that we supported and are worth noting included a rebate on fixed electricity charges provided by the Queensland Government, and a rebate of up to \$4,000 per irrigation entitlement licence holder offered by the New South Wales Government.

This year also saw the federal government's Regional Investment Corporation launch its low interest drought loans, and Cotton Australia was aware of growers who accessed this support.

WHERE TO FROM HERE

While at the time of writing it was far too soon to herald the end of the drought, there were some promising signs of it relaxing its grip, particularly in New South Wales.

Cotton Australia will continue to work with state and federal governments, often in tandem with the National Farmers' Federation and the Queensland Farmers' Federation, to develop a viable, long-term alternative to transactional drought assistance, and move the focus towards drought preparedness. In particular, Cotton Australia will continue working with the Queensland Government to implement the recommendations of the Burke/Wade Review into Drought Assistance.



RESEARCH DIRECTION AND STEWARDSHIP

Ensuring our industry is at the forefront of research and biosecurity protection measures, for the benefit of the environment and our industry.

- Work to guide the industry's research direction continues.
- Combatting pest incursions a key focus this year.
- Northern Australia biosecurity management a priority for Cotton Australia.

Australia's cotton industry was fortunate this year to continue to be brimming with talented and hard-working researchers whose studies ensured our sector continued to be world-leading.

Throughout 2019-20, Cotton Australia worked to ensure our growers' voices were heard in the guiding of research priorities for our industry. This important work saw the views and opinions of our farmers listened to about what research they would benefit from.

Biosecurity remained a core focus for our team this past year, particularly in the face of pest incursions and when considering and managing biosecurity risks for northern Australia – a region where optimism about our industry's growth continued to build.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Cotton Australia played a key role on behalf of our growers this past year in shaping our industry's research priorities and direction (in line with Cotton Australia's Representative Organisation status under the PIRD Act 1989).

Our work in this space included:

- Convening member representatives to engage with the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) on the submitted research applications, and providing feedback on research priorities for project funding.
- Coordinating the annual Grower Research Priorities Survey to ensure all members of the cotton industry had an opportunity to provide feedback on research priorities to CRDC. We continued to work with CRDC on refining this process and ensuring new growing regions, including northern Australia, could contribute their perspectives.
- Addressing the concerns raised in last year's Grower Research Priorities Survey around disease, social licence and responding to climate change. On disease, we worked to obtain new permits for the use of fungicides in-crop, so that growers could have access to a range of actives. Around social licence, we ensured Cotton Australia's Rebuilding Trust Strategy was being comprehensively implemented. On climate change, Cotton Australia developed an industry policy on this issue and worked with CRDC to deepen research on this important topic.

WHERE TO FROM HERE

Over the coming year, Cotton Australia will continue to work to ensure that grower research priorities are documented for the CRDC.

The latest Grower Research Priorities Survey results will also be released later in 2020, and Cotton Australia will work to ensure the CRDC is aware of research issues and any concerns of growers.

Another focus will be working with the CRDC to ensure research is conducted that supports the industry's Sustainability Targets, which are due to be finalised later in 2020.



Fall armyworm was detected for the first time in Australia this year.

BIOSECURITY

Ensuring protection from the potentially disastrous impacts of biosecurity incidents is a core necessity for our growers. This will ensure their local environment, farms and communities remain strong.

Throughout the past year, Cotton Australia worked to ensure our industry was informed around and protected from biosecurity threats.

- Cotton Australia was the industry representative on the Consultative Committee for Emergency Plant Pests and National Management Group. As part of that role, we were involved in the management of biosecurity incursions this past year, including Brown Marmorated Stink Bug and Fall armyworm.
- We obtained a number of emergency permits on behalf of our industry for the control of Fall armyworm in both cotton and refuge crops.
- Cotton Australia joined the Tropical Plant Industries Biosecurity Surveillance Strategy Steering Committee this year, which worked towards strengthening biosecurity in northern Australia, which is a key priority for our industry as optimism grows for an expansion of the cotton industry into the northern parts of the country.
- Cotton Australia and Plant Health Australia endorsed Owner Reimbursement Costs (ORC) for the cotton industry. ORCs are important to ensure that in the event of a biosecurity incursion, the costs of eradication to owners, loss of income, or the value of destroyed crops are covered.
- We convened the Biosecurity Reference Group, which was the forum for discussing and addressing key biosecurity priorities for the industry. An annual review of cotton Emergency Plant Pests was conducted and contingency plans were developed. A review of the biosecurity protocols for the movement of machinery and seed cotton from regions of northern Australia to prevent the spread of pink bollworm was also undertaken.
- Cotton Australia worked this year to further develop its biosecurity policy, and were involved in the development of the National Farmers' Federation's biosecurity policy.

WHERE TO FROM HERE

Over the next year, Cotton Australia will continue to monitor the spread of Fall armyworm and the potential impact that pest could have on the cotton industry.

Cotton Australia will be involved in investigating how the cotton industry's current resistance management plans may be able to incorporate Fall armyworm. Developing and implementing cross-industry resistance management plans for Fall armyworm will be important for managing the pest in the future.

Biosecurity surveillance in northern Australia will become a greater priority moving forward over the year.

TIMS COMMITTEE

Annual review of the Bollgard 3 Resistance Management Plan (RMP)

- This year saw the adoption of an 'attract and kill' strategy in southern valleys of New South Wales as an alternative to pupae destruction.
- The northern RMP expanded to have an eight-week planting window to give growers greater flexibility in this region.
- A standard industry process was developed for the approval of planting windows in Northern Australia.

Other work

- The TIMS Committee continued to advocate to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) and Bayer for stringent risk mitigation strategies to be applied to XtendFlex technology, to reduce the likelihood of off-target impacts from applications of Dicamba.

WHERE TO FROM HERE

Cotton Australia will continue to advocate on issues to do with XtendFlex technology. At the time of writing, the United States EPA has banned the use of Dicamba on GM cotton and soybeans due to spray drift concerns.

Work on resistance management for Bt, insecticides and herbicides will continue to be a priority over the coming year.

Cotton Australia will continue to manage the pyriproxyfen window to reduce the risk of Silverleaf whitefly developing resistance to the product.



SPRAY DRIFT

Reducing the impacts of off-target spray damage on our cotton crops and others.

- Significant uptake of a new crop mapping platform.
- Spray drift incidents reported after rain in early 2020.
- An extensive spray awareness campaign undertaken.

Spray drift damage on crops is a continued concern for our growers and industry, which is why Cotton Australia continued to amp-up our efforts to tackle this issue during 2019/2020.

One of the biggest steps forward we made in tackling this issue was activating a new online tool for all growers to use by mapping their crops over a satellite image. The program, SataCrop, was successfully trialled in Central Queensland last season, and this year was available to all growers.

The program allowed farmers to map all crops, not just cotton, and enabled growers to see what crops were around their farms when planning their spray activity.

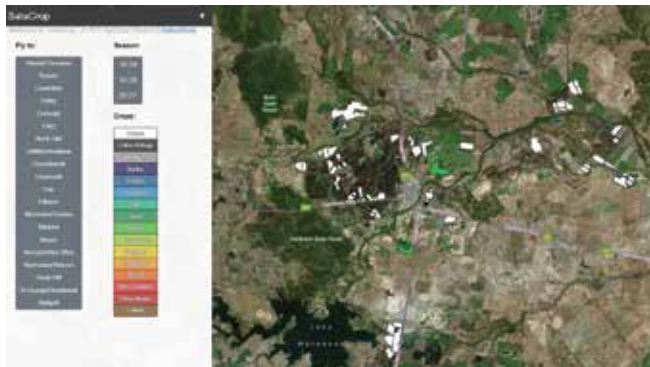
The total area of cotton mapped on SataCrop during the 2019/2020 season was 63%, and pleasingly, the Gwydir Valley and Border Rivers districts had 100% of their farming areas mapped.

The range of crops mapped included cotton, barley, chickpeas, citrus, corn, cotton refuge, grapes, macadamia, sorghum, soybeans and wheat.

There were low incidences of spray drift prior to Christmas in the 2019/2020 cotton season; however, widespread rain in early 2020 saw an increase in reports of incidents.

It is estimated that 742 hectares, or 1.25%, of the Australian crop was damaged by spray drift in the 2019/2020 cotton season.

There were no reports of bee hives being affected by spray drift in cotton growing regions this season.



SataCrop allowed growers to map different crops over a satellite image.

Cotton Australia implemented measures throughout the season to play our role in mitigating spray drift damage. For example, we worked with the New South Wales Environment Protection Authority and Biosecurity Queensland to host pre-season meetings outlining education and awareness campaigns and establishing joint media releases.

Cotton Australia deployed a series of radio advertisements in cotton growing valleys throughout the season raising awareness of spray best practice, inversions, and the general risk of spray drift.

We were also encouraged to see the 'SOS Macquarie model', where awareness around spray drift also occurred at a local level, rolled out across New South Wales cotton growing regions and in St George in Queensland.

It was also exciting for our industry to implement a new initiative launched this season - a defoliation awareness campaign. The campaign was a joint initiative between Cotton Seed Distributors and CottonInfo and involved the sharing of information around spray best practice at defoliation, to raise awareness regarding this issue.

WHERE TO FROM HERE

Over the coming year, Cotton Australia will continue to meet with regulators offering pre-season updates and encouraging better communication and awareness on spray drift across the industry.

We will continue to drive the cotton industry's adoption of SataCrop, and encourage all of agriculture to use the platform for the betterment of all.

The holding of spray application workshops will be another priority going forward, as will advocating for continued funding into research around spray drift prevention. Research into inversion risk will soon be implemented on the ground, with CRDC and GRDC developing a spray drift hazard and alert system for use in New South Wales and Queensland. This system aims to improve on-farm decision making by accurately identifying and forecasting hazardous spray conditions.



WORKFORCE

Ensuring our industry was highly skilled and enjoyed boosted capacity was a core focus for Cotton Australia.

- Advocacy undertaken at state and national levels around cotton's workforce needs.
- Submissions made to parliament denouncing the Ban Cotton Exports Bill.
- COVID-19 pandemic forces adaptation in cotton's workforce.

Advocating and providing opportunities for our cotton workforce to expand its skills and develop strong businesses was a key priority for Cotton Australia over this past year.

Upskilling our workforce is beneficial not just for individuals and their farms, but also for our entire industry. By ensuring our growers and their staff were at the cutting edge of knowledge and best practice, we ensured our industry remained well positioned to adapt and grow into the future.

The key projects Cotton Australia focussed on in the workforce space this year were around providing leadership and training opportunities for growers (for a detailed insight into these programs, please read the AgSkilled and Leadership Programs sections of this report). Similarly, we continued to advocate for our industry on workforce issues in forums such as the National Farmers' Federation's workforce committee.

Another key focus for our Policy team around workforce was responding to the politically motivated Ban Cotton Exports Bill that was put forward by Senator Rex Patrick as a stunt. Our team encouraged submissions from within our industry that demonstrated the significant role cotton plays in supporting regional workforces, and we prepared our own response to the Bill and emphasised the impact such a ban would have on our industry's workforce.

During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, Cotton Australia focussed on ensuring the workforce needs of our growers were met as best they could be during such an unprecedented time. Our team also provided growers with the most up-to-date government information about health and safety precautions during the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic reduced the availability of seasonal workers for the short-term in 2020, and Cotton Australia will continue to monitor this situation and advocate for effective solutions. At the time of writing, the short, medium and long-term impacts of the disease were unknown; however, Cotton Australia is committed to ensuring this important area of our work remained a priority throughout the remainder of 2020.

WHERE TO FROM HERE

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the postponement of key industry programs and events until 2021, including: the Future Cotton Leaders Program, the Cotton Industry Leadership Dinner, and the Irrigation20 Leadership Program. We look forward to their return in 2021.

Cotton Australia will advocate a proposal to the Queensland Government to upskill and train the current and emerging Queensland agricultural workforce. The proposal will be for a program akin to the successful AgSkilled strategy in New South Wales to be developed for Queensland growers.

Cotton Australia will also advocate to the Queensland Government around micro-credentialing, with a proposal put forward for \$250,000 from the government to run micro-credentialing workshops. Cotton Australia proposed to run the workshops in cotton producing regions of Queensland for growers and their employees.

In New South Wales, Cotton Australia had submitted a proposal to the NSW Government for an extension of the AgSkilled program in the state. At the time of writing, Cotton Australia was awaiting a response from the Minister.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Advocacy around improved connectivity continued as progress on issues was made in some valleys.

- Telecommunications issues continue to be a concern for growers.
- New towers proposed for cotton regions.
- Better connectivity achieved in St George and Mungindi.

Throughout 2019-2020, Cotton Australia advocated for growers around telecommunications issues.

Connectivity in the bush remained a major concern for many in our industry this year. Slow internet speeds, poor mobile coverage, unreliable service and financial expensiveness remained inhibiting factors for cotton businesses to fully thrive in a digitally connected world.

Cotton Australia's advocacy on telecommunications issues has contributed to tangible results being achieved for growers, some of which are detailed below.

MOBILE BLACKSPOT PROGRAM PROVIDING SOLUTIONS

The Federal Government continued its Mobile Blackspot program this year, which Cotton Australia supported and advocated for.

The Blackspot Program's Round 5 saw a series of recommendations announced that were taken from growers and were used to inform the government.

Among the recommendations were:

- Four towers proposed for cotton regions, including:
 - Spring Plains (completion date: due in third quarter of 2020);
 - The Lake – south-west of Walgett and mid-way between Carinda and Come By Chance (completion date: due in third quarter of 2020).
- Two towers proposed by JustISP (Field Solutions Group) for the Macquarie Valley in New South Wales. It is the first time a telco outside the 'Big Four' telcos had been involved in the Blackspot Program.



Photo: NBN Co.

JUSTISP DEVELOPMENTS WELCOMED

Cotton Australia also worked with JustISP (Field Solutions Group) in advocating for the continued filling of communications gaps in the cotton growing regions of northern New South Wales and southern Queensland.

Some of the key developments in this space over the year included:

- Following FSG's successful funding application under the Queensland Government's Building Our Regions strategy (which Cotton Australia supported), the towers for St George and Goondiwindi were ordered, with a commission date set for October 2020. Cotton Australia supported this development.
- Following the installation of additional relay dishes on GrainCorp silos and other local infrastructure, the communities of St George, Dirranbandi, Mungindi, Talwood, Goondiwindi and Moree will be provided with enhanced communications services this year. Cotton Australia also applauded this progress and congratulated Field Solutions Group for their work enhancing connectivity to these cotton growing towns.

WHERE TO FROM HERE

Cotton Australia will continue to push for improvements in connectivity for cotton farm businesses, to enable precision agriculture and improved social, safety, and business outcomes.

We will also provide our industry's views on how new initiatives are designed and implemented, so they benefit cotton businesses.

Cotton Australia will this coming year work to ensure consumer reforms around telecommunications led by the federal government are completed.

Our work with telecommunications providers, to ensure the voices of cotton growers are heard, will continue. As part of that work, we will continue our positive relationship with Telstra and ensure we maintain the capacity to raise significant issues with senior executives of the telco.

Cotton Australia will continue to be an active member of the National Farmers' Federation's telecommunications committee.

There will also be Round 5A of the Mobile Blackspot Program, of which we will be making a submission.

ENERGY, MINING AND CSG

Advocating for our growers on natural resources issues and securing affordable utilities.

- Progress continues on NSW mining and CSG projects.
- Advocacy on electricity tariffs a key focus.
- Energy Savers Plus Program supporting growers.



MINING AND COAL SEAM GAS

Over the past year, there were a number of events in the mining and coal seam gas policy areas. Our team monitored these closely and worked with affected growers to formulate comprehensive responses and advocate effectively.

Below are some of the key updates and projects we advocated on.

New South Wales

Shenhua began its exploratory drilling at Breeza in January 2020, presumably to help furnish the missing water and biodiversity management plans required by the Australian Government. The mining company will not be granted an extraction licence to commence mining until these plans, plus an additional set required under NSW law relating to construction and operation of the mine, had been approved by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

Regarding the Narrabri Gas Project (Santos) and Whitehaven Coal Vickery Extension Project, there were some administrative changes in late 2019 and early 2020. The NSW Planning Minister requested the Independent Planning Commission reconvene for a second public hearing for both projects. Santos had indicated it may know an outcome by August 2020, whereas Whitehaven signalled a scaling back of its Australian operations due to the global economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cotton Australia will continue to provide support to affected growers over the coming year, who, with other impacted community members, have formed the Boggabri Farming and Community Group.

Queensland

Cotton Australia this year continued its liaison with Queensland's Gasfields Commission and continued to monitor coal seam gas activities in the state. Cotton Australia also became a member of the Gasfields Commission's stakeholder advisory group this year, along with our affiliate body the Queensland Farmers' Federation.

The Gasfields Commission was reorganised following an audit by Queensland's Auditor General of CSG regulation in the state. The audit's criticisms focussed on a lack of transparency, ineffective compliance management and data, and failures of legislative function.

Another matter in Queensland regarding CSG was to do with Arrow Energy, who, in early 2020, announced it would commence phase one of its 27-year Surat Basin project. The work was scheduled to start in the precinct north-west of Miles, and progressively work south-east towards Dalby and Cecil Plains.

Cotton Australia will continue to monitor this project and work with nearby growers to ensure their views and concerns are heard.





ELECTRICITY

During 2019-20, Cotton Australia ramped-up its efforts with Queensland energy companies and regulators to negotiate an improved suite of tariffs and prices for cotton growers and cotton ginners.

This has long been a priority for Cotton Australia, and the process took on extra importance this year, as the network companies were going through their five-year revenue review with the Australian Energy Regulator (AER), and also had to submit their revised Tariff Structures for approval.

Efforts by Cotton Australia and other industry advocates from across agriculture and the wider community ensured the original proposals submitted by Energy Queensland were rejected, and they had to be modified for re-submission.

A combination of the resubmission requirement and the impact of COVID-19 delayed the final response from the AER, but, at the time of writing, Cotton Australia was confident that irrigators would soon have access to a suite of more attractive and flexible tariffs.

The general trajectory of lower electricity prices over recent years continued this year, and Cotton Australia expected that irrigators could expect either stable or modestly reduced electricity prices over the coming year.

Over the past year, Cotton Australia worked closely with the three cotton ginning companies that operate within the Ergon supply network. We advocated to Ergon and the government for a recognition of the highly seasonal nature of cotton ginning and the punitive nature of the existing electricity tariffs. While the issue is ongoing, it was recognised by the Queensland Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, Anthony Lynham, who inspected cotton ginning at St George during the year.

Cotton Australia's quarterly participation in Essential Energy's Customer Advisory Group continued throughout 2019-20, and will carry on over the coming year.

ENERGY SAVERS PLUS PROGRAM

Cotton Australia this year supported growers in Queensland participating in the Energy Savers Plus Program Extension (ESPPE).

A total of nine cotton growing businesses from across the state participated in the ESPPE, a program which provided energy audits and funding to help up to 200 Queensland agricultural businesses improve their energy efficiency.

As part of the ESPPE, participants received a free, independent electricity audit to identify ways to better manage their electricity use in areas such as heating, pumping, cooling and lighting. Participants also received funding to implement the recommendations of the audit, including plant and equipment upgrades. Participants could also receive a co-contribution grant of up to 50% towards the cost of implementing audit recommendations, to a maximum of \$20,000.

This program enabled energy efficiency improvements to be made in areas including irrigation, pumping, workshop and household consumption.

At the time of writing, all on-farm audits had been completed, with the exception of two that had their pumping assessments delayed due to the ongoing drought.



Photo: ReAqua

ESSENTIAL GROWER SERVICES

Ensuring the optimal provision of services our growers need and use.



TRANSPORT

Transporting cotton safely and efficiently from farm to gin and beyond is important for our growers and the productivity of our industry generally.

Cotton Australia was proud to continue working in this space over the past year. It was a year that saw a significant development implemented, which Cotton Australia had spent much time advocating for.

In late April 2019, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator's National Class 1 Agricultural Vehicle and Combination Notice commenced. This was the culmination of about two years of intense work by Cotton Australia and other agricultural bodies under the National Farmers' Federation banner to secure better transport options for our growers.

The Notice did not provide one set of consistent rules for all agricultural movements across Australia, but it has simplified the legal movement of oversize and over-mass agricultural vehicles.

The law means that, in general, agricultural producers can now move wider, longer and taller machinery without the need to apply for specific permits, and the signage and escort requirements have been simplified.

Importantly for cotton producers, the Notice provides specific exemptions for self-baling pickers, removing the need for specific permits when being 'walked' on the roads.

The introduction of the Notice effectively signalled the end of negotiations that commenced in 2012, and allowed the introduction of round-bale technology into our transport system. While it was a long road to success, it was a great example of industry and government working together to ensure greater productivity while maintaining road safety.

Due to the small size of the 2019/2020 cotton crop, Cotton Australia did not run regional pre-season transport meetings this past year. We hope the 2020/2021 crop will be much larger, so we can resume this initiative in the year ahead.

GLYPHOSATE

Over the past year, debate around glyphosate's safety continued to bubble in the media.

Cotton Australia continued its advocacy around the safety of glyphosate and the benefits it provided agriculture.

As part of our advocacy this year, we worked with the industry's herbicide technical panel on the Herbicide Resistance Management Strategy, and with Bayer to manage resistance to glyphosate.

Moving forward, Cotton Australia will continue to advocate for the safe use of glyphosate, while at the same time working with industry and researchers to investigate future alternative weed control options.





COMMUNICATIONS

Sharing our industry's news and views with growers and the public.

- Broad range of stakeholders engaged with on important issues.
- Proactive media stories boost positive perception of industry.
- Digital communications platforms enhanced.

Over the past year, Cotton Australia's Communications team continued its extensive work proactively sharing our industry's story with the community and providing growers and the industry with engaging and up-to-date information.

A core focus of Cotton Australia's communications work this past year was implementing our industry's Rebuilding Trust Strategy (for more detail, please visit the section of this report dedicated to that initiative). The team also enacted a comprehensive communications plan that involved sharing our industry's story through proactive media engagement, targeted digital content,

social media engagement, and working with a diverse range of stakeholders. Some of the highlights and achievements from the past year are detailed below.

We would like to thank all the growers and industry personnel who have been involved in our communications activities over the past year, including through featuring in media stories, presenting at our public-facing events, or through content on our own website and social media channels. Your contribution has been invaluable in sharing our industry's story.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Over the past year Cotton Australia made a significant effort to engage with a broad audience to ensure the industry remained valued, viable and advanced, as outlined in Cotton Australia's 2018 – 2023 Strategic Plan.

Growers received regular updates on important industry news and issues through Cotton Matters, e-bursts and a refreshed document delivering information on the organisation's current and future activities. Cotton Australia staff attended regional events, meetings and training in each of the cotton growing regions over the year.

Cotton Australia continued to maintain a constructive relationship with representatives from all sides of politics over this year, and we continued to engage with state and federal politicians to ensure our industry remained valued and strong now and into the future. Cotton Australia used the 2019 Federal Election as an opportunity to advocate for our industry around our policy priorities.

Over the past year, Cotton Australia's Communications team held valuable meetings with a wide range of stakeholders to share our story and broaden support for the industry. This included engagement with non-government organisations, local governments, business, media, industry and community group representatives, environmental organisations, educators, Indigenous representatives and influencers.

On behalf of the Australian cotton industry, Cotton Australia was proud to donate premium Australian cotton towels to wildlife rescue organisation WIRES, to support their work in bushfire-affected areas. The towels were an invaluable resource for caring for the injured wildlife and greatly appreciated by the volunteers.



TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Cotton Australia's Communications team facilitated media opportunities over the past year through media releases, media statements and exclusive stories in metropolitan and regional outlets. We also built positive working relationships with key journalists, which resulted in more balanced coverage and a growing positive sentiment towards the industry.

While much of the media attention over the past year was focused on drought, access to water, and sustainable crop production during dry times, we still achieved a significant share of media voice. Positive media stories covered, among other topics, cotton research, technology and brand partnerships. We also made a concerted effort to provide opportunities and support for growers in sharing their own personal stories and achievements.

Some examples of these opportunities included: an exclusive story with The Australian newspaper announcing a new range of men's chinos exclusively made from sustainably-grown Australian cotton; case studies in The Land for Farm Safety Week; editorials in Sydney's The Daily Telegraph covering topics discussed at the Bush Summit; and a live broadcast with ABC's NSW Country Hour program at the inaugural Cotton Open House.

Cotton Australia took a lead role over the past year in calling for accurate, fair and balanced media coverage of agricultural issues. The calls came after a series of inaccurate, sensationalist and unbalanced stories were aired that impacted our industry.

For example, in July 2019, the ABC's Four Corners aired a report looking at the effectiveness of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan's irrigation efficiency program. During the episode, key facts and a balance of perspectives were omitted, and 12 out of the 13 people featured were critical of the irrigation efficiency project. In the aftermath of the episode, Cotton Australia, in conjunction with the National Farmers' Federation (NFF), demanded accurate and balanced coverage from the national broadcaster. We contributed to the NFF's formal complaint to the ABC and supported the NFF in that process.

Consequently, Cotton Australia invited the ABC's Director of News, Gaven Morris, to address our General Meeting in November. Mr Morris presented on the broadcaster's processes and took questions from growers about the ABC's prior questionable coverage.



DIGITAL STRATEGY

Over the past year, Cotton Australia worked to ensure the views of our industry were communicated widely and effectively on digital platforms.

Our team developed and implemented a targeted digital strategy that focussed on sharing the Australian cotton industry's story, advocating our position on issues of importance, and communicating essential information to growers.

A key project undertaken this year was the redevelopment and redesign of Cotton Australia's website. The project provided the opportunity for information about our industry to be more clearly communicated with audiences through simplified navigation and mobile optimisation. All the webpages were comprehensively updated with the latest information, and new pages were added to the site to fill gaps in information about our industry. The website's new visual design modernised this important communications tool and made it more appealing to the audience.

The new website launched in January 2020 to a positive reception from the industry, media, community, teachers and students.

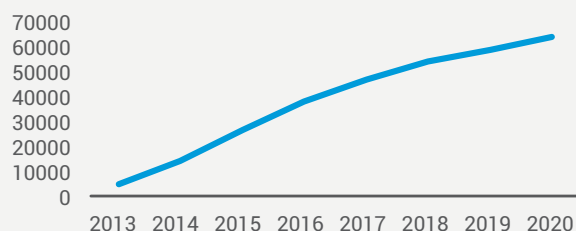
Over the year, Cotton Australia's website (both the old and new sites) accumulated a total of 651,503 page views (an average of 1,785 page views per day).

Cotton Australia's social media audience also continued to grow over the past year, owing to engaging photos, videos and graphics being produced by our team to effectively communicate with viewers. Our Facebook audience grew by 6% to 9,020 followers and our Twitter followers increased by 8% to 6,300.



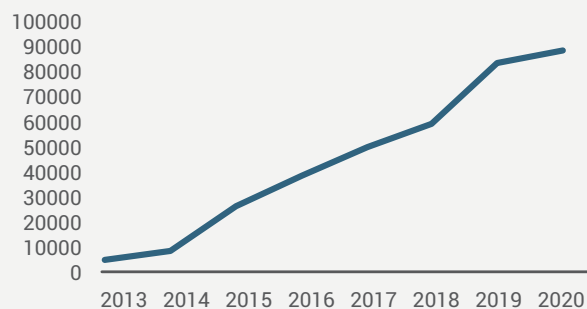
6,300

YEARLY TWITTER FOLLOWER GROWTH
ENDING 31 MAR 2020



9,020

YEARLY FACEBOOK FOLLOWER GROWTH
ENDING 31 MAR 2020



EDUCATION

Growing knowledge of Australian cotton through engagement and classroom resources.

- Cotton's story shared at city shows.
- Engagement with teachers a success.
- Online learning resources attract thousands of views.

Cotton Australia's education program remained a core focus of the organisation's work over the past year, with a number of key achievements recorded.

The value of educating about our industry is immense, with teachers, students and the general public the target audiences for our work in this space. Through quality education projects, resources and initiatives we boost understanding of our industry and share the Australian cotton story far and wide.

Over this past year, our education program evolved to include working with all sectors to foster productive partnerships that extended our reach and engaged with teachers to support their work with students.

Some of our key achievements and activities in this space are detailed below.

AGRICULTURAL SHOWS

A key focus over the past year for our education team was been developing connections between the cotton industry and the general public.

In April 2019, the Sydney Royal Easter Show was held, and Cotton Australia had a strong presence at the event with a large display in the Farm of the Future pavilion in conjunction with the University of New England. An estimated 350,000 people visited the pavilion over the course of the show, and our team engaged in many meaningful conversations with the public about our industry.

Similarly, Cotton Australia exhibited at Brisbane's EKKA event in August 2019, with thousands of showgoers visiting the Agricultural Hall we were located in.

At these events, we ensured we had many physical items on display, such as cotton plants, freshly ginned cotton, bales, fuzzy seed and fabric. Attendees were able to look at and feel the items, and for many, it was the first time they had seen and touched a cotton plant.

Many visitors took the opportunity to talk directly to growers and have their questions about the cotton industry answered in order to gain a new appreciation for the production practices and sustainability of the Australian cotton industry.

ENGAGEMENT WITH TEACHERS

It has long been recognised that experiential learning with opportunities for hands-on engagement provides the best learning outcomes for all ages. With that knowledge in mind, over this past year Cotton Australia led interactive education sessions for school students at events including AgVision, the largest agricultural careers event in NSW, Moo Baa Munch in Toowoomba for both primary and secondary students, and at Primary School Preview Day with Sydney-based students. For teachers, we led sessions at two professional development seminars at the Sydney Royal Easter Show and engaged with more than 90 agriculture teachers during their national conference held in the Riverina in January 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, our team was forced to cancel a series of Teach the Teacher events, and the 2020 Sydney Royal Easter Show was also cancelled due to the health crisis.



Cotton Australia presented at the Teacher Professional Development Days at the 2019 Sydney Royal Easter Show.



Cotton Australia continued its partnership with The Clontarf Foundation this year.

DIGITAL LEARNING RESOURCES

Ensuring teachers had access to the best and most up-to-date resources to enhance their teaching of cotton was another priority for Cotton Australia's education team this year.

Cotton Australia's website featured a section called Cotton Classroom, which housed a carefully planned suite of learning resources for early primary through to senior secondary school teachers and their students. The resources were maintained by our team throughout the year to ensure teachers and students had tools to boost their understanding of cotton's production process, career opportunities in the industry and the skills needed to work in cotton.

Over the past year, the Cotton Classroom webpage and resources were accessed more than 22,000 times. Our team also had direct contact with more than 150 teachers who requested our free sample kits. Our team was pleased to constantly receive positive feedback from teachers saying how useful and relevant our resources were to their teaching programs.

PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout 2019/20, Cotton Australia continued working with the Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA). Through this partnership, we extended our audience reach and provided the best resources and industry expertise through PIEFA's social media channels and online resource portal, PrimeZone. We also developed a partnership with the new Agricultural Centre of Excellence in Sydney, which combined Richmond High School, Western Sydney University and TAFE, to develop innovative engagement programs over the coming year.

CAREERS

In September 2019, Cotton Australia joined with the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) to attend the National Career Advisors Conference in Canberra. At the event, we facilitated a session outlining the importance of interpersonal skills and resilience. We were also pleased to see Dr Nicole McDonald from the University of Southern Queensland receive the 2019 Excellence in Career Development Research award from Career Development Association of Australia.

During the past year, Cotton Australia was also proud to support travel bursaries for undergraduate students from six different universities to attend the 2019 Australian Cotton Research Conference.



Attendees at the National Association of Agricultural Educators' annual conference toured Southern Cotton at Whitton, NSW to learn about the cotton industry.

EVENTS

Promoting our industry through hosting and attending key events.

- Cotton industry stages engaging events to share its story and broaden support.
- Cotton Collective covers key topics affecting the industry.
- High achievers recognised at the Australian Cotton Industry Awards.

2019 AUSTRALIAN COTTON COLLECTIVE

In late July 2019, Cotton Australia staged its biennial Australian Cotton Collective event in Griffith, New South Wales.

The event brought the industry together for two days of forums, presentations and panels about key issues affecting Australian cotton, as well as a tradeshow and showcase of new products and technologies.

More than 400 delegates attended each day of the Collective, which was held in conjunction with the Australian Cotton Industry Awards presentation night.

One of the highlights from the Collective was a forum on water issues that featured Steve Whan, CEO of the National Irrigators' Council, Phillip Glyde, CEO of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), and Hilton Taylor, Assistant Secretary of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO).

Mr Whan began the forum by giving a thorough insight into water policy from a national perspective; Mr Glyde presented on where the Murray-Darling Basin Plan was up to and some of the challenges that were being experienced; and Mr Taylor provided

insight into the volume of Commonwealth environmental water that had been delivered across the Basin's river system.

In other water-focussed discussions during the event, Professor Jamie Pittock from The Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists presented on achieving the twin goals of productive irrigated agriculture and an improved riparian environment; Wilf Finn from water policy advisory company Aither spoke on if the water market could aid both the environment and irrigated agriculture; and New South Wales' floodplain harvesting policy was also discussed.

Another key session at the Collective focussed on the impact of climate change on Australia's cotton industry. Presenters in that session included the Director of the Climate Change Institute at the Australian National University, Professor Mark Howden, and Dr Katie Broughton and Dr Dio Antille from the CSIRO.

Another popular session at the event was the 'New Products' showcase, which allowed exhibitors to present their new developments, innovations and products to a large audience.



2019 Cotton Collective, Griffith, NSW



Award recipients and some of the program's sponsors at the 2019 Australian Cotton Industry Awards in Griffith.

2019 AUSTRALIAN COTTON INDUSTRY AWARDS

The 2019 Australian Cotton Industry Awards were held in conjunction with the Cotton Collective event in Griffith.

The Awards program recognised excellence and achievement in Australia's cotton industry throughout the supply chain, from growers and ginners to product suppliers, consultants, agronomists and researchers.

The recipients of the 2019 Australian Cotton Industry Awards were:

- **Bayer Grower of the Year**
Tom and Charm Arnott, Boggabilla, New South Wales.
- **ADAMA Chris Lehmann Trust Young Cotton Achiever of the Year**
Murray Connor, Australian Food and Fibre, Moree, New South Wales.
- **AgriRisk High Achiever of the Year**
Jamie Traill and Ashley Tunks, One Tree Agriculture, Warra, Queensland.
- **Cotton Seed Distributors Ltd Researcher of the Year**
Dr Linda Smith, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.
- **IPF Service to Industry**
Kieran O'Keeffe.

2020 AUSTRALIAN COTTON CONFERENCE

The Australian Cotton Conference was scheduled to be held on the Gold Coast in August 2020; however, the event had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Australian Cotton Conference was rescheduled to take place in 2021.



ICAC 78th Plenary meeting and field trip, Brisbane and Toowoomba, Qld



Cotton Community Catchups held in Gunnedah and Moree, NSW



Cotton Australia General Meetings held in Brisbane and Sydney



2019 Sydney Royal Easter Show, NSW



Camp Cotton, Warren, NSW



2019 Brisbane Ekka, Qld





Northern Territory engagement, NT



Exercise Blueprint (biosecurity training scenario), Toowoomba, Qld



School presentations in NSW and Qld.



Better Cotton Forum, Sydney, NSW



Political briefings with federal and state representatives.



Prime Minister Scott Morrison showing his support for Australian cotton at the Bush Summit, Dubbo, NSW





myBMP AND BCI

Ensuring our industry operates at the highest possible levels.

- Growth in uptake in cotton's best practices program.
- Better Cotton quantities reduced due to drought.
- Workshops held in cotton regions to boost myBMP uptake.

myBMP is the Australian cotton industry's best management practices program. The program empowers growers to improve their on-farm practices by reducing risk, boosting their business management procedures and ensuring they are meeting regulatory requirements.

The program began in 1997 and has developed into a comprehensive online initiative covering 10 modules, including: Water Management, Biosecurity, Pesticide Management, and HR and WHS. Cotton Australia staff, along with CottonInfo's Regional Extension Officers, provide personalised support and technical assistance to myBMP participants.

myBMP

Over the past year, the Australian cotton industry's best practices program, myBMP, continued to grow in strength.

There was a 10% increase in grower involvement in the program over the year, with 85 new growers joining the initiative and the total now standing at 910 growers.

At year's end, a total of 645 cotton farming businesses were registered in the myBMP system, which represented approximately 70% of all businesses in the industry.

This year also saw a record number of myBMP-accredited farms in the industry, with a total of 240 – equating to an increase of 3%. This was a strong achievement for the industry during what was a challenging year. The increase meant approximately 24% of Australia's cotton was grown on myBMP-accredited farms this season.



BETTER COTTON INITIATIVE

The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) is an international non-profit organisation that promotes the sustainable, responsible production of cotton worldwide. Cotton Australia actively works with BCI on behalf of our industry. Growers can negotiate a premium for BCI cotton through their merchant.

Over the past season, a total of 39 businesses and 67 farms grew Better Cotton, which was a significant reduction on previous years, due to drought.

A total of 144,000 bales of Better Cotton were opted-in, a reduction of 68% on last year, but that represented approximately 24% of Australia's lint. Over this past year, some growers negotiated a small premium for Better Cotton, but generally, this was harder to achieve than in previous seasons due to increasing global supply.

The transition to a more sustainable cotton industry is highlighted by how more than 25% of the global cotton supply is now Better Cotton.



PROJECT WRAPS UP

Over the past three years, Cotton Australia's myBMP program worked with the Fitzroy Basin Association on a project to improve water quality and water and nutrient use efficiency on 30 cotton farms in Queensland's Central Highlands and Dawson-Callide Valley. The project concluded this year and saw \$465,000 from the Australian Government (through the Reef Trust) fund 30 on-farm projects and eight farm trial sites.

The trial sites successfully looked at the benefits of using advanced myBMP practices, including variable rate nitrogen fertiliser application. Field days were held at Emerald and Theodore to share the results of the farm trials with industry and stakeholders.

myBMP GLOBAL STANDARD RECOGNITION

To increase global recognition of the *myBMP* standard, Cotton Australia provided data for inclusion in the Textile Exchange's Cotton 2025 Challenge Report. Fashion brands use the report to source sustainably produced cotton. The *myBMP* standard is now recognised by several global standards including: The Partnership for Sustainable Textiles, the International Trade Centre (ITC) Sustainability Map, and the Forum for the Future CottonUP Guide.

myBMP MODULE UPDATES

myBMP modules are reviewed and updated annually, to ensure the program remains at the forefront of best practice.

Over the past year, the Human Resources and Work Health and Safety (WHS) module received a major upgrade to ensure growers were aware of several new WHS codes of practice introduced by regulators.

myBMP EXPRESS WORKSHOPS

Cotton Australia worked to boost the progress of growers participating in the *myBMP* program this past year through a series of regional workshops.

myBMP Express workshops covered at least four modules within a few hours and resulted in growers making significant progress towards *myBMP* accreditation.

A total of nine *myBMP* Express workshops were held during the year at locations including Hillston, Deniliquin, Griffith, Warren, Narramine, Narrabri, Goondiwindi, Mungindi, and Theodore.



WHERE TO FROM HERE

Over the coming year, Cotton Australia will continue its work encouraging all cotton growers to join *myBMP* and implement best practices on-farm.

The Cotton Australia team will also support growers who are working towards *myBMP* accreditation. Similarly, we will continue working on new opportunities to increase the benefits of *myBMP* for growers, including more financial incentives for attaining *myBMP* accreditation.

Further work will also be carried out adapting the *myBMP* program to include best management practices for potential new cotton regions in northern Australia.

Increasing international recognition of the *myBMP* standard will also be a key focus for the year ahead, as will boosting the volume of *myBMP* cotton that is sold through global sustainability markets. Cotton Australia continues to sit on the BCI Council and guides the efforts of BCI internationally. A key area of focus for BCI will be increasing the retailer and brand owner take-up of BCI-accredited cotton globally.



Holding *myBMP* Express workshops have been a focus over the past year.

COTTON TO MARKET

Furthering Australian cotton's reach through brand and supply chain relationships, partnerships and events.

- Continued growth in number of brand partnerships.
- Camp Cotton gives stakeholders hands-on farm experience.
- Post-COVID-19 pandemic support to be a priority.

Over the past year, Cotton Australia's Cotton to Market program continued its track record of successfully boosting the position of Australian cotton in the world textile market.

The team worked throughout the year to implement strategic initiatives that would ensure the Australian cotton story would be well known among the industry's supply chain partners and textiles stakeholders.

Through collaborations with brands, retailers, not-for-profit organisations and influencers, as well as partnerships, events, presentations, special projects, and communication and stakeholder engagement activities, the Cotton to Market program continued to raise the profile of Australian cotton.

Below are some of the highlights and achievements the program recorded over the past year.

CAMP COTTON 2019

Camp Cotton was a valuable engagement event staged by the Cotton to Market team, where representatives from fashion brands, retailers, not-for-profits and influencers travelled to a cotton region for a hands-on farm experience to gain insight into the cotton production process.

The event had been held annually over recent years, and the 2019 event was the fifth. This year's Camp Cotton was the first time it had been held in the Macquarie Valley in New South Wales and included an overnight stay in Warren.

A record number of delegates attended the event, and they participated in activities that included a roundtable discussion, tours of two local cotton farms and a gin, and a campfire dinner hosted by local cotton growers.

Attendees included representatives from the brands Bonds, Trenery, Politix, Outland Denim, Best and Less, Sussan, Crossroads, Jockey, The Very Good Bra and MJ Bale. Vogue Magazine's Sustainability Editor, Clare Press, also attended, as did other sustainable fashion influencers, including a blogger from EcoWarrior Princess.

A number of the brands that attended Camp Cotton started sourcing Australian cotton as a result of that experience and learning more about the industry.

The event was a huge success, attracting overwhelmingly positive feedback and resulting in more than 25 new advocates for Australian cotton.

Cotton Australia would like to thank the growers and industry personnel who contributed to making the event such a big success.

AUSTRALIAN COTTON WEBSITE LAUNCHED

A new website that provides information and inspiration specifically to supply chain stakeholders including brands, retailers and manufacturers was launched this year. This Australian Cotton website – australiancotton.com.au – plays a different role to the new Cotton Australia website.

The Australian Cotton website tells the story of Australian cotton's quality, sustainability, traceability and social impact. The website also answers questions regularly asked by Cotton to Market stakeholders on issues such as organic cotton, water use, how to source Australian cotton, and textile waste.

It is hoped the site will inspire more brands to partner with and source Australian cotton, as well as answer questions asked by these specific stakeholders.



BETTER COTTON FORUM

In May 2019, Cotton Australia and Levi Strauss & Co staged a special event to promote the Better Cotton Initiative and Australian cotton's sustainability credentials to more than 100 brand, retailer, industry and supply chain stakeholders.

The event brought together global sustainability leaders with local brands, researchers and growers who were all working towards a more sustainable future for cotton.

The keynote speaker at the event was the then-Vice President, Sustainability at Levi Strauss & Co, Michael Kobori. As the leader of the team that started Levis on its sustainability journey almost 20 years ago, Michael shared his insights from the process and the learnings that helped make the brand a leader in sustainable textiles.

The event also included presentations from leading Australian brands sourcing Better Cotton, BCI members, growers and researchers.



Former Vice President, Sustainability at Levi Strauss & Co, Michael Kobori, speaking at the Better Cotton Forum.

EVENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

The Cotton to Market team made a concerted effort over the past year to engage in meaningful conversations with supply chain influencers on key topics including water, climate change, biodiversity, quality, social impact, traceability, circular economy, and textile waste.

As part of this work, the team presented at key events including the Global Sustainability Conference, the Textile Exchange Conference, the ANU Crawford Leadership Forum, the Hong Kong Fashion Summit Round Table, the LEGACY Summit, and the Circular Fashion Conference, as well as individual presentations to more than 50 brands and retailers.

Other key stakeholders we engaged with this year were not-for-profit organisations including World Wildlife Fund, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, Baptist World Aid, Alliance for Water Stewardship, Earthworm Foundation and the National Retailer Association, who were all briefed on the Australian cotton industry.



BRAND PARTNERSHIPS

The Cotton to Market program continued its success growing the number of brands producing 100% Australian cotton products over the past year. A key focus was on working with brands to include Australian cotton in their sustainable sourcing strategies and connecting stories from the farm with their consumers.

Examples of our brand partnerships included:

- **Bonds** - continued to expand its ranges of Australian cotton products to include tracksuits, childrenswear, underwear and socks. The company branded their products by highlighting to consumers the attributes of Australian cotton.
- **Sussan** - developed into a major industry supporter, growing their sales of Australian cotton products throughout the past year and highlighting stories from our farmers through blogs, social media and website content, as well as catalogues.
- **Country Road** - the brand's Heritage range was launched at the 2020 Australian Open tennis grand slam with a back-to-farm story. This preceded strong sales throughout the year.
- **MJ Bale** - produced a back-to-farm video highlighting the biodiversity work of family farmer Andrew Watson, which helped promote the brand's launch of a 100% Australian cotton chino product.

A number of other small and large brands started or continued their Australian cotton journey with Cotton Australia over this past year, and our team will continue working with these partners to finalise their sourcing, marketing and storytelling needs.

WHERE TO FROM HERE

Over the coming year, the Cotton to Market team will continue to support Australian and global brands in the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the wake of the crisis and with a renewed focus on sustainability, there will be an opportunity to promote *myBMP* as a gold star standard in sustainable cotton production.

Another key focus for the year will be working with the *myBMP* team around the industry's Sustainability Targets in places where *myBMP* intersects with Cotton to Market, particularly on customer-centric issues.

As the appetite for local manufacturing grows, we will also investigate opportunities for shortening supply chains so that 100% Australian cotton products can be manufactured in Australia.

Our Cotton to Market team will also work to strengthen relationships with existing brand partners, as well as support new partners on their Australian cotton journey. We will also identify new ways to engage with global stakeholders, given the likely limits on international travel over the coming year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The other key focus will be on making progress on existing projects, including traceability, circularity, biodiversity and textile waste.

AGSKILLED

The AgSkilled strategy continued to yield significant results for growers in New South Wales.

- More than 280 training courses delivered this year
- New training programs implemented that were tailored to the needs of growers.
- Submission made to extend the AgSkilled program.

The AgSkilled program enjoyed another successful year, providing leading training opportunities for New South Wales growers.

AgSkilled was an initiative that worked to upskill cotton and grains growers in New South Wales, and was funded by the NSW Government and led by industry partners Cotton Australia and the GRDC. At its conclusion, the program will have invested more than \$10 million into training within the NSW cotton and grains industries over three years.

AgSkilled had a strong past 12 months, delivering more than 285 courses across more than 100 locations, and enrolling almost 1,800 participants.

Key highlights were the development and delivery of a number of new industry-requested courses, including Work Health and Safety/Human Resources Fundamentals; Risk Management & Innovation; and Introductory Agronomy courses.

WHERE TO FROM HERE

The AgSkilled strategy was a three-year commitment from the NSW Government and, at the time of writing, was due to conclude on June 30th 2020.

All training had to have commenced by June 30th 2020, but participants had until the end of 2020 to complete their training.

Cotton Australia submitted a case for the extension and expansion of the AgSkilled strategy and advocated strongly for its continuation given its success. At the time of writing, we were awaiting a response from the Minister.



Training courses were held in more than 100 locations across NSW.



Almost 1,800 participants were enrolled in AgSkilled training courses this past year.

LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Cotton industry's leaders given opportunity to shine through unique programs.

- Cotton20 Leadership Program breaks new ground.
- Podcast series brings important conversations to the fore.

Cotton Australia was this year again proud to invest in our industry's people by running leadership programs that boosted their skills and helped them to achieve their goals.

Our leadership programs have a proven track record of bringing together some of our industry's trailblazers in the spirit of unified growth for Australian cotton.

In addition to our regular contact with and support of alumni of our leadership programs, throughout 2019-2020, the Cotton20 Leadership Program was a particular highlight.



Cotton20 Leadership Program participants met in Sydney in 2019.



Program participants shared their ideas and perspectives to help boost the industry.

COTTON20 LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Cotton20 Leadership Program was part of the Represent Your Industry - Leadership Development Initiative - 2018-2020.

The initiative was a three-year program led by Cotton Australia with funding support from the Australian Government's Department of Agriculture and Water Resources Leadership in Agricultural Industries Fund.

The key goal of the program was to support cotton growers in developing their leadership skills and to enable them to communicate and influence industry change. Key topics covered in the program included:

- Governance
- Strategic thinking and planning
- Advocacy
- Leadership
- Industry development
- Communication

In 2019, the focus was on the Cotton20 Leadership Program.

A total of 19 growers from across the Australian cotton industry participated in a face-to-face meeting held in Sydney during March 2019. At the meeting, participants learned about the history of the Murray-Darling Basin and had their skills boosted around governance, advocacy, industry development, strategic thinking and planning, leadership and communications. These skills were focussed on so growers could use them when called upon by their Cotton Growers' Association to be spokespeople for the industry.

The program also included mentoring support for the participating growers. Participants were then linked with emerging growers and irrigation leaders to share knowledge, challenge current practices and enable change.

As part of the Cotton20 Leadership Program, the participants attended the Irrigation Forum held at the 2019 Cotton Collective in Griffith, which saw presentations from Hilton Taylor (Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder), Professor Jamie Pittock (The Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists), Phillip Glyde (Murray-Darling Basin Authority), Steve Whan (National Irrigators' Council), Jim Cush (NSW Irrigators' Council and grower), and Michael Murray (Cotton Australia).

A series of eight podcast episodes were also developed as part of the leadership program, with each episode focussed on a different topic, including online advocacy, leadership, community engagement, communication, self-care, the importance of local Cotton Growers' Associations, pathways to leadership, and everyday conversations that count.



VALLEY REPORTS

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, QUEENSLAND

- **Regional Manager:** Renee Anderson
- **Hectares grown in 2019-20:** 6,020 ha irrigated
- **Bales produced in 2019-20:** 65,000 (estimate)

"The 2019-20 season was particularly challenging, as growers entered the season with zero water allocations due to the fourth year of low rainfall, and the Fairbairn Dam dropping to its lowest levels on record. However, growers still managed to produce some good yields, with some above 12 and 14 bales per hectare." – **Renee Anderson**

Cotton Australia activities and achievements:

- 80% of businesses in the Central Highlands are registered in the *myBMP* program.
- Boosted knowledge of the cotton industry through the 'Teach the Teacher' event.
- Hosted Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay and Chairman Hamish McIntyre for a visit of the Central Highlands to meet with growers to discuss current challenges and opportunities.
- Supported the Farm Water Futures workshop to provide an information session on water use efficiency projects and current systems and technology that was available to growers.
- Involved in the Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia's (PIEFA) 'Farmer Time' project to give children an insight into life on a cotton farm through a video call.
- Supported growers in obtaining their *myBMP* certification through regular engagement and workshops; 36 growers are now registered.



Cotton Australia Regional Manager Renee Anderson with President of the Central Highlands Cotton Growers and Irrigators Association Aaron Kiely at the Emerald Show.

DAWSON AND CALLIDE VALLEYS, QUEENSLAND

- **Regional Manager:** Kelly Becker
- **Hectares grown in 2019-20:** 2,656 ha irrigated
- **Bales produced in 2019-20:** 27,000 (estimate)

"The 2019-20 season started with a zero per cent water allocation, leading to a lower than normal cotton plant. This was then followed by hail, cool weather and rain, which caused havoc on emergence and re-plantings were necessary in some instances. Rain has now fallen in the catchment and growers remain optimistic for a bumper crop next season." – **Kelly Becker**

Cotton Australia activities and achievements:

- 94% of businesses in the Dawson and Callide valleys are registered in the *myBMP* program.
- Facilitated a *myBMP* Express workshop in Theodore to support growers in achieving *myBMP* accreditation.
- Coordinated a water efficiency workshop in Moura for growers to share ideas and ensure they were aware of the latest projects, technologies and systems to improve water efficiency on farm.



Cotton Australia Regional Manager Kelly Becker with Glendale grower Chris Hutchinson.

DARLING DOWNS, QUEENSLAND

- **Regional Manager:** Mary O'Brien
- **Hectares grown in 2019-20:** 5,989 ha irrigated, 200 ha dryland
- **Bales produced in 2019-20:** 60,000 (estimate)

"The Darling Downs had another tough season. The ongoing drought reduced the cotton crop to one of the smallest on record for the region. Despite this, there have been some very pleasing yields reported. The rain in late January and February put some welcome water in storages and improved the outlook for next season for some. Here's hoping things turn around and we see a lot more fluffy paddocks next picking." – **Mary O'Brien**

Cotton Australia activities and achievements:

- 53% of businesses in the Darling Downs are registered in the myBMP program.
- Supported the launch of Ritemate Workwear's new range of Pilbara Aussie cotton shirts with a tour of a local farm and cotton gin.
- Hosted National Rugby League legend Petero Civoniceva on a cotton farm in South Burnett to better understand how the industry operates and to meet some of the hardworking growers.
- Supported Cotton Australia Education Coordinator Jenny Hughes at Moo Baa Munch, an opportunity for students to learn about the important role industries like cotton play in everyday life.
- Hosted Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay on the Darling Downs to meet with and visit local growers to better understand their current challenges and inform them of Cotton Australia's activities.
- Successful promotion of pink wrap with growers to support the McGrath Foundation.
- Coordinated the combined Cotton Australia and Darling Downs Cotton Growers Inc. Christmas parties and cricket games to unite the local industry and ensure growers were supported in being resilient during a tough season.
- Promoted the cotton industry to the next generation by presenting at two schools and hosting students from the University of Queensland's Gatton campus.



Cotton Australia Regional Manager Mary O'Brien with NRL legend Petero Civoniceva and South Burnett growers Andrea Stewart and Mike Stewart.

ST GEORGE, DIRRANBANDI AND MUNGINDI, QUEENSLAND AND NEW SOUTH WALES

- **Regional Manager:** Jane Hill
- **Hectares grown in 2019-20:** 947 ha irrigated
- **Bales produced in 2019-20:** 10,500 (estimate)

"It was a very tough season for local growers, with minimal water and limited rainfall during the record-breaking drought. Unfortunately, two of my regions had zero cotton this season, while St George had just three per cent planted. Growers remained resilient and active in the local community. We are all looking forward to an improved 2020-21 season across St George, Dirranbandi and Mungindi." – **Jane Hill**

Cotton Australia activities and achievements:

- 95% of businesses in St George, Dirranbandi and Mungindi are registered in the myBMP program.
- Organised and facilitated a cotton and irrigation session at the St George Food and Fibre Conference to provide industry and community representatives with the latest industry information.
- Supported growers in achieving myBMP accreditation through one-on-one consultations and express workshops.
- Organised first aid training to ensure growers continued to make workplace health and safety a priority in their businesses.
- Helped organise the Mungindi Charity Golf Day and St George Charity Golf Day to raise funds for local charities.
- Was a member of the St George Cotton Dinner Awards Committee to ensure growers were recognised for their hard work and innovation on-farm.



Cotton Australia Regional Manager Jane Hill and Cotton Australia Chair Hamish McIntyre with former rugby league player Shane Webcke at the St George Food and Fibre Conference.

MACINTYRE VALLEY, QUEENSLAND AND NEW SOUTH WALES

- **Regional Manager:** Cate Wild
- **Hectares grown in 2019-20:** 1,232 ha irrigated, 332 ha dryland
- **Bales produced in 2019-20:** 15,000 (estimate)

"This season, only a small area of cotton was planted in the Macintyre Valley due to drought and low water allocations. Growers have demonstrated enormous resilience during a challenging period and have continued to support the local community. The season ahead is looking more positive and we are hoping for more rain in the catchment area before planting for 2020-21." – **Cate Wild**

Cotton Australia activities and achievements:

- 92% of businesses in the Macintyre Valley are registered in the *myBMP* program.
- Assisted Cotton Australia's Cotton to Market program in supporting local clothing brands Goondiwindi Cotton and Love Henry source Australian cotton.
- Coordinated and promoted fully-funded training through various training organisations for growers in New South Wales and Queensland, to help upskill the local industry.
- Provided ongoing support for growers involved in *myBMP* through the coordination of individual and group workshops and discussions.
- Helped coordinate the local charity golf day to raise much needed funds for local organisations.
- Supported the local Cotton Growers' Association to organise the Macintyre Valley Cotton Awards Dinner.
- Unfortunately, a number of events planned for 2020 were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the Grower of the Year Field Day, 'Teach the Teacher' and student farm tours.



Cotton Australia Regional Manager Cate Wild with growers Tom and Charm Arnott.

GWYDIR VALLEY, NEW SOUTH WALES

- **Regional Manager:** Alec Macintosh
- **Hectares grown in 2019-20:** 2,363 ha irrigated, 343 ha dryland
- **Bales produced in 2019-20:** 27,000 (estimate)

"The season has been particularly challenging for the region. Following a prolonged dry period, rainfall in February impacted the cotton crop but has managed to fill soil moisture profiles in a lot of cases, and provided flows in creeks and rivers and improved the health of the environment. Growers are hoping the rain continues through winter, allowing winter crops to flourish and an improved summer cotton crop." – **Alec Macintosh**

Cotton Australia activities and achievements:

- 47% of businesses in the Gwydir Valley are registered in the *myBMP* program.
- Engaged with agronomists in face-to-face training in the use and application of SataCrop to ensure all sensitive crops were mapped to mitigate any potential spray incidents.
- Provided ongoing support to growers seeking accreditation in *myBMP*.
- Represented the cotton industry's need for digital connectivity at a community meeting to discuss the NSW Government's new Regional Digital Connectivity program, which will focus on farm, water and ag-tech.
- Helped facilitate a 'Cotton Community Catchup' event for growers and representatives from the local community. This also included a presentation at Moree Shire Council's monthly meeting to acknowledge their support of the industry and discuss current challenges.
- Promoted the cotton industry to the next generation by hosting two scholarship recipients from the University of New England (UNE – GRASS program). The students spent a week visiting cotton farms, learning about research trials underway and meeting with representatives of cotton organisations. Was also a guest speaker at the UNE GRASS presentation at the conclusion of the program.
- Educated students on how the cotton industry operates and the careers available through involvement at the Moree Careers Expo and local school presentations.
- Promoted funded training available through AgSkilled for growers that covered corporate governance, WHS, on-farm welding, spray application, leadership and management, and safety courses.



Cotton Australia Regional Manager Alec Macintosh at the Moree High School Careers Day.

NAMOI VALLEY, NEW SOUTH WALES

- **Regional Manager:** Alec Macintosh
- **Hectares grown in 2019-20:** 17,682 ha irrigated
- **Bales produced in 2019-20:** 187,000 (estimate)

"It was another tough season for the region and local community as the dry conditions continued. Recent rainfall has been welcomed with open arms and is improving growers' outlook for the season ahead. The recent wet weather has created sufficient moisture to plant winter crops, and growers are hoping for an improved summer crop for the 2020-21 season." – **Alec Macintosh**

Cotton Australia activities and achievements:

- 47% of businesses in the Namoi Valley are registered in the *myBMP* program.
- Promoted the use and application of SataCrop through involvement in training for local agronomists.
- Represented the cotton industry's need for digital connectivity through involvement in the scoping phase of the NSW Government's Regional Digital Connectivity program for agriculture.
- Coordinated a 'Cotton Community Catchup' for growers and community groups in Gunnedah, this also involved key meetings with representatives from local government.
- Promoted the cotton industry to the next generation by hosting a scholarship recipient from the University of New England (UNE – GRASS program). The student spent a week visiting cotton farms, learning about research trials underway and meeting with representatives of cotton organisations. I was also, a guest speaker at the UNE GRASS presentation at the conclusion of the program.
- Participated in the Climate Vulnerability Assessment Project: Broadacre Cropping Nodes to ensure the cotton industry was involved in the discussion and workshops.
- Presented at a Narrabri Probus Club meeting detailing the effects of the drought on cotton production and the continuing improvements in pesticide and water use.
- Promoted and encouraged growers to attend funded training available through AgSkilled in a variety of courses.



Cotton Australia Regional Manager Alec Macintosh with grower Peter Lennox and CottonInfo Regional Extension Officer Elsie Hudson.

WALGETT AND BOURKE, NEW SOUTH WALES

- **Regional Manager:** Alec Macintosh
- **Hectares grown in 2019-20:** 581 ha irrigated
- **Bales produced in 2019-20:** 6,500 (estimate)

"Only two fields of cotton were planted in the Walgett region during the 2019-20 season. Fortunately, with more rain forecast this year, growers are hopeful of planting dryland cotton next season and irrigated growers are also expecting a healthy crop in the 2020-21 season." – **Alec Macintosh**

Cotton Australia activities and achievements:

- 47% of businesses in Walgett and Bourke are registered in the *myBMP* program.
- Participated in face-to-face training with local agronomists to encourage them to use SataCrop for mapping all crops in the area in an effort to reduce any potential spray drift incidents.
- Provided ongoing support to growers seeking accreditation in *myBMP*.
- Helped build community resilience and support through a focus group discussion in Walgett. This was a jointly funded project between CRDC and the University of Melbourne.
- Involved in the Walgett Shire Council monthly meeting to support an application for funding to provide a community grants writer as identified during the Resilience project.



Cotton Australia Board member and Rowena grower Bernie Bierhoff.

MACQUARIE VALLEY, NEW SOUTH WALES

- **Regional Manager:** Julie Wise
- **Hectares grown in 2019-20:** 4,715 ha irrigated, 200 ha dryland
- **Bales produced in 2019-20:** 50,000 (estimate)

"The Macquarie Valley endured another dry season, and those that were able to plant cotton faced difficult conditions with high temperatures and high winds sucking all moisture out of the system and making it particularly challenging when planting. The resilience of our growers and their businesses is commendable. With a change in weather patterns, growers are looking forward to a healthy cotton plant for the upcoming season." – **Julie Wise**

Cotton Australia activities and achievements:

- 86% of businesses in the Macquarie Valley are registered in the *myBMP* program.
- Hosted 20 key stakeholders from the fashion industry for the two-day 'Camp Cotton' event to educate stakeholders on how the natural fibre is produced in the Macquarie and develop new relationships between the different ends of the supply chain.
- Organised an industry tour with the Clontarf Foundation which involved a farm visit and aerial operators visit.
- Attended the Clontarf Foundation's careers information day to promote the industry as a potential employer.
- Supported growers involved in *myBMP* by hosting introduction and *myBMP* Express workshops.
- Boosted exposure and knowledge of the cotton industry by hosting a 'Teach the Teacher' event on farm.



Cotton Australia Regional Manager Julie Wise and Policy Officer Sally Ceeney with brands and retailers during Camp Cotton in Warren.

SOUTHERN VALLEYS (LACHLAN, MURRUMBIDGEE, MURRAY), NEW SOUTH WALES

- **Regional Manager:** Kylie Edwards
- **Hectares grown in 2019-20:** 15,800 ha irrigated
- **Bales produced in 2019-20:** 150,000 (estimate)

"Due to the prevailing drought conditions, the southern crop was the smallest we have seen in several years. The tough start to the season was followed by cool weather and hazy, smokey days caused by the bushfires across eastern Australia. Growers have supported one another through this challenging season and are still expected to achieve good yields relative to the season. The Bureau of Meteorology is expecting an above average wet winter from July through to Spring, which is incredibly exciting given the lack of rainfall over the past few years, so there is a lot of optimism for the season ahead." – **Kylie Edwards**

Cotton Australia activities and achievements:

- 73% of businesses in the Riverina and Southern Valleys are registered in the *myBMP* program.
- Hosted Cotton Australia's Communication Manager Robert Virtue for social media training in Griffith and Forbes to ensure growers had the right tools and skills to be part of the online conversation about the industry.
- Convened workshops in Colleenbally and Griffith to support growers in achieving *myBMP* accreditation.
- Encouraged educators to talk about cotton in their classrooms by hosting 'Teach the Teacher' events in Hillston and Hay, where teachers were taken to a cotton farm and given access to educational resources.
- Supported Cotton Australia in coordinating the Cotton Collective event and national awards dinner in Griffith.
- Helped organise the biannual Southern Valleys Cotton Growers' Association's Cotton Awards Dinner in Griffith to recognise the outstanding efforts of local growers.
- Promoted safe practices when planning any spraying activities through involvement in the SOS (Stop Off Target Spray Drift) Riverina and SOS NSW stakeholder groups and facilitated advanced spray training courses.
- Promoted funded training available through AgSkilled to ensure growers had opportunities to upskill in corporate governance, precision agronomy, workplace health and safety, and be involved in the GROW and THRIVE courses.
- Attended the Women of Influence in Science evening held at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga.



Murrumbidgee farm manager Bill Back.

COTTON AUSTRALIA BOARD



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Chairman
Cotton grower – St George
& Dirranbandi, Qld



NIGEL BURNETT
Deputy Chair
Cotton grower –
Emerald, Qld



FLEUR ANDERSON
Grower & Community
relations executive –
Theodore, Qld



BERNIE BIERHOFF
Cotton grower –
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BOB DALL'ALBA
Executive Director and
Country Head – Olam



ROB DUGDALE
Industry representative
– Lower Namoi Cotton
Growers' Association



SUSAN MCCUTCHEON
Cotton grower –
Narromine, NSW



MATT MCVEIGH
Cotton grower – Dalby, Qld



ARTHUR SPELLSON
Industry representative –
Auscott Limited



PETER TUOHEY
Cotton grower –
Carrathool, NSW

COTTON AUSTRALIA STAFF



ADAM KAY
Chief Executive Officer



MICHAEL MURRAY
General Manager



RENEE ANDERSON
Regional Manager
Central Highlands
(part-time)



HONI ANDERSON
Regional Manager,
Southern Valleys
(until late 2019)



KELLY BECKER
Regional Manager
Dawson and Callide
Valleys (part-time)



ANGELA BRADBURN
Policy Officer (part-time
until January 2020)



LUCY BRENNAN
Communications Manager
Stakeholder Engagement



JENNIFER BROWN
Policy Officer
(part-time)



SALLY CEENEY
Policy Officer
(part-time)



KYLIE EDWARDS
Regional Manager,
Southern Valleys



JANE HILL
Regional Manager
St George, Dirranbandi
& Mungindi (part-time)



JENNY HUGHES
Education Coordinator



RICK KOWITZ
myBMP Manager



ALEC MACINTOSH
Regional Manager
Northern NSW



MARY O'BRIEN
Regional Manager –
Darling Downs (part-time)



NICOLE SCOTT
myBMP Customer Service
Officer (part-time)



PAUL SLOMAN
Policy Officer



BROOKE SUMMERS
Supply Chain Consultant
Cotton to Market Program



CLAUDIA VICARY
Project Officer - AgSkilled



ROBERT VIRTUE
Communications Manager
– Digital Strategy



CATE WILD
Regional Manager
Macintyre Valley (part-time)



JULIE WISE
Regional Manager
Macquarie Valley (part-time)



THERESE WOODEN
Finance Manager



ROCHELLE ZAKHER
Executive Assistant





FINANCIAL SUMMARY

INCOME		
YEAR	LEVY	OTHER INCOME
2018/2019	4,756,991	327,543
2019/2020	2,432,867	427,606
EXPENDITURE		
	OPERATING EXPENDITURE	
2018/2019	3,977,620	
2019/2020	3,663,017	
OPERATING EXPENDITURE BY PROGRAM		
	2019/2020	2018/2019
Board and Executive	570,330	615,842
Policy and Advocacy	585,410	661,360
Affiliations	141,352	152,097
Communications & Engagement	832,020	885,103
Grower Services	396,965	451,214
myBMP	226,407	237,084
Research	124,041	69,659
Education	99,928	113,303
Administration	156,505	155,219
Office Overheads	530,058	636,739
TOTAL	3,663,016	3,977,620
Levy Contribution	74%	70%

*Cotton Australia's full financial accounts, which were audited by Ernst & Young, have been provided to our Member Organisations.





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