



CELEBRATING



YEARS

OF GROWER
ADVOCACY

Annual Report
2021-22



COTTON
AUSTRALIA



YEARS



50
YEARS

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Chairman's Report

More than half a century ago, a group of pioneering farmers started the modern, mechanised production of Australian cotton.

After much hard work, successes, failures, and learnings, that vision became a reality... and what a reality it is: a modern \$4.5-billion industry that leads Australian agriculture.

A key ingredient in the success of the industry over these decades has been having an effective and agile peak industry body – Cotton Australia – serving growers and voicing the views of the industry to decision makers.

I am incredibly proud to be the new Chairman of Cotton Australia, particularly in the organisation's 50th year.

Cotton Australia is a valuable asset for the Australian cotton industry, providing a united voice for growers that connects and engages with the public and key decision makers.

Over the course of its history, Cotton Australia has successfully navigated the significant opportunities and challenges that have come the industry's way, including: supporting growers through droughts and floods; driving public awareness of cotton;

managing stewardship and biosecurity in the industry; establishing and maintaining a leading best practices program; driving water use efficiency and reducing pesticide use; defending growers from politicised attacks and smears; developing a sustainability framework; facilitating environmental audits; and supporting growers moving into new regions. Through all these challenges and opportunities, Cotton Australia has been there for you: our industry's growers.

This season's crop forecast, 5.5 million bales, is another exciting chapter for our industry's history book. This crop will support our national economy to the tune of \$4.5 billion, once again highlighting the importance of cotton production in Australia. The financial benefit of this strong result will be felt predominantly in our cotton regions. We know growers spend a significant percentage of their cotton income in their local community, and this supports our claim that a strong cotton industry equals strong communities.

I would like to thank our growers for their support and for funding the organisation through its voluntary levy over the past half century. Without you, Cotton Australia would not have achieved all it has this year, and over its lifetime.

Thank you to all of Cotton Australia's chairs, directors, and staff that have served the organisation over the past 50 years. Our company's current strength has undoubtedly been shaped by the efforts of all who have gone before us.

The past year has seen Cotton Australia continue its track record of successfully advocating for its growers.

In the water space, our team lobbied on floodplain harvesting legislation in NSW (with valley-based irrigation groups), and metering reforms in Queensland. Our team continued to advocate on stewardship and biosecurity issues and proactively promoted spray best practice to mitigate off-target spray drift.

Rebuilding public trust in Australian cotton continued to be a priority for Cotton Australia, with new initiatives created to share our industry's story. Likewise, promoting Australian cotton to brands and supply chain partners and educating school students about our industry remained a core focus for our team. And importantly, our staff engaged with growers and provided them support on their *myBMP* journey. These are just a few of the headline achievements Cotton Australia made over the past year, and this Annual Report details our team's work in full.

A summary of our organisation's financials can be found at the end of this Annual Report, this highlights the strong financial position Cotton Australia is in. Consequently, the Cotton Australia Board has retained the voluntary levy fee at \$1.50 per bale for the coming season – unchanged on last year.

I look forward to celebrating Cotton Australia's 50th anniversary with you over this coming year, and also embracing and navigating all that lies ahead for the organisation and our cotton industry over the next 50 years.

I would like to thank my fellow Cotton Australia Board members, Deputy Chair Bernie Bierhoff, CEO Adam Kay, and all staff for their work. Your efforts and commitment to ensuring Australian cotton is valued, viable and advanced is appreciated by all in the industry.

Thank you to our growers for your commitment to our industry, and again, I thank you for your support of Cotton Australia. I wish you all the best for the coming year and look forward to meeting with you over the months ahead.

Nigel Burnett
Chairman, Cotton Australia



CEO's Report

Cotton Australia has achieved significant results for our industry this year, in alignment with its Strategic Plan.

Our team worked for you, our growers, by advocating on policy issues, building public trust for the industry, growing interest in Australian cotton among supply chain stakeholders, educating students, and ensuring best practice was enacted on-farm through *myBMP*.

In 2022, Cotton Australia will celebrate its 50th anniversary. This is a significant milestone, and an appropriate time to reflect on all that has been achieved by the organisation over its long history. In its half century of existence, Cotton Australia has grown and adapted with the times. It has been an organisation that constantly evolved to meet new priorities with agility and conviction; that has listened to its growers and advanced their views to stakeholders; and a company that has developed into a leader in Australian agriculture.

I have consistently observed these traits over my time as CEO, and I hope this culture continues to strengthen over Cotton Australia's next 50 years.

I am proud to present Cotton Australia's Annual Report for 2021/22, which showcases our key achievements from the past year.

Over the past 12 months, Cotton Australia's team has achieved considerable results for our industry, despite further disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cotton Australia's policy team ensured the views of growers were heard by politicians across all sides of politics, at both state and federal levels, and engaged with them around our core policy portfolios and projects, including water, workforce, energy, biosecurity, stewardship, and mining. Cotton Australia's strict non-partisan approach and our commitment to engaging with

governments and oppositions has led to very strong relationships and industry understanding at all levels of government, and this continued over the past year.

With pandemic border restrictions limiting growers' access to seasonal workers, our team particularly focussed on finding solutions to this issue. The development of the Cotton Jobs Australia platform that connected growers with job seekers was an initiative I am particularly proud of, and I look forward to it being enhanced further in the coming year.

Our communications and education team continued to strategically share our industry's story with the public, particularly city dwellers, through social media, traditional media, and school visits. I am proud of the new initiatives the team developed, including podcasts, targeted digital advertising, and refreshed stakeholder publications.

Cotton Australia's *myBMP* team continued its work supporting growers in the best practices program and the linkage we have forged with Better Cotton is providing premiums to growers in many instances. I was thrilled to see even more growers become certified in the program, over the past year. Our regional managers also played a key role in supporting growers as our boots-on-the-ground team and ensured the views of farmers were relayed to all the Cotton Australia team, including the Board.

Our Cotton to Market team also achieved at a high level this year, establishing, and growing important relationships with brands and supply chain partners, and fostering deep interest at home and abroad in Australian cotton as a product of choice.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of Cotton Australia's administrative team, whose dedication and coordination helped ensure the organisation ran smoothly. Thanks also to Michael Murray our General Manager and all the Cotton Australia team for their hard work through a difficult year of lockdowns and border closures.

I wish our growers 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 for years to come.

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 is sustainable, valued for its economic and social contributions, and its production of very high-quality cotton that is 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 50 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 2018-23 Strategic Plan that sets out priorities and core areas of business.

Cotton Australia is a member of, and works in partnership with, key partners to align messages and coordinate efforts. We work with affiliate organisations including 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.

In 2022, Cotton Australia is celebrating its 50th year.



THANK YOU TO OUR LEVY PAYERS

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







We want to thank all those growers who contributed the full Cotton Australia levy for the 2020-21 year. It is for you that we do what we do.









50 Years of Cotton Australia


-  Cotton Australia
-  ACGRA
-  General industry
-  Cotton Australia and ACGRA
-  Cotton Australia and ACGRA merger
-  Cotton Australia and CRDC

1972


-  Australian Cotton Foundation (ACF) established by Namoi Cotton Cooperative, Auscott Limited and Queensland Cotton Marketing Board. These organisations financed ACF, along with a \$0.23 per bale grower levy. ACF began as a client of public relations firm Professional Public Relations that provided issues management advice and arranged promotional activities.

-  Australian Cotton Growers Research Association (ACGRA) formed with Richard Williams as Chairman and funded by a voluntary levy of \$0.25 per bale. Members were Namoi Cotton Cooperative, Auscott Limited and Queensland Cotton Marketing Board, Cotton Seed Distributors and the Ord River Cooperative. ACGRA was established to raise and invest grower dollars in research projects.


1973


-  Insect plague destroys 30% of the crop.


1973-76


-  Widespread floods throughout the major cotton regions of northern NSW for a number of years running.

1975


-  ACF's major focus during the '70s is managing media issues relating to agricultural chemicals and workers and ramping up positive promotion of Australian cotton products.

-  Industry is focussed on securing investments in capital infrastructure such as roads, rail, electricity and water to support a growing industry.

-  Cotton production reaches 110,000 bales.


-  Industry's first major attempt at IPM with the release of the Trichogramma (wasp).

1976


-  Short subject film produced by ACF about cotton growing in Australia wins Best Agricultural Film from New York Film and TV Awards.


-  First PhD funded, Peter Twine.


1977

-  Early funding for irrigation scheduling work.


1978

-  Australian Cotton Mark launched at the Sydney Opera House.


-  Grant for Verticillium resistance breeding and bacterial blight awarded.


-  ACGRA grants \$50,000 for Australian Cotton Research Institute insectarium facility at Myall Vale and insect resistance studies.

1979

-  Major funding for development of SIRATAC (CSIRO) and Extension.

1980



-  Cotton promotions featuring giant t-shirts, Easter Show displays and give-aways like 'Wrapped in Cotton' stickers and posters.

-  Cotton production reaches 435,000 bales.



1981

-  R&D levy raised to \$1 per bale.
-  Cotton Research Council established (Australian Government matches grower R&D levy).


1982

-  Severe and widespread drought hits.
-  First Australian Cotton Conference held in Goondiwindi, with an overhead projector the main form of technology.


1983

-  Pyrethroid resistance detected.
-  Darling River Cotton Company becomes a new member of ACGRA and ACF, the start of a new wave of gins to join.


1985

-  Cotton production reaches 1.1 million bales.


1986

-  R&D budget doubles in one year to \$2 million, reflecting rapid industry expansion.


1987

-  ACF produces first chemical safety chart.


1989

-  Maree McCaskill appointed as first CEO of the ACF, establishing itself as a stand-alone organisation.

1990


-  First whole-of-industry Environmental Audit ever undertaken by an agricultural industry in the southern hemisphere commenced, and was completed in 1991.

-  500,000 people witness 73 'Wrapped in National Fibres' fashion parade at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, with reports of the event running in 300 newspapers across the country.

-  Cotton production reaches 1.3 million bales.


-  CRDC established, replacing Cotton Research Council, with an R&D budget of \$3.5 million.


1991

-  Promotion activities ramped up: Wrapped in Cotton poster and TV campaign, education kit developed, launch of a distinctive new Cotton Mark and brand owners start attaching cotton swing tags to products.


-  First Industry Development Officer employed in the Macquarie.

1992

-  ACF Board votes to renew its membership to take into account the recently formed Cotton Grower Associations – 10 new CGAs also join ACGRA.


-  First Cotton CRC bid successful, under the banner of Sustainable Cotton Production.


1993

-  ACF staff hold shed meetings to talk about safe work practices.


1994


-  First Wrapped in Cotton Fashion parades at the Royal Queensland Show (Ekka) to showcase the work of Australia's leading designers to 70,000 people.

-  Insecticide residues found in gin trash fed to beef cattle, prompting an industry and government crisis – leads to growing community concerns.


-  TIMS (Transgenic Insecticide Management) Committee formed for industry oversight of insecticides and transgenic cotton varieties. Dick Browne is the first Chair.


1995

-  Drought causes harvest to fall to 1.5 million bales.

-  Allan Williams appointed as Executive Officer of ACGRA, replacing long-serving Secretary David Swallow.

1996

-  New slogan introduced. 'Growing Better All The Time' along with major TV advertising campaign.

-  194 registered users of the Cotton Mark.



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- Ingard cotton grown commercially for the first time – Australia's first transgenic cotton variety making up 8% of cotton area.

- All major processors and all Cotton Grower Associations are now members of Cotton Australia and ACGRA.

1997

- ACF changes its name to Cotton Australia, in part to avoid confusion with the Australian Conservation Foundation.

- NSW Government announces plans to cut access to water for irrigators by 10%.

- Gary Punch appointed as CEO.

- Formation of FUSCOM (Fusarium Committee) as disease spreads through the industry.

1998

- Pesticide use reaches crisis point with a shipment of beef bound for Korea found to be contaminated with endosulfan.

- Federal Agriculture Minister Mark Vaile issues a blunt warning to the cotton industry to 'get it right', that contamination of the beef industry would not be tolerated.

- The Cotton Store opens at Darling Harbour, Sydney – the first retail outlet in the world to showcase a product from farm to fashion, with an education centre.

- Endosulfan, used to control Heliothis caterpillar, makes up 70% of all chemicals used by the cotton industry, increasing community concerns around pesticides.

- More than 500,000 hectares of cotton planted for the first time.

- Severe and major insect pressure across the whole industry result in Area Wide Management groups to implement Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

- Cross-industry Heliothis Working Group secures \$4.5 million from Queensland Government to explore non-toxic options for Heliothis control.

1999

- 97% of all growers introduced to the BMP program at 300 workshops attended by 3,000 industry people.

- 60 local Aboriginal workers placed by the cotton industry's Aboriginal Employment Strategy in the Gwydir, sponsored by Cotton Australia.

- Policy and Legislation team broadened to focus lobbying efforts on gaining legally enshrined and fully tradeable water entitlements granted in perpetuity.

- Phillip Russell appointed as CEO.

- Re-bid for Cotton CRC successful, becomes the Australian Cotton CRC.

- ACGRA and Cotton Australia join forces to manage media relations for the ninth Australian Cotton Conference.

2000

- 270 independent audits of grower's spray drift management plans show 97% compliance with new endosulfan label requirements.

- Cotton Australia and ICAC host the International Cotton Advisory Committee meeting in Cairns.

- First Roundup Ready cotton grown commercially.

- Cotton production reaches 3.2 million bales.

- Major outbreak of Bunchy top disease.

- Ultra-Narrow Row cotton planting configurations trialled.

- Small commercial areas planted in southern NSW.

2001

- National Registration Authority announced ULV endosulfan to be withdrawn from the market.

- First fully accredited BMP cotton bale is produced by the Austin family at 'Badminton' in Theodore, Queensland.

- ACGRA becomes foundation member of Plant Health Australia.

- R&D levy raised to \$2.25.

2002

- First Bollgard II cotton grown commercially.

- Silverleaf Whitefly emerges as a cotton pest for the first time.

- Cotton research finds that truck wash (Farm Cleanse) is effective in disinfecting farm equipment for Fusarium.

- Rural Water Use Efficiency Financial Incentive Scheme helps growers fund WUE equipment.

2003

- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry recognises Cotton BMP as a world-leading environmental management system.

- Cotton education program winds down after directly reaching 40,000 students and close to 100,000 students through its outreach programs over five years.

- Second Cotton Industry Environmental Audit shows the BMP program has driven massive cultural change on-farm, with improvements across almost all areas of cotton production.

- With the encouragement of Cotton Australia and NFF, the Australian Government joins Brazil in challenging US cotton subsidy programs through WTO.

2004

- Cotton Australia welcomes National Water Initiative that contains long sought-after outcomes: water access rights granted in perpetuity, issues of structural adjustment for those affected by reform addressed and tradeable rights.

- Transgenic varieties make up 50% of Australia's cotton area.

2005

- World Trade Organisation rules in favour of Brazil in dispute with the USA and orders US Government to bring its cotton programs into line with WTO rules.

- Growers produce 2.9 million bales.

- New Cotton Catchment Communities CRC commences, with Cotton Australia and ACGRA as partners.

2006

- Roundup Ready Flex cotton grown commercially for the first time.

- Greg Kauter appointed as ACGRA Executive Officer.

- Formal participation in the national framework for biosecurity by signing the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed and developing the first cotton Biosecurity Plan.

2007

- Adam Kay appointed as CEO.

- \$700,000 in DAFF funding secured for Tools for Managing the Drought Project.

- Liberty Link transgenic cotton grown commercially for the first time.

2008

- Merger: Cotton Australia and ACGRA merge to provide one united voice for cotton growers across all policy and research areas. Members are 12 ginning companies, 16 Cotton Grower Associations, and two Service and Industry Members (30 members in total). A Board of ginners and grower representatives oversee the organisation.



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2009

- 16,000 hectares of cotton affected by phenoxy herbicide (Group I) drift, costing the industry \$9 million in lost production.
- Cotton Industry 2029 Vision developed with input from all industry sectors. By 2029, the industry wants to be Differentiated, Responsible, Tough, Successful, Respected, Capable.
- Solenopsis Mealybug, a new exotic pest, found in cotton for the first time.
- Agriculture excluded from the federal government's draft Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme legislation as part of a coalition deal, reflecting Cotton Australia's policy position.
- 85% of cotton fields mapped on cottonmap.com.au as part of a broader strategy to reduce incidence of 2,4D drift.

2010

- Cotton production reaches 1.594 million bales – still severely drought affected.
- First round modules produced.

- Cotton dryland plantings reach a record 35% of the total crop planted.
- Decade-long drought recedes with widespread flooding that caused severe damage to cotton crops in some areas.
- Guide to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan recommends cuts in diversions across the Basin between 3,000 GL – 4,000 GL, and predicts just 800 jobs would be lost – community outrage follows and CRC research used to counter this claim.
- Federal Government announces it would only purchase water entitlements from willing sellers at full market value in regard to Murray-Darling Basin adjustments – a major win.
- 'Cotton Safe' program launched to promote work health and safety issues.
- Revised myBMP program launched, a web-based system making it easier for growers to use and bringing all of the industry's sustainability resources and knowledge together.
- Cotton planted area reaches more than 600,000 hectares for the first time.
- Third Environmental Assessment (audit) commences.

- Round modules represent 85% of harvested area.
- Cotton Australia negotiates outcomes to alleviate equipment movement restrictions during critical harvest period.
- Productivity Commission Review threatens rural R&D. Cotton Australia coordinates cross-sectoral group of over 20 commodity groups. Federal Ag Minister pledges not to change funding arrangements a major win for growers, but not cotton communities.

2012

- Cotton Australia celebrates its 40th anniversary with an anniversary dinner in Narromine, a special issue of the Annual Report, a YouTube video series, and a cotton conference display looking back over 40 years.
- Cotton Australia becomes a member of the global Better Cotton Initiative.
- Cotton Australia and the US cotton industry work together to develop the Cotton Leads program to promote the sustainability credentials of both countries.

- Cotton Australia Transport Guide updated to include round modules.
- Cotton Australia's Education program is re-launched, connecting the cotton industry with school teachers and students.
- Cotton CRC ends with 19 years of cotton research, \$320 million invested in R&D, resulting in at least \$2 billion worth of value.
- A record crop of 5.3 million bales produced.
- 98.6% of cotton crop made up of transgenic varieties.
- CottonInfo – the industry's extension program – is launched as a joint venture between CA, CSD, CRDC.

2013

- Cotton Australia's Cotton to Market program is launched to strategically enhance the promotion of Australian cotton to brands and retailers, and to support them on their journey using our fibre in their products.
- For the first time, Cotton Australia has a stand at the Intertextile event in Shanghai promoting Australian cotton to the world.

2014

- Water embargoes in northern NSW overturned following lobbying by Cotton Australia and irrigation industry bodies.
- Cotton Australia becomes a Strategic Partner of the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) following a formal benchmarking process to align the 'my Best Management Practice' (myBMP) program with the Better Cotton Standard.
- Cotton's first Herbicide Resistance Management Strategy released, which is an important step for stewardship and managing glyphosate resistance.

2015

- Supplementary water licences issued in perpetuity after a decade long advocacy effort by Cotton Australia and valley-based irrigator groups.
- Through its advocacy, Cotton Australia achieved a regulatory determination to reduce electricity pricing.
- Easter transport notices and exemptions secured through Cotton Australia's advocacy.
- Research identifies a defoliating strain of Verticillium dahlia in QLD and NSW thanks to proactive disease monitoring.

- The first ever resilience assessment of the Australian cotton industry is undertaken, outlining cotton's resilience and preparedness.
- The world's first cotton climate change facility developed at ACRI, with support from CRDC.
- The industry's first Workforce Development Strategy is developed by CRDC and Cotton Australia.

2016

- An extension to planting windows is secured by Cotton Australia for growers.
- Cotton Australia lobbied to avoid a Road Transport Renumeration Tribunal (RSRT), avoiding transport price hikes.
- Cotton Australia lobbied and secured natural disaster assistance for growers hit by super storm cells.
- Cotton Australia director Simon Corish appointed to the BCI Council.
- The development of local area management for water schemes in Queensland is progressed.
- 500,000ha planted into irrigated and dryland cotton, the largest crop in five years.



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2017

- The AgSkilled workforce training program begins for NSW growers – a direct partnership between Cotton Australia, GRDC, and the NSW Government to invest \$14.7 million over three years.
- The benefit-cost ratio of best practices program *myBMP* is measured at 9.1:1 – \$9.10 in benefit for growers for every \$1 invested by growers and the Government through CRDC.

2018

- Cotton Australia launches its 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, with the aim of ensuring the industry is valued, viable and advanced.
- A record number of delegates attend the Australian Cotton Conference, with 2,460 people present.
- Cotton Australia stewarded the 'More Than Flow' campaign, successfully rallying communities and growers to engage in the Northern Basin Review.
- Cotton Australia advocated and secured a successful outcome on the backpacker tax issue.
- Through its advocacy work, Cotton Australia helped secure extended planting windows for Bollgard 3 cotton.

- Following successful advocacy from Cotton Australia, the ACCC launched a review into electricity pricing.
- The first commercial cotton trial in 15 years is picked in the Northern Territory, supported by industry-led research.

2019

- One of the worst droughts in a century takes hold, triggering a dramatic decline in cotton crop size due to the lack of water.
- Media coverage and public commentary unfairly blames the cotton industry for a mass fish death event in Menindee during the drought. Scientific reports later find a lack of water and deoxygenation of the river caused the deaths.
- Independent federal Senator Rex Patrick launches a calculated political attack on the cotton industry, introducing a Bill (that later fails) to ban the export of cotton from Australia.
- Cotton Australia launched a 'defending the industry' campaign to protect the industry strongly and robustly from politically motivated attacks.
- The International Cotton Advisory Committee Conference is held in Brisbane.
- 97% of growers adopt the industry-recommended thresholds for pest management.

- Cotton Australia and CRDC launch the Australian Cotton Sustainability Report 2019, with a focus on eight priority areas – water, carbon, biodiversity, pesticides, quality of work life (safety, diversity, training), wellbeing and social capital, efficiency, and profitability.

- Cotton Australia launches its Rebuilding Trust Strategy – involving the whole company and industry – in an effort to repair reputational damage incurred by the unfair negative attention the industry received after the Menindee fish deaths.

2020

- The first Cotton Open House event is held in Sydney, bringing together stakeholders and critics of the industry to learn about cotton.
- Cotton Australia launches its 360-degree virtual reality video. The video is used as an immersive educational resource and industry trust-building tool.
- Cotton Australia joins with Country Road and Landcare Australia to form a partnership with the cotton industry to improve biodiversity on cotton farms called The Country Road Biodiversity Project.
- China introduces a soft ban on its import of Australian cotton, leaving the Australian industry to find new export partners.

- The cotton industry's Sustainability framework: Paddock, People, Planet is launched. A total of 365 stakeholders provide feedback on the Australian cotton industry's draft sustainability targets during consultation.

- The COVID-19 pandemic hits, impacting all business sectors, including cotton.

- Analysis of available water use data shows the cotton industry almost halved the amount of water needed to grow a bale of cotton since 1996.

2021

- Cotton Australia continues to adapt to the digital age, with a significant acceleration in the organisation's digital audience growth. The cumulative audience for the organisation's social media and website reached 182,000 people.
- A new and updated Cotton Education Kit is launched to better inform teachers and students about the Australian cotton industry. The Cotton Australia education program has been running successfully for more than a decade.
- CRDC, Cotton Australia and the Sustainability Working Group form the Australian Cotton Sustainability Reference Group, bringing together a group of experts for genuine stakeholder engagement and feedback.

- Construction begins on a new gin near Katherine, Northern Territory – the first in the territory.

- Cotton production in northern Australia in 2021/22 almost doubled from the previous year.

- A ground-breaking trial tests whether shredded cotton products could offer benefits to soil health and a scalable solution to textile waste.

2022

- Cotton Australia is finally able to use its virtual reality video featuring a cotton growing family at the Sydney Royal Easter Show (the resource was prepared for 2020, but the pandemic prevented its use).
- The Australian cotton industry's 4th Environmental Audit process begins, with Cotton Australia and CRDC overseeing the project.
- Heavy rain and floods replenishes water supplies and increases allocations to growers, leading to the best cotton crop on record.
- It is anticipated Australia will produce more than one million bales of BCI cotton (generating an estimated \$7 million-plus for BCI growers).
- Bayer offers canopy temperature sensors and soil moisture probes to support BCI growers.





Water

Supporting growers on state and federal water issues.

- + Advocacy on the future of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan a focus.
- + Frustrating delays to floodplain harvesting reforms in NSW.
- + Queensland water compliance changes take shape.

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

With the crippling drought well and truly broken, the flooding rains brought a new set of policy challenges for Cotton Australia to advocate on, coupled with a looming federal election and the politicising of water issues.

The future of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, the volumetric licencing of floodplain harvesting, and ongoing reforms to metering have all been among the issues Cotton Australia has advocated on, on behalf of our growers.

Water politics

In conjunction with industry and agricultural stakeholders, Cotton Australia regularly advocated for growers to state and federal water ministers, shadow ministers, and senior water public servants over the past year.

Cotton Australia strongly supported enhanced government investment in complementary measures across the Murray-Darling Basin to leverage increased environmental outcomes from the use of environmental water. We also put forward our industry's view that in the run-up to the Basin Plan Review, it was essential there were clear, measurable outcomes from the environmental water that had been acquired.

In March 2022, Cotton Australia toured the Border Rivers and Lower Balonne in Queensland with the Chair of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), Sir Angus Houston, the acting MDBA CEO, Andrew Reynolds, and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, Hilton Taylor. This tour was valuable in informing the aforementioned stakeholders about our industry, and our growers' perspectives on water regulation.

With a federal election to be held in May 2022, Cotton Australia looks forward to continuing to advocate to the new government (Coalition or Labor) for increased expenditure on complementary measures throughout the Murray-Darling Basin, as we have done over the past year. We will also continue our calls for the optimisation of Sustainable Diversion Adjustment Mechanism projects to achieve the minimum water recovery of 605GL. Similarly, we will advocate for the completion of the Basin Plan without having to resort to further buybacks, and issue ongoing support for the sustainable release of water resources, particularly across northern Australia.



New South Wales

Water issues over the past year in NSW focussed on the volumetric licencing of floodplain harvesting. The debate was a frustrating one to follow, with progress on the issue hampered by the NSW Parliament's volatile power balance (particularly in the Legislative Council), and the disruption of the process in getting on with the job and solving the issue. These obstructions were despite the Parliament's independent legal advice (commissioned by the Upper House) from pre-eminent barrister Bret Walker QC clearly recommending the need to volumetrically licence the take of floodplain water.

On this issue, Cotton Australia appeared as a witness at the Upper House inquiry into floodplain harvesting, alongside the NSW Irrigators' Council.

At the time of writing, a lack of certainty remained around the issue, but it appeared volumetric licences may be in place on or around July 1st 2022 for the Gwydir and Border Rivers, but not for the Barwon-Darling, Namoi and Macquarie Valleys.

Cotton Australia recognised that volumetric licencing will lead to a significant reduction in allowed average floodplain harvesting take; but despite this, we continue to support volumetric licencing for the increased certainty it will provide, and because we recognise take must be within the limits of individual water resource plans and the overall Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

The other main water issue Cotton Australia advocated on over the past year in NSW was water metering and compliance, which remained a focus for parliamentarians and government departments. We continued to present our support for compliance and water metering reforms that are both effective and cost effective.

Cotton Australia worked closely with the following valley-based groups in NSW over the past year: Lachlan Valley Water, Macquarie River Food and Fibre, Namoi Water, Gwydir Valley Irrigators' Association, Border Rivers Food and Fibre, and Barwon-Darling Water.

Queensland

Over the past year in Queensland, Cotton Australia, along with the Queensland Farmers' Federation and valley-based groups, strongly and clearly presented our view on behalf of growers that we support effective and cost-effective metering, measurement, and monitoring reforms.

We acknowledged that the Queensland Government was on a pathway to improving the standard of metering and monitoring across the state, and in particular within the Queensland portion of the Murray-Darling Basin. Over the past year we observed that the Queensland Government appeared to be learning from some of the mistakes made in New South Wales during that state's metering roll-out, and was taking a more considered and steady approach. Cotton Australia convened a meeting of irrigator groups from the Queensland portion of the Murray-Darling Basin in December 2021 to provide direct feedback to the state government on its metering policy, along with other issues of common interest.

During the 2021/22 season, Cotton Australia, in close partnership with QFF, successfully advocated to the Queensland Government for positive adjustments to Sunwater water charges. It will remain a priority of Cotton Australia over the next year to push for the rectification of the long-standing Queensland Government position that will see some schemes paying well in excess of the stated Queensland rural water policy of pricing being based on Lower Bound costs.

The past year saw the finalisation of the three-year Queensland Farm Water Futures Program, which directly stimulated investment in 36 on-farm irrigation efficiency projects with a total value in excess of \$817,000. The investment by growers was supported by grant funding of \$241,464. In addition to the money provided by the government, Cotton Australia contributed more than \$27,000. The investment covered the implementation of a broad range of innovative technology, the production of resources, including nine case studies and media articles, and water use efficiency extension activities.

Cotton Australia worked with the Dawson Valley Cotton Growers' Association to liaise with the Queensland Government about the renewal of strategic infrastructure reserve water leases that were available to agriculture. The more than 60,000 megalitres of water that was available was being held for potential use should Nathan Dam be built. At the time of writing, there was no clear timetable or process for the renewal, with the first of the original leases expiring in September 2021.



Our thanks

Cotton Australia worked closely with a range of other irrigation groups to affect positive change this past 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.

Sustainability

Enhancing our industry's future prosperity by placing sustainability at the heart of our operations.

- + Work on finalising targets continued.
- + Stakeholder engagement activities proceed, despite the pandemic.
- + Industry's next independent environmental examination underway.

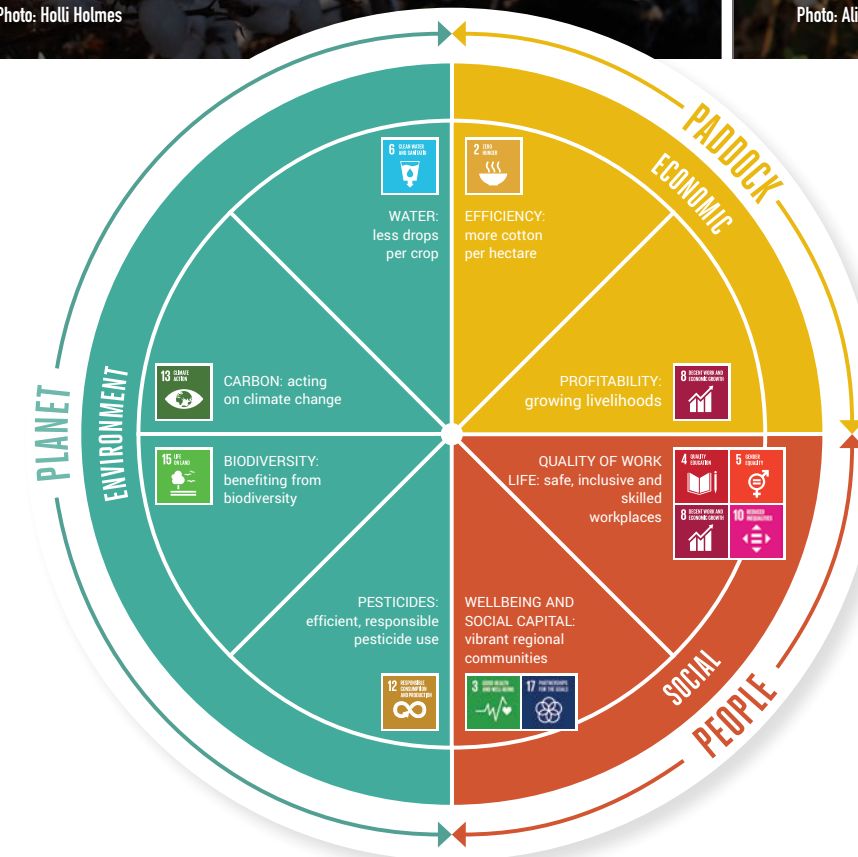
Over the past year, the Australian cotton industry's sustainability framework **PLANET. PEOPLE. PADDOCK.** continued to take shape.

The nine priority sustainability topics in this framework are:

- + Planet: water; carbon; biodiversity; pesticides.
- + People: quality of work life; workplace safety; wellbeing and social capital.
- + Paddock: productivity; profitability.

Throughout 2021/22, the core focus was on finalising the framework's targets and undertaking extensive stakeholder engagement to ensure the cotton industry continued to operate and respond to sustainability issues.

The Sustainability Working Group, co-chaired by Cotton Australia and the Cotton Research and Development Corporation, continued its work finalising the framework's targets by meeting quarterly. The group reviewed and coordinated existing work and new investments to progress the project and refine targets as appropriate.



The core stakeholder engagement initiative that was established over the past year was the Australian Cotton Sustainability Reference Group (ACSRG). The establishment of the group ensures the PLANET. PEOPLE. PADDOCK. framework is credible and in line with community expectations. The group met for the first time virtually in November, and its members included representatives from retail brands, environmental organisations, First Nations, governments, merchants, regulators, community organisations, health and safety, as well as cotton growers, researchers, input providers and other broadacre agriculture sustainability frameworks. The group's first meeting was designed to build members' knowledge of our industry's actions to date and build rapport.

Into the future, the ACSRSG will create a regular formal process to bring a diverse group of experts and thought leaders together to inform the industry's sustainability decision-making.

The ACSRSG has asked to meet twice-yearly to provide constructive feedback on opportunities for collaboration, emerging risks, and suggestions to increase existing pathways and enhance the Australian cotton industry's plans for greater positive impact.

Over the past year, Cotton Australia continued to provide input into the National Farmers' Federation's sustainability project – the Australian Agriculture Sustainability Framework (AASF). This two-year undertaking aims to create a standardised and efficient voluntary system to demonstrate sustainable farming outcomes, generate new commercial value, and meet new and emerging market needs. The Australian cotton industry's long standing myBMP program has played a key role in setting the tone for many of the principles and indicators that have evolved into the AASF.

> WHERE TO FROM HERE

The Australian cotton industry's PLANET. PEOPLE. PADDOCK. framework is underpinned by industry environmental audits and assessments. The first was conducted in 1991, with subsequent studies in 2003 and 2012. The industry made a public commitment to conduct these every 10 years.

The next (fourth) environmental assessment began in early 2022, with CRDC engaging the company GHD to:

- + Assess the cotton industry's response to the recommendations made in the Third Environmental Assessment (2012);
- + Assess the current industry's environmental issues and goals;
- + Identify opportunities for greater impact, recommend priorities for action and risk management.

The final report is scheduled to be released in October 2022, with the project's timeline designed to minimise on-farm disruptions during planting and picking, as well as contend with potential COVID-19 restrictions. Like the 2003 and 2012 assessments, the activity is designed to drive further industry improvements and acknowledge achievements made in the interim.

AUSTRALIAN COTTON SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK
PLANET. PEOPLE. PADDOCK.

Research Direction & Stewardship

Ensuring our growers were shielded from biosecurity threats, and protecting their environments while growing cotton.

- + Research priorities determined through grower engagement.
- + New and emerging biosecurity threats identified.
- + Ensuring safe and sustainable pesticide use a priority.

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 facilitating the annual grower survey to ensure levy payers have input into research priorities and CRDC investment, and the research forums in May and November.

These avenues provided our growers the opportunity to share their perspectives on research areas of need, and ensured the industry continued on its path of innovation and development.

Over the coming year, Cotton Australia will continue to work with CRDC as part of its new strategic plan. We aim to help enhance research outcomes by optimising the involvement of levy payers in the research input process, so it yields greater value both for growers and researchers. Likewise, in the longer-term, we will work to provide more strategic input in research projects and research areas.

Biosecurity

Ensuring our industry was informed and protected from the potentially disastrous impacts of biosecurity incidents remained a core focus for Cotton Australia over the past year.

As part of Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed, Cotton Australia collaborated with stakeholders around efforts to eradicate a number of khapra beetle and Brown marmorated stink bug incursions.

Our team advocated for increased biosecurity funding through the National Farmers' Federation, in an effort to ensure the biosecurity system's capacity remains fit for purpose and well-resourced into the future.

To support our industry's growth into northern Australia, Cotton Australia reviewed guidelines for module transportation from Western Australia and the Northern Territory for ginning, to manage risk of pink bollworm.

Similarly, over the past year Cotton Australia reviewed the cotton industry's list of High Priority Pests from overseas to identify new and emerging potential threats and to ensure contingency plans are developed.

Into the coming year, a focus of Cotton Australia will be on establishing further training to increase industry preparedness around new and emerging biosecurity threats.

Cotton Australia will also continue to push for increased biosecurity funding, to ensure our industry, and agriculture generally, is protected from threats.

TIMS Committee

Throughout 2021/22, the TIMS Committee reviewed the current pupae busting date in the Bollgard 3 Resistance Management Plan (RMP) to ensure the date was still relevant in managing risk.

The committee also worked with Bayer and Central Queensland growers to negotiate changes to the Bollgard 3 RMP in that region to mitigate an emerging risk to Bollgard 3 technology identified when growing long-season cotton.

Similarly, the TIMS Committee engaged with Bayer on changes to the Bollgard 3 Northern RMP, that was designed to ensure ratoon cotton in Northern Australia was properly controlled, and that there was a break in crops between seasons to mitigate the risk of cotton growing in warm conditions all year round.

Over the past year, new recommendations were developed in the industry's Insecticide Resistance Management Strategy to prevent the application of fipronil during flowering to protect pollinator species in cotton.

Looking ahead, the TIMS Committee will continue to work with Bayer on XtendFlex, to ensure a robust stewardship package is developed that adequately manages the risk of dicamba application in cotton.

Advocacy work around a cross-commodity farming system approach for the stewardship of herbicide-tolerant traits will also be an area of focus.

Pesticides

During the 2021/22 season, Cotton Australia worked to ensure growers continued to have access to the pesticides they need to effectively and sustainably grow cotton.

One major development was minor use permits being approved for mancozeb and tebuconazole to control Alternaria.

Cotton Australia's membership of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority's (APVMA) stakeholder forum continued, and a focus was the discussion around access to and regulation of agricultural pesticides.

We continued to advocate for growers around maintaining the current role of the APVMA as the independent regulator in biotechnologies, to ensure effective stewardship and resistance management of biotechnologies in Australia remains in place.





Spray Drift

Ensuring spray best practice through proactive information sharing and training.

- + Engagement with government agencies on spray application a priority.
- + Almost 70% of the national crop mapped on SataCrop.
- + Training opportunities enhance growers' pesticide application skills.

With a bumper crop being grown in 2021/22, and wet weather spurring the growth of weeds, advocating for effective and safe spraying was a key priority for Cotton Australia over the past year.

A number of initiatives were enacted by Cotton Australia's team to ensure off-target spray drift was mitigated, with communication and engagement activities being at the heart of these efforts.

A number of pre-season meetings were held with government agencies, including Biosecurity Queensland and the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), which Cotton Australia used to update stakeholders on the latest developments in the industry and insight into what Cotton Australia was doing to raise awareness.

Ensuring the skills of growers were at the highest level was another key priority, with Sustainable Spray Application Workshops delivered to farmers in Queensland, along with Advanced Spray Application workshops delivered in NSW under the AgSkilled training program.

SataCrop continued to develop as a platform for mapping fields and informing growers and apiarists about the location of sensitive crops. A key new feature of the program was for apiarists to log where their bee hives were located, so cotton growers were more informed when planning their spray activities. Further to this, Cotton Australia presented at the Queensland Beekeepers' Association's state conference to promote SataCrop and ensure successful outcomes for all stakeholders. A total of 68.5% of the cotton growing hectares for this season were mapped on SataCrop.

As part of proactive communication efforts, Cotton Australia ran a series of strategically timed radio advertisements promoting spray best practice and raising awareness of conditions when spray drift can occur.

As a result of these initiatives, fewer moderate and severe spray drift incidents occurred during the 2021/22 cotton season. Cotton Australia received 11 reports of damage, with off-target spray drift damage to the national crop totalling just 0.31%.

> WHERE TO FROM HERE

Over the year ahead, Cotton Australia will continue to promote SataCrop to all agricultural industries and apiarists.

The team will also continue and enhance the initiatives we implemented this season to engage with government stakeholders and agencies on this issue, as well as run spray application workshops in both Queensland and New South Wales.

Another key focus will be on investigating ways to integrate SataCrop with other platforms to provide growers better decision-making tools for pesticide application.



Workforce

Ensuring our growers are highly trained and have their workforce needs met.

- + Cotton Jobs Australia launched to help fill recruitment holes.
- + Extensive engagement with government a core focus.
- + Skills and training needs analysis conducted.

A key priority for Cotton Australia over the past year was advocating and providing opportunities for our cotton workforce to expand its skills and develop strong businesses.

With the Australian border closed to international arrivals for much of the year due to the pandemic, growers were faced with the challenge of securing workers to fill seasonal positions on-farm. Cotton Australia worked to support growers in the process by developing a job advertisement and application portal on its website called Cotton Jobs Australia. Growers created an account and posted jobs they needed filling. Applicants logged online and applied for the available roles.

The platform was developed with assistance from a Queensland Government grant, and the Cotton Australia team promoted the platform to job seekers in cities through targeted social media advertising and Google search advertisements.

Over the past year, Cotton Australia continued to advocate for our industry's workforce training proposal in Queensland called SmartAg QLD. As a result, the Queensland Government announced \$5 million in funding for agribusiness skills training, with Cotton Australia invited to participate and be on the steering committee.

Some of Cotton Australia's other workforce advocacy work over the past year included:

- + Presenting at and actively participating in the Queensland Government's Workforce Summit.
- + Meeting with Queensland's Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development, Di Farmer, on numerous occasions.
- + Continuing to roll out the fully-funded Sustainable Spray Application workshops to Queensland cotton and grain businesses, following a successful application for funding under the Queensland Government's Micro-credential Pilot Program.
- + Meeting quarterly with Queensland TAFE to ensure they were informed of our industry's training needs.
- + Continuing to be an active member of the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance in Queensland and the National Farmers' Federation's (NFF) Workforce committee.
- + Organising an industry visit for the NSW Agriculture, Food and Animal Management Industry Training Advisory Body (AFAM ITAB) representative to help them understand our industry's training needs and workforce challenges.

- + Continuing to advocate for industry training needs and guide the delivery of the AgSkilled program in NSW as an industry representative on the program's Steering Committee.

In conjunction with these activities, Cotton Australia completed a skills and training needs analysis of the industry, to better inform itself, government and registered training organisations of the industry's workforce and capability requirements.

> WHERE TO FROM HERE

Over the coming season, Cotton Australia will ensure it is an active member of the steering committee that will influence the Queensland Government's \$5 million spend on agribusiness skills training.

We will continue to represent the cotton industry as an industry representative on the AgSkilled Steering Committee.

On behalf of growers, Cotton Australia will remain strong participants of the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance in Queensland, and the NFF's Workforce committee.

Further work will be done to enhance the Cotton Jobs Australia platform and promote it extensively to universities to attract more seasonal workers.

Energy, Mining and CSG

Advocating for affordable natural resource and utility options for our growers.

- + CSG expansion triggers concern.
- + Participation in energy groups enhances advocacy
- + Securing equitable tariffs a priority.

Mining and coal seam gas (CSG)

Over the past year, the expansion of the CSG resource industry's footprint onto Queensland's Darling Downs, and in particular the Condamine Floodplain, brought challenges for Cotton Australia. Significant concern was raised among some landholders after the release of a Queensland Government report showed landscape-wide subsidence – an almost-certain outcome from CSG extraction on the Darling Downs. It remained unclear as to what, if any, economic loss will occur.

In addressing this issue, Cotton Australia acknowledged that cotton growers on the Darling Downs hold a diversity of views around the CSG industry, and therefore Cotton Australia focused on its three key policy areas:

- + Protect the productive capacity of the water our industry relies on;
- + Protect the productive capacity of the soil our industry relies on; and,
- + If CSG development occurs, growers are appropriately compensated.

Throughout the 2021/22 season, Cotton Australia provided input on, but did not formally endorse, the Arrow Energy Deviated Well Agreement. Cotton Australia believed the agreement gave landholders with deviated wells under their properties enhanced protection, and a better-defined pathway to remediation and compensation should they suffer an economic loss, but also acknowledged that it does not meet the expectations of some landholders.

Another area of focus for Cotton Australia over the past year was participating in the GasFields Commission's partial review of the Regional Planning Interest Act. This review resulted in recommendations for improvement in the way the Act operates, but unfortunately widespread confusion remained, even among government bodies, as to the effectiveness of this Act.

In New South Wales, Cotton Australia continued its work tracking the Narrabri Gas Project, and the other petroleum exploration licences issued by the NSW Government. The Santos gas project faced a number of legal challenges throughout the year and consequently was only in the very early stages of project establishment at the time of writing



Energy

National and New South Wales

In New South Wales this past year, Cotton Australia continued to represent our growers' views through its membership of Essential Energy's Customer Advisory Group. This group was afforded opportunities to explore fit-for-purpose tariffs for so-called 'lumpy energy users' – for example, gins and river pumps – whose energy use spikes at certain times of the year.

Cotton Australia also continued to play a key advisory role in the NSW Government's stakeholder think tank to assist with the delivery of its Energy Infrastructure Roadmap and Renewable Energy Zones stakeholder groups. Our work included advocating for growers and raising their concerns about:

- + the cost of infrastructure that will connect these zones;
- + competing land use issues; and,
- + advocating for direct benefits to the hosting community, such as gaining access to locally-generated electricity or receiving income from hosting infrastructure.

On a national level, a key focus of Cotton Australia during the 2021/22 season was contributing to the ongoing work of the Agricultural Energy Users Taskforce, which particularly centred on distributed energy and 'microgrids'. This work included the Regional and Remote Communities Reliability Fund feasibility

study which Cotton Australia and the Queensland Farmers' Federation, in partnership with two renewable energy consultancies, conducted.

Over the past 12 months in the 'Flow on Benefits of Microgrids for Agriculture' project, the four field sites that were selected (including a cotton farm at St George in Queensland) had 65 smart meters installed. At the time of writing, the project was in the modelling and analysis phase, in preparation for final recommendations and reporting in the first half of 2022. The modelling will consider whether the linking of on-farm solar infrastructure to share energy in different locations as a 'microgrid' can offer benefits to agricultural electricity consumers as well as the network providers. The project will consider the opportunity for farmers to generate renewable energy and whether it can reduce overall energy costs. The project will conclude in mid-2022.

Queensland

After extensive and long-term advocacy by Cotton Australia and other organisations, the past year saw some improvement in electricity tariff offerings and prices for many Queensland users. This was achieved through the combined effort of Cotton Australia and the major cotton ginning companies in Queensland. Improvements in the tariff options that are available to ginners provided some pricing relief; however, this followed years of significant price increases and inflexible tariff options.

Equitable tariffs will continue to be a priority issue for Cotton Australia over the year ahead, as it seeks to ensure irrigators can access, and continue to access, affordable grid-supplied electricity. Of particular note will be advocacy to the Queensland Competition Authority, after it announced significant increases in tariffs for the 2022/23 year.

Energy Savers Plus Program

The Queensland Government-funded Energy Savers Plus Program will enable up to 200 audits of farm energy usage to identify better ways to manage growers' electricity consumption. Cotton Australia continued its involvement in this program, and over the past year, nine Queensland-based cotton farms participated in the initiative. Key benefits delivered to growers included identifying cost efficiency savings through better tariff options, improved pumping efficiencies, streamlined water delivery on farm, and supplying growers with the financial information they needed to make infrastructure upgrades. Cotton Australia will continue to encourage Queensland growers to access this program over the year ahead.



Essential grower services

Providing a voice for growers around key on-farm needs.

Transport

Over recent years, issues surrounding transport in the cotton industry have remained relatively stable. Despite this, Cotton Australia continued to engage with transport stakeholders this past year, including the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR), the NSW Roads and Maritime Services, and the Queensland Transport and Main Roads.

In the coming year, Cotton Australia will continue to work with the above stakeholders to help provide easier and plain-English advice to growers around transport requirements and road regulations. Similarly, the arrival of the new John Deere 770 cotton picker will require Cotton Australia to advocate to state governments to achieve the same rules for transport as earlier models enjoyed.

Workplace Health and Safety (WHS)

Throughout 2021/22, Cotton Australia worked to ensure growers' views around workplace health and safety (WHS) were advocated for.

Through its membership of the National Farmers' Federation and Farmsafe Australia, Cotton Australia played an integral role in securing funding for Farmsafe Australia. This achievement enabled the expansion of the group to include other state agricultural bodies, which in turn benefitted growers by strengthening the voices calling for enhancements to WHS legislation and awareness.

Cotton Australia's membership of Farmsafe Australia over the past year enabled the cotton industry to embark on programs to revitalise safety awareness. This in turn made farms safer and prevented injuries and loss of life. An example of this work was the development of the George the Farmer resource and animated song, which was aimed at raising children's safety awareness on-farm.

Over the past year, Cotton Australia delivered first aid workshops to growers in Queensland and New South Wales, and also secured a grant from the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to deliver safety awareness workshops, which will be rolled out over the coming 12 months.

On behalf of growers, Cotton Australia participated in the Electrical Safety Forum in Queensland, which brought together government, electricity providers, and agricultural industry representatives to reduce unsafe electrical practices. As part of this membership Cotton Australia, assisted in the further development of the Look Up and Live app. Similarly, Cotton Australia met with Essential Energy in NSW to raise electrical safety awareness for growers in that state.

During 2021/22, Cotton Australia and CRDC continued the Australian Cotton Industry WHS Committee. The committee collaborated to increase engagement and produce consistent communications around the critical issues of work health and safety within the cotton industry.

Telecommunications

Working to ensure our growers enjoyed strong telecommunications infrastructure continued to be a focus for Cotton Australia throughout 2021/22. The organisation remained an active member of the National Farmers' Federation's Telecommunications and Social Policy Committee, as well the Regional Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC). As part of these group memberships, Cotton Australia regularly met with providers Telstra and NBNCo, as well as federal parliamentarians to promote the needs of cotton growers in this space.

Over the past year, Cotton Australia wrote letters of support for Field Solutions Group, which enabled them to secure government grants to fund increased infrastructure and expand network coverage in cotton producing areas. Cotton Australia also assisted Zetifi in establishing trials in cotton producing regions.

Over the year ahead, Cotton Australia will work to ensure the Mobile Black Spot Program continues to be rolled out.

Cotton Australia will also continue its active membership of the NFF Telecommunications and Social Policy Committee, and the RRRCC.

Likewise, Cotton Australia will continue to advocate to governments for better digital coverage for cotton producing regions.







Communications

Advocating for growers, and informing industry members, through media and digital channels.

- + Enriched media coverage of cotton achieved.
- + Digital audience size skyrockets.
- + New projects ensure cotton's messages reach new audiences.

Over the past year, Cotton Australia's Communications team continued its broad portfolio of work and projects centred on: informing growers and industry of news and information, proactively sharing the cotton industry's story with the community, and strategically reaching new audiences through digital channels and media outlets.

In addition to the key achievements detailed in this report, Cotton Australia's communications team played key roles in providing daily hands-on communications support to all of the organisation's teams to enhance its operations on behalf of growers. This support included: providing media and social media training to staff and growers, developing presentations, proofreading documents and submissions, providing technical, administrative, and graphic design support, developing speaking notes and speeches, maintaining key organisational documents, advising on communications best practice, and supporting company events.

Digital strategy

Cotton Australia's social media audience continued to grow considerably over the past year. Our Facebook audience grew by 26% to 13,920 followers, our Instagram followers skyrocketed by 51% to 2,034, and our Twitter followers increased by 6% to 7,047. This growth was due to the targeted digital strategy enacted by Cotton Australia, which focussed on delivering industry information through content such as stories, videos, and photos, and a social media advertising campaign aimed at metropolitan audiences.

Over the past year, Cotton Australia's website accumulated a total of 374,212 page views (an average of 1,025 page views per day).

Cotton Australia also informed growers and the industry by producing e-newsletters and publications, including the fortnightly *Cotton Matters*, the *Members Memo* report after each Cotton Australia General Meeting, the quarterly *Current and Future Activities* document, and Cotton Australia's *Annual Report*. Another core achievement over the past year was the complete update and re-design of *The Pocket Guide to Cotton* publication, which was printed and distributed to stakeholders and the community.

Other core achievements and projects included:

Podcast

In early 2022, production of Cotton Australia's debut podcast *From the Field* began. Season one of the podcast spanned five episodes and featured conversations between Darrin Davies and growers and industry leaders around five core themes. The podcast

was targeted at metropolitan listeners, and was part of Cotton Australia's efforts to rebuild public trust. At the time of writing, the podcast was in the final stages of production before launch. Cotton Australia thanks Aaron Kiely, Joe Briggs, Amanda Thomas, Alexandria Galea, and Nigel Burnett for being interviewed and part of the series.

Advertising

A new initiative enacted over the past year was a targeted digital advertising campaign on Spotify and Google Ads, to raise awareness of the industry and attract new workers into cotton. The limited-run audio campaign on Spotify reached more than 60,000 people in metropolitan areas of Australia, and the Google Ads campaign made 287,000 digital impressions.

Interactive quiz

A new digital tool was developed over the past year to engage audiences about the Australian cotton industry. The interactive video quiz tool allowed website visitors to watch videos about the cotton industry, and then test their knowledge by completing a short online quiz. The tool has been promoted to school students in particular, and is available on Cotton Australia's website.

Digital review

An extensive Digital Strategy Analysis was conducted in late 2021 to analyse the performance of Cotton Australia's Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and website over the previous year. The research, analysis and report were valuable for Cotton Australia, and helped identify changing audience trends, which in turn informed planning of future strategic initiatives for the betterment of the industry's social licence.



Stakeholder engagement

Cotton Australia engaged with a range of stakeholders over the past year in a variety of forums, the highlights of which are detailed below:

- + **Cotton Open House** – an event in Brisbane aiming to inform about the cotton industry that attracted more than 50 invited guests, and ABC's *Queensland Country Hour* presenter Amy Phillips hosted one segment.
- + **Canberra Press Gallery** – Cotton Australia staged an event in May with political journalists, and visited Parliament House to directly engage with other key media.
- + **Cotton industry briefings** – Cotton Australia hosted an evening industry briefing for key agriculture and rural-focussed journalists in Canberra which was attended by the ABC's Chief Rural reporter, and journalists from AAP and *The Sydney Morning Herald*.
- + **Media engagement** – conducted deep engagement with journalists before, during, and after the launch of the Goondiwindi Circular Cotton Initiative. Proactively engaged with journalists across regional markets, but particularly in Toowoomba and North Queensland. Engaged with and provided an industry briefing to key staff at leading Brisbane radio station 4BC.
- + **Informal engagement** – with the Editor of Rural Business and reporters from AAP and *The Sydney Morning Herald* at events in Sydney and Canberra.



Cotton Open House in Brisbane



Adam Kay on ABC's NSW Country Hour

Education

Traditional media

Traditional face-to-face media engagement was again impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, however despite this, the communications team found fresh opportunities to interact in a meaningful way with media from metropolitan, regional, and rural areas, and across print, online and broadcast.

Some key, organic highlights included the strategic media and communication process around the delayed 2021 Cotton Awards, the Goondiwindi Circularity Project, the announcement of a new Chair for Cotton Australia, and the launch of Cotton Jobs Australia.

World Cotton Day

During 2021, Cotton Australia generated significant publicity for the industry on World Cotton Day, with a media release headlined 'One Year On – Life after China'. The story updated the community and industry on how Australian cotton was sitting one year after China's soft ban on Australian cotton, among other commodities. The release was based on interviews with Adam Kay and Michael O'Rielly from ACSA and provided an update on our cotton trading efforts. This media effort attracted about \$250,000 in equivalent advertising value, however this figure is conservative with the real value estimated to be significantly higher. Cotton Australia's campaign prompted a national Sunday night television news special on Channel 9, which canvassed the impact on cotton and other exports by the China position on Australian goods.

Murray-Darling Basin

While Cotton Australia's focus was on proactive media engagement and coverage, it was prepared and able to react to negative commentary. Over the past year, Australian Community Media began a campaign across most of its mastheads entitled Forgotten River, which

included a story called *The Northern Murray-Darling chapter of Australia's cotton industry*. The article raised well-canvassed topics of water use and the Murray-Darling Basin, while admitting cotton farmers had been demonised. With no opportunity provided for Cotton Australia to reply in the original series, the communications team secured two feature editorials to put forward our view. One article was written on behalf of Cotton Australia's Michael Murray, and the other was produced on behalf of cotton farmer and social media advocate Sam Heagney. Both articles received widespread attention, balancing the coverage and enhancing acclaim of the industry.

Sustainability

Sustainability and the industry's efforts to rebuild trust were top of mind over the past year, with several opportunities secured to highlight the industry's credentials in these areas. These opportunities included a joint media release with CRDC focussed on our how cotton halved its water use over 25 years, along with other proactive media opportunities covering the launch and first meeting of the Australian Cotton Sustainability Reference Group, and the appointment of an independent expert to reassess the industry's environmental performance through an environmental audit.

Industry leadership

In early 2022, the communications team strategically announced the successful Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program applicants to achieve significant regional and rural media attention. This was primarily achieved by pitching the stories of the successful applicants from each region to targeted media. In addition, the focus on women participants and the diversity of their skills and interests led to significant coverage from the ABC.

When the Cotton Grower of the Year and High Achiever of the Year award recipients were announced at the Macintyre Valley Field Day near Boggabilla in early 2022, Cotton Australia ensured widespread media coverage was achieved. The communications team filmed interviews and overlay and provided the material to commercial television networks, enhancing options for coverage that were not previously available. This enabled Channel 7 to broadcast the awards to the majority of Queensland, despite not being able to send a journalist to the event themselves.

Seasonal updates

The favourable conditions over this season presented a valuable opportunity for positive media engagement for Cotton Australia, on behalf of growers. A media release was produced by Cotton Australia announcing the forecast of a near-record crop in yield and economic performance.

The most impactful coverage was a four-minute breakfast television interview on Sky News between host Jaynie Seal and Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay. The wide-ranging interview, which featured footage supplied by Cotton Australia, opened up a potential audience of 5.3 million people through the WIN Network and Sky News Regional in markets across Victoria, NSW, Queensland, and South Australia. This engagement helped Cotton Australia to form deeper connections with journalists at Sky, which was evidenced months later by Cotton Australia's communications team negotiating further valuable exposure for the industry through another wide-ranging interview with Sky News.

Bringing cotton into the classroom by engaging with teachers and students.

- + Education videos a hit.
- + Engagement with teachers key to building cotton awareness.
- + Valuable partnerships work to attract young people into the cotton industry.

Throughout 2021/22, Cotton Australia continued engaging with teachers and students in a bid to enrich their understanding of the Australian cotton industry.

An initial easing of the pandemic saw students return to their classrooms early in 2021, before lockdowns again brought an end to face-to-face engagement mid-year, particularly in Sydney. This once again meant Cotton Australia's education team had to engage with teachers and students remotely.

In early 2022, students were back in the classroom, however, many NSW schools were still reluctant to book excursions or invite guest presenters into their schools.

Many key education events, conferences, and plans, that Cotton Australia would have attended, were postponed, or cancelled over the past year, including: the NSW Agriculture Teacher's conference, the National Association of Agricultural Educators conference in Toowoomba, the Ekka, Ag Vision Careers Day, Tocal's Career Fair, and AgForce events in Queensland.

Digital education resources grow in popularity

Over the past year, a record number of people engaged with Cotton Australia online. While there were small declines in people accessing digital classroom resources, there was a significant surge in views of our educational videos, with the three most popular being viewed more than 26,000 times.

The Cotton Education Kit was fully updated and released in June. This resource is the 'hero' in Cotton Australia's suite of online tools for teachers and was very well received by educators.

Cotton Australia's digital education resources received:

- + **Lessons and units:** more than 5,800 pageviews
- + **How to Grow A Pair of Jeans:** more than 5,600 pageviews
- + **Education Kit:** more than 4,800 pageviews
- + **Education videos:** more than 3,400 pageviews
- + **Posters:** more than 1,700 pageviews
- + **Seed to Sock YouTube video:** more than 15,100 views
- + **The Australian Cotton Story for Primary Schools YouTube video:** more than 6,100 views
- + **The Australian Cotton Story for High Schools YouTube video:** more than 4,700 views
- + **Cotton 360 YouTube video:** more than 2,000 views

Teacher engagement

To continue building relationships with educators during COVID-19-induced lockdowns, Cotton Australia successfully offered digital conferencing.

The most effective of these initiatives was during NSW's hard lockdowns, with all students dialling into the lesson remotely, but were still able to have a voice, interact and ask questions. Special guests were also invited, such as agronomist, Emma Ayliffe and cotton grower, Richard Quigley, for students to hear directly from these professionals.

In April 2021, Cotton Australia worked with NT Farmers and delivered a virtual teacher professional development seminar to primary school teachers in Katherine. This initiative enabled Cotton Australia to invite teachers to engage with the organisation, with a view to conducting school visits in the Northern Territory in the future.

Events

Teach the Teacher

Cotton Australia's Teach the Teacher program returned in 2021 in growing regions in NSW and Queensland. A total of 239 teachers attended the eight tours that were run. Data collected at the events showed that many rural and regional teachers had previously not had the opportunity to visit a farm or engage directly with growers, and consequently were unaware of the sustainability credentials of cotton, or how to incorporate cotton into their classroom. Post-tour feedback showed a significant shift in understanding and the debunking of many of the misconceptions held about the industry.

Sydney Royal Easter Show

The return of the Sydney Royal Easter Show after it was cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic, was valuable, with 800,000 showgoers attending. Cotton Australia secured a prominent location in the Woolworths Dome foyer to engage with attendees about the industry. Due to COVID-19 health concerns, Cotton Australia chose to not have any hands-on engagement, however the team created a QR code for guests to view its 360-degree virtual reality video from their own devices or watch on a TV monitor.

Farm Days

The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW launched its Farm Days excursion program in early 2022, which will see nine weeks of engagement activities be staged from February to November during 2022. Cotton Australia was invited to host a workshop in February. During the week, Cotton Australia engaged with more than 300 students at the event and will participate in as many of these initiatives as possible during the coming year.

Barker College Agriculture HSC Revision Day

Cotton Australia was invited to present at Barker College's Agriculture HSC Revision Day in April 2021. It was an incredibly valuable opportunity for Cotton Australia and the students, with 95 Barker students attending, 75 guests from other schools, and 25-30 schools from across NSW watching the livestream. It was estimated up to 500 students attended in one form or another, which equated to about one third of all HSC agriculture students in NSW.

Technology Teachers Association (TTA)

The 2021 TTA Conference moved to a virtual platform and Cotton Australia presented about cotton for one hour to more than 60 teachers. The presentation focused on cotton linking with textile curriculum outcomes, and the resources Cotton Australia has available for teachers.

There was high engagement in the Q&A session, mainly around sustainability and circularity.

Working with partners

Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA)

PIEFA continued to go from strength to strength over the past year in terms of exposure, visibility and people accessing agricultural resources on Primezone. Members, including Cotton Australia, worked to create a suite of resources for release on National Ag Day in November, along with offering FarmerTime sessions.

University of New England GRASS program

Cotton Australia, along with the three CGAs in northern NSW sponsored the UNE GRASS program in 2021. This program attracted nearly 100 applicants, with three being chosen for a one-week in-depth tour of a region. More than 500 secondary students attended workshops by the UNE coordinator to talk about the cotton industry, giving the program greater visibility.



Workforce

AgCareerSTART

Cotton Australia partnered with the National Farmers' Federation to deliver AgCareerSTART – a structured gap year program to introduce a career in agriculture to people aged under 25. On-farm placements over 10-12 months will provide participants with a paid job, training and development and the ability to build networks within the agriculture industry. Both the participating grower and Cotton Australia will receive funding for each placement, to support participants' training and attendance at events such as the Cotton Conference.

Excited 4 Careers in Agriculture

Over the past year, Cotton Australia partnered with Central Queensland University, who received a grant from the Australian Government's National Careers Institute to run a project that will establish a unified cross sector approach to delivering quality career guidance for K-10 students in rural and regional Australia.

The Riverina region in NSW was chosen to work with cotton. Over the two-year life of the project, teacher development webinars and workshops, speed-dating events, hands-on classroom activities, incursions and excursions will be held. At the completion of the project, Cotton Australia will have a new suite of resources to support cotton career education for all teachers across Australia.

Northwest Regional Careers Expo in Tamworth

About 1,300 secondary students travelled from across northern NSW to attend the expo and discover careers in agriculture. Cotton Australia's team spoke to keen students already on the pathway into agriculture and advocated to many to consider a career in cotton.

Cotton Australia also attended a parents' information session to inform them of careers in cotton and help attract new workers into the industry.

Scholarships

Over the past year, Cotton Australia ran two scholarship programs, both jointly supported by the Upper Namoi Cotton Growers' Association.

- + **Marcus Oldham:** In 2021, two undergraduate students, Sam Carberry, and John Ashley, progressed through their scholarships.
- + **University of New England (UNE):** In 2021, Cotton Australia and the Upper Namoi CGA moved the Marcus Oldham scholarship program to UNE. The first scholar from UNE, Madeline Bide, will complete her second year of study in 2022.



Cotton to Market

Building positive relationships with brands and supply chain partners to promote Australian cotton.

- + Interest in Australian cotton grows among the supply chain.
- + ATMAC grant presents fresh opportunities for growth.
- + Biodiversity project delivers results for environment.

Throughout 2021, the Cotton to Market team worked to support brands and supply chain partners as they adjusted to life after the worst of the pandemic.

The past year saw interest in Australian cotton among brands and retailers continue to grow, and the Cotton to Market team supported those stakeholders, informed them of Australian cotton's benefits, provided assistance with the launch of their Australian cotton products, and collaborated with supply chain influencers and not-for-profit organisations to raise the profile of Australian cotton and enhance the industry.

A number of key projects were also undertaken and progressed, which are detailed below.

Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation (ATMAC) Grant

Cotton Australia secured \$1.5 million in federal government funding this past year to further drive demand for Australian cotton and educate customers in new global markets.

Throughout the 2021/22 season, the Cotton to Market team undertook a series of activities that were made possible through this grant funding, including:

- + Securing additional resources to build strategic relationships with organisations such as Better Cotton, Textile Exchange, and the Sustainable Apparel Coalition;
- + Developing an 'Australian Cotton Data Dashboard' that, once completed, will collate and report key industry data to internal and external stakeholders;
- + Producing a webinar series to educate the supply chain on the sustainability and traceability of Australia's cotton industry;
- + Significantly increasing communications content via websites and social media, targeted at brand and retail customers;
- + Translating written and digital resources into several languages for global customers;
- + Surveying supply chain businesses to better understand their requirements regarding Australian cotton.

Goondiwindi Circular Cotton project progresses

In June 2021, a ground-breaking trial that returned cotton textile waste to cotton fields was launched in Goondiwindi, Queensland. Cotton Australia was heavily involved in organising and delivering the project.

The project was conducted at grower Sam Coulton's cotton farm near Goondiwindi, and tested whether shredded cotton products could offer benefits to soil health, and be a scalable solution to textile waste.

The project, under the guidance of circular economy specialists Coreo, was a partnership between Cotton Australia, the Queensland Government, Goondiwindi Cotton, Sheridan, Worn Up, and the Cotton Research and Development Corporation-supported soil scientist Dr Oliver Knox from the University of New England.

The project attracted positive attention from brands and retailers, the media, and potential partners, with CRDC committing to investing in research to take the project to the next level, looking at methods of composting cotton textiles for use on the farm.

Country Road Biodiversity project enhanced further

Over the past 12 months, a unique partnership between Landcare Australia, Country Road and the Australian cotton industry resulted in 34 hectares of biodiversity improvements, including the planting of native species in the NSW Namoi Valley.

The project came about after Country Road invested \$200,000 a year over three years to improve biodiversity on cotton farms. This funding came via the sale of Verified Australian Cotton Heritage Sweats.

The funds have so far been invested in two core projects near Narrabri and Boggabri, managed by Landcare Australia.

The project saw weeks of restoration work undertaken, including the planting of thousands of native trees and grasses on properties 'Glencoe' and 'Merriendi' on the Namoi River, both owned by local farming families.



Grower Sam Coulton was part of the Goondiwindi Circular Cotton project



The Kiely family being filmed for a Cotton On Kids promotion

More products now carrying the Australian Cotton Mark

Cotton Australia has continued to build and deepen relationships with iconic Australian and global brands, driving demand and encouraging them to use 100% Australian cotton in their products

Over the past year, millions of cotton products have started carrying the Australian Cotton Mark, which increases exposure of our world-leading crop.

Multiple marketing campaigns by brand partners, supported by Cotton Australia, have helped to build trust in Australian cotton with consumers. These campaigns were built around messages of sustainability, women in cotton, and the support of regional and farming communities.

Cotton's story brought to life through animation

During 2021, the Cotton to Market team started production on a new animated video series to shine a light on the Australian cotton industry's credentials, and reach the public in a new way.

The series of animated videos were produced to highlight some of the challenges cotton growers have faced, and how they have collectively worked to overcome them.

The first animations explained the complexities of water allocations, and the sustainability attributes of Australian cotton.

The series will contain six animations, with more to be produced over the coming year.

Industry's views voiced at textile waste round table

In May 2021, Cotton Australia was invited to participate in an invitation-only textile waste round table, hosted by the federal Environment Minister Sussan Ley.

A total of 20 non-government organisations, manufacturers, brands and charities attended and started to map a plan for dealing with the significant issue of textile waste; Cotton Australia provided a voice for the raw materials sector.

With clothing textile waste added to the federal government's National Priority Waste list, the government is now funding the development of a National Clothing Product Stewardship Scheme.

> WHERE TO FROM HERE

Cotton Australia's Cotton to Market program will continue over the coming year and complete initiatives under the following strategic pillars:

- + **Grower and Industry Support:** Drive positive participation to deliver industry value.
- + **Raising Awareness and Driving Demand:** Seeking market access with brands and retailers, and delivering what our customers want.
- + **Sustainability:** Providing sustainable Australian cotton to customers.
- + **Traceability & Transparency:** Delivering traceable, transparent supply chains for Australian cotton from brand to farm.
- + **Building trust:** In cotton as a preferred raw material and in the Australian cotton industry.
- + **Preparing for disruptions:** Anticipate, plan for, and be part of conversations about issues that could and are disrupting markets and supply chains.

The Cotton to Market team will also focus on building the program further and delivering the second phase of the federal government's ATMAC grant. This work will include:

- + Additional resources within the team to drive demand for Australian cotton with brands and retailers domestically and overseas;
- + The development of an industry roadmap to look at key strategic issues such as traceability, certified sustainable cotton from Australia, the positioning of myBMP within the market, and data collection and sharing;
- + Hosting an international contingent of brands, retailers, spinners, manufacturers, and textile not-for-profit organisations to tour the Australian cotton industry;
- + Having a presence at key international events such as the Better Cotton conference, the Textile Exchange Conference, and the Premier Vision fashion trade show.



Shredded cotton mulch for the Goondiwindi Circular Cotton project

myBMP and Better Cotton

Supporting our growers to work at the highest standard.



- + Significant increase in myBMP certifications.
- + Best practice program takes off in northern Australia.
- + Better Cotton demand grows.

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.

Key achievements

Throughout 2021/22, the myBMP program experienced a significant increase in certifications. A total of 75 new farms became certified in the program, compared to 41 farms during the previous year. It is expected that this upward trend will continue, based off the high levels of grower inquiries being responded to at the time of writing.

In 2021, there were 58 new grower registrations, with a total of 1,030 growers now involved in the program. There were also 26 new businesses registered in myBMP over the past year.

During the reporting period, 38 myBMP audits were conducted, resulting in 21 new businesses achieving certification and 17 businesses renewing their certification (of which six businesses added new farms). Over the past year, 102 farms were certified in the program, of which 75 were new and 27 were re-certified.

Throughout the past year, participatory interest from growers in northern Australia continued to grow. This spike in participation was encouraging, especially as the industry puts down its roots in new regions. To help support growers in these emerging areas, Cotton Australia hosted a myBMP workshop at Douglas Station in the Northern Territory in early 2022. The event was co-organised with NT Farmers and was well attended by growers, local agronomists, and industry personnel.

Another development over the past year was the launch of a new strategic alliance between Cotton Australia and farm insurer Achmea Australia (Achmea). The new alliance supported cotton growers through an insurance reward for those who are certified in myBMP and Achmea customers.



Better Cotton

In 2021, the Better Cotton Initiative was re-named 'Better Cotton', and also launched a new website.

Over the past year, it was noted that the appetite for Certified Sustainably produced cotton was fast becoming a major driver in the decision-making process of textile brands, retailers, and their customers. As such, promoting Australian cotton's sustainability credentials continued to be a priority.

With most water storages in cotton regions, except in central Queensland, replenished after the drought, myBMP-certified growers were once again able to participate in the Better Cotton program during the 2021/22 season.

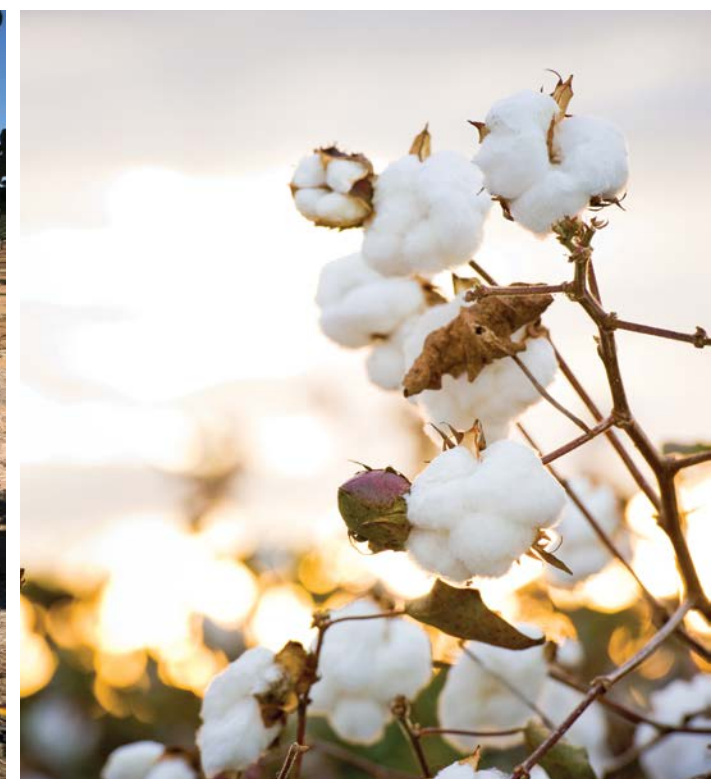
There was also increased demand for Better Cotton over the past year, with most eligible growers paid a premium of between \$3 and \$7 per bale of cotton produced, with about 30% of the season's cotton crop marketed as 'Better Cotton'. It was observed that the high participation numbers in the program was due to the widespread rainfall enhancing crop size. Some growers were participating in the Better Cotton program for the first time, even though they had been certified for several years.

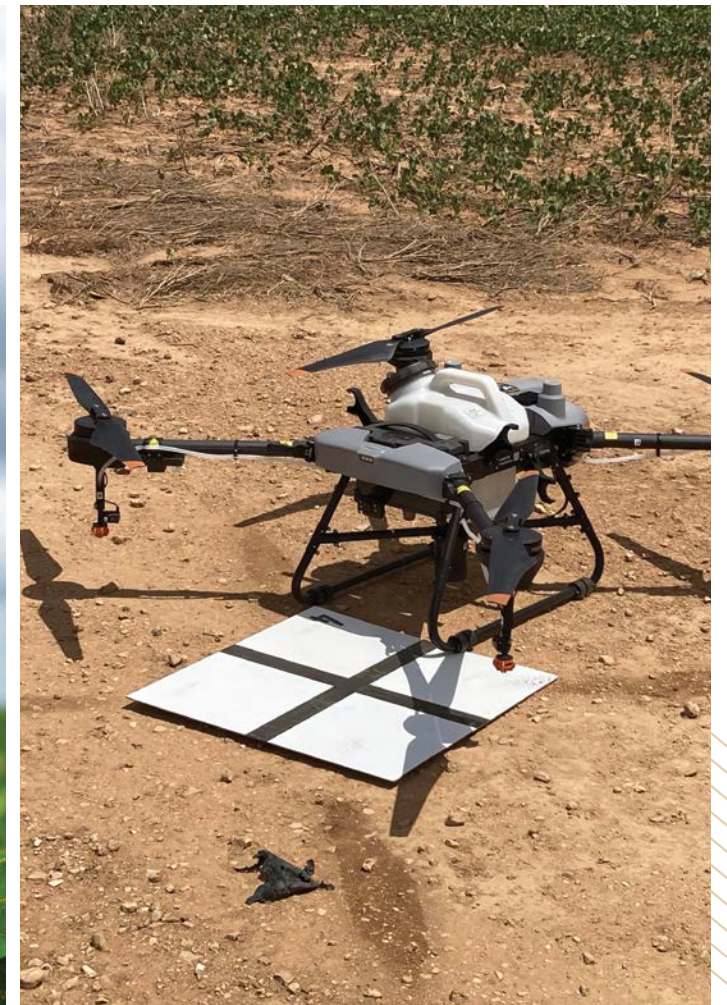
> WHERE TO FROM HERE

With interest growing around establishing ongoing cotton production in northern Australia, the myBMP team will focus on ensuring growers in that region are operating with best practice. Part of that process will involve reviewing existing myBMP modules and updating them to specifically suit the northern Australia growing conditions and situation.

A focus for the team will be continuing to grow uptake of myBMP in established cotton regions, and working to support growers in attaining certification in the program.

Cotton Australia's southern NSW regional manager Kylie Edwards with growers Daisy and Matt Toscan.





AgSkilled

Providing high-quality training to enhance NSW growers' skills.

- + AgSkilled program renewed and expanded.
- + COVID-19 restrictions impact training opportunities.
- + Cotton growers benefit from industry-specific courses.

The AgSkilled program continued for NSW growers in 2021/22, after being renewed and expanded by the NSW Government in late 2020. While many successes were recorded thanks to the fresh training opportunities provided for New South Wales growers, challenges triggered by the pandemic had to be navigated.

The NSW Government's funding of the program – \$15 million over three years – saw many of the popular courses from the first iteration of AgSkilled continue to be delivered, while also enabling new courses to be developed.

Under the broadened program, AgSkilled's training offerings were extended to New South Wales' production horticulture, viticulture, rice, and Agrifuture's plant-based industries, along with the cotton and grains sectors.

Cotton Australia continued to play a key role in guiding the program, as the cotton industry's representative on the AgSkilled 2.0 Steering Committee.

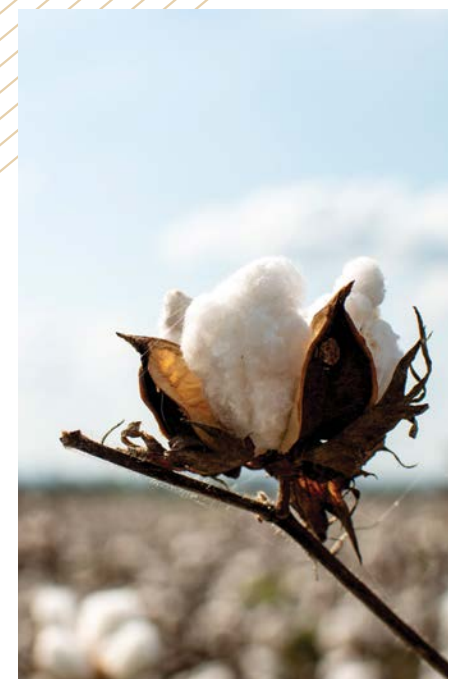
When COVID-19 case numbers escalated in NSW in 2021, a raft of restrictions were reintroduced across the state, meaning the provision of training was significantly impacted. Where possible, courses were transitioned online; however, given the practical nature of most courses, many had to be postponed or cancelled. While face-to-face delivery became possible again later in the year, clashes with farmers' seasonal commitments presented fresh challenges.

Despite these factors, AgSkilled delivered 117 training sessions across 31 different courses specific to cotton, and with 593 places supported. The overall program delivered more than 500 courses with more than 2,300 places supported. The most commonly accessed courses for cotton growers focussed on WHS, ag chemical skills, truck licencing, advanced spray training, and cotton pest management. Other courses included GROW, Corporate Governance, HR & WHS Fundamentals, and Drones in Agriculture.

Farm employees, consultants, agronomists, and farm owners were the most common groups accessing AgSkilled funded training. The most cited expected practice change outcomes as a result of completing training were improved efficiency and productivity on farm, improved safety on farm, and the ability to complete more tasks.

> WHERE TO FROM HERE

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, training uptake has been increasing as restrictions ease and the industry begins to return to business as usual. With many courses postponed or cancelled due to the pandemic, there was a low likelihood of AgSkilled meeting its budget targets for the year; but with the promising seasons ahead and a wave of new industry entrants, training and workforce development opportunities are more important than ever. As such, the AgSkilled Steering Committee was, at the time of writing, requesting the renewal of the program for a further three years.





Valley Reports

Central Highlands, Queensland

REGIONAL MANAGER:
Renee Anderson

HECTARES GROWN IN 2021-22:
28,653 ha total
(18,188 ha irrigated; 10,465 ha dryland)

BALES PRODUCED IN 2021-22:
259,020 bales (estimate)



Aaron Kiely, Renee Anderson, Stewart Brotherton, Alexandria Galea, and Nigel Burnett at the Central Highlands Careers Day.

COTTON AUSTRALIA ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

- + Supported growers in progressing with myBMP through one-on-one visits.
- + Worked to attract more young people into the industry by running three cotton career information days for local high school and university students.
- + Hosted meetings with local government officials and councillors to inform them of the industry's achievements, issues, and progress.
- + Enhanced knowledge of Australian cotton by staging a very successful Teach the Teacher event, which was attended by 65 teachers and 30 grower and industry participants from across the region.
- + Brought local community members, including students and members of the Gladstone Senior Citizens group, on-farm to inform them first-hand about the cotton industry.
- + Worked to enhance best practice knowledge around pesticide application, by facilitating spray workshops for growers.

- + Helped organise a tour of irrigation properties in St George for growers from central Queensland.

"With extremely dry conditions and the Fairbairn Dam once again sitting at very low levels, growers across the Central Highlands began the 2021/22 season on 0% allocation and were desperately hoping for rain with the announcement of La Nina. This came with good, generalised falls in late November/December however minimal rainfall events occurred for the rest of the season. There was a portion of river farmers who were able to capture water as a result of extensive rainfall to the north of the district, and early August cotton was planted. By the end of December that had increased to 17 000ha of irrigated cotton and 10 000 ha of dryland. With rainfall across the catchment and some inflows into the dam, growers had received an announcement of 50% of their allocation in January, which was increased to 66% by February. Early planted cotton was grown on and being harvested by April with exceptional yields being reported."

Renee Anderson

Dawson and Callide Valleys, Queensland

REGIONAL MANAGER:
Kelly Becker

HECTARES GROWN IN 2021-22:
8,194 ha total
(7,167 ha irrigated; 1,027 ha dryland)

BALES PRODUCED IN 2021-22:
84,693 bales (estimate)



Kelly Becker with grower Andrew French and Mick Bange from CSD.

COTTON AUSTRALIA ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

- + Informed local teachers about the region's cotton industry via a Teach the Teacher event in May, which was attended by about 30 educators.
- + Enhanced local children's knowledge of cotton by supporting Moura Primary School students grow cotton in a pot as part of their STEM projects, and then gin their lint using a mini gin.
- + Supported new growers that joined the myBMP program achieve success in completing checklist items.
- + Enhanced safe spraying practices in the region by organising a sustainable spray workshop in Moura in July.
- + Supported the Dawson Valley Cotton Growers' Association in organising and hosting their community cotton dinner in October, which returned after years of hiatus due to the pandemic.
- + Brought school students on-farm in November, where they discovered the water efficiency successes of local cotton growers.

- + Helped coordinate a grower trip to St George with Emerald-based growers, to study water efficiency and bank-less irrigation systems in use in that region.

"This season threw a few curve balls at our Dawson Valley growers, with some early hail in October, then the threat of floods later in November, then cloudy weather, then a final hit of hail in March. We had plenty of runs in the river, allowing growers to water on four occasions through the season and fill their on-farm storages. Growers have been happy with yields to date given the season. With the current pricing for next year's crop and water available on farm, most growers are banking on another big crop next year." **Kelly Becker**

Darling Downs, Queensland

REGIONAL MANAGER:
Janet Barker

HECTARES GROWN IN 2021-22:
56,021 ha total
(40,000 ha irrigated; 16,021 ha dryland)

BALES PRODUCED IN 2021-22:
535,865 bales (estimate)



Grower David Scott with Janet Barker.

COTTON AUSTRALIA ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

- + The Darling Downs recorded a 20% increase in the amount of cotton planted compared to the previous year.
- + Supported growers with myBMP, which helped 34 Darling Downs farms attain certification in myBMP for the first time. Three businesses were re-certified in myBMP, including 10 re-certified farms and six new farms (16 farms total).
- + Worked to grow uptake of myBMP among Darling Downs growers. There are 98 farms certified in myBMP on the Downs, and a number of new businesses are working through the program at the time of writing, with the aim of reaching certification in 2022.
- + Enhanced knowledge of cotton in the community by conducting tours of cotton farms and gins with year nine students from Fairholme College and three councillors from Toowoomba Regional Council.
- + Engaged with local teachers through hosting a successful Teach the Teacher event at Paul and Georgie Krieg's property near Brookstead.

- + A number of new growers joined the industry in the South Burnett region and Lockyer Valley, and there was increasing interest from other growers in these areas.

"The 2021/2022 season was a record high rainfall year for the Darling Downs which was very positive. However, it posed some challenges for the crop, including a very small planting window and some flood-damaged cotton. It was one of the larger seasons for hectares planted and with storages full of water and full soil moisture profiles, there is plenty of optimism for the 2022/23 season to come. This year also saw very low pest pressure, with a number of growers having no pesticide sprays for the entire season. There was increasing interest in myBMP certification and growing Better Cotton. There was also significant interest from new growers in emerging areas of the Darling Downs in planting cotton for the first time or increasing their existing cotton area." **Janet Barker**

St George, Dirranbandi and Mungindi, Queensland and New South Wales

REGIONAL MANAGER:
Sally Rigney

HECTARES GROWN IN 2021-22:
St George: 21,499 ha;
Dirranbandi: 12,304 ha;
Mungindi: 22,152 ha

BALES PRODUCED IN 2021-22:
St George: 27,450;
Dirranbandi: 147,648;
Mungindi: 241,000



Sally Rigney and grower Lucas Wuerschling, who featured in the Season at Saunders video series.

COTTON AUSTRALIA ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

- + Fostered knowledge sharing among growers by hosting a bus tour of growers from Central Queensland, which saw them connect and share information around improving on-farm water use efficiency.
- + Supported growers involved in myBMP and hosted a visit by myBMP manager Rob Crothers, which resulted in three more local properties achieving certification.
- + Supported the St George Cotton Growers Association with their activities and initiatives, including the St George Cotton Awards dinner, which celebrated 50 years of the organisation and the Beardmore Irrigation Scheme, which facilitated the beginning of the modern cotton industry in this region.
- + Encouraged spray best practice by promoting SataCrop and holding Advanced Spray Application Workshops at St George, Nindigully and Talwood, with more than 50 growers attending.
- + Worked to share the region's local stories as part of industry-wide efforts to rebuild public trust in Australian cotton.
- + Produced a popular social media video series showcasing the local industry – A Season at Saunders Farming. Saunders Farming at St George opened up their family and farm for the series, which will include 20 episodes explaining cotton growing from planting to picking and showing how our growers are real people, with real families, doing their best to carefully manage their natural resources. The most popular episode was viewed more than 62,000 times.

- + Promoted employment in the Australian cotton industry through the Cotton Jobs Australia project, with four case study videos produced to encourage young people to work on a cotton farm.
- + Helped share the cotton industry's message on National Ag Day by producing a video featuring grower Tristram Hertslet's daughters providing cotton facts.
- + Encouraged community understanding of the interconnection between river health and rural community prosperity through a video featuring grower and Mungindi CGA president Tristram Hertslet.

"It's been an exceptionally wet season, with growers starting and finishing with full water. The flood events began as good news. However, a final flood at picking saw losses stacking up through wet modules and downgraded cotton. There was damage to fields and logistical nightmares with damaged roads; however, you have to believe the good outweighed the bad. Water and good prices has created confidence in the paddock and down the main street of our local towns. This season has helped the region rebuild after the drought years. Finding a workforce has been challenging, and everyone has been flat-out. But there is hope and optimism for the next season coming." Sally Rigney

Macintyre Valley, Queensland and New South Wales

REGIONAL MANAGER:
Cate Wild

HECTARES GROWN IN 2021-22:
48,668 ha total
(42,244 ha irrigated; 6,424 ha dryland)

BALES PRODUCED IN 2021-22:
522,313 bales (estimate)



Regional Manager Cate Wild.

COTTON AUSTRALIA ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

- + Supported growers on the myBMP journey by meeting with them and guiding them on ways to meet criteria to attain certification.
- + Helped coordinate assessments with local growers after intense rainfall and flooding caused damage. These assessments helped result in disaster grants being made available in the region.
- + Enhanced the knowledge of local educators about cotton by coordinating a Teach the Teacher event at 'Alcheringa', and made classroom visits for year 4 and 5 students at local schools.
- + Supported local growers in broadening their knowledge by organising a northern region cotton tour through the CGA and facilitating applications for grassroots grants.
- + Assisted the CGA in holding a local awards night for growers, which was smaller than usual due to COVID-19 restrictions.

- + Worked to promote cotton's sustainability credentials by assisting with the Goondiwindi Circular Cotton trial at 'Alcheringa' to highlight cotton's role in the circular economy.
- + Supported bringing the industry together by helping facilitate the Macintyre Valley Field Day at Turkey Lagoon.

"What a year! It was a nice change to start the season with so many hectares to plant and the water to irrigate. While rain throughout the season definitely produced its own challenges, it was a welcome change than the previous years of drought. The season has been finishing well with good yields and water for next year." Cate Wild

Gwydir Valley, New South Wales

REGIONAL MANAGER:
Alec Macintosh

HECTARES GROWN IN 2021-22:
88,897 ha total
(61,771 ha irrigated; 27,126 ha dryland)

BALES PRODUCED IN 2021-22:
998,092 bales (estimate)



Alec Macintosh (R) with grower Liam Winter.

COTTON AUSTRALIA ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

- + Helped facilitate the University of New England GRASS Industry Placement Scholarship, where a student spent a week being introduced to the cotton industry through visits to cotton farms, studying on-farm variety and research trials, attending Area Wide Management Meetings, and visiting CRDC, CSD and ACRI.
- + Achieved significant success supporting growers to become involved in the myBMP program, with an additional six farms achieving certification in the program.
- + Enhanced spray best practice knowledge and worked to mitigate drift by promoting SataCrop and encouraging uptake of the platform among growers and agronomists.
- + Participated in Area Wide Management Meetings and field days to bolster growers' knowledge of Cotton Australia's activities and achievements and foster valuable relationships.

- + Supported the implementation of the AgSkilled training program and encouraged growers to develop their skills further by being involved in the initiative's offerings.
- + Coordinated a Teach the Teacher event in Moree to optimise the knowledge of local teachers about the region's cotton industry.

"Full allocations and full moisture profiles at the start of the season indicated that the valley would be back to near full production this season. A three-fold increase in irrigated area from last season and a doubling of the dryland area was subsequently achieved. With in-crop rain assisting both the irrigated and dryland cotton, expectations coming into picking were high. The wet weather had some impact on irrigated potential, but was excellent for the dryland crops in the district; unfortunately floods and storms caused damage to some growing crops." Alec Macintosh

Namoi Valley, New South Wales

REGIONAL MANAGER:
Alec Macintosh

HECTARES GROWN IN 2021-22:
100,105 ha total
(57,449 ha irrigated; 42,656 ha dryland)

BALES PRODUCED IN 2021-22:
985,553 bales (estimate)



Alec Macintosh with grower Rob Davies, who was named Upper Namoi Grower of the Year.

COTTON AUSTRALIA ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

- + Made regular farm visits to growers to support them on their myBMP journey and provide advice and input. An additional nine farms achieved certification over the past year.
- + Successfully staged Teach the Teacher events in Gunnedah and Narrabri to introduce local teachers to the industry.
- + Promoted AgSkilled training for growers across the region to further enhance the skills of our workforce.
- + Helped facilitate the University of New England GRASS Industry Placement Scholarship, where a student spent a week being introduced to the cotton industry through visits to cotton farms, studying on-farm variety and research trials, attending Area Wide Management Meetings, and visiting CRDC, CSD and ACRI.
- + Presented at field days across the Namoi Valley, updating growers on Cotton Australia's activities and achievements.

- + Optimised spray best practice knowledge and helped mitigate drift by promoting SataCrop and encouraging uptake of the platform among growers and agronomists. This included presenting at two CGS workshops on defoliation, highlighting the importance of SataCrop.

"With more than a third more irrigated cotton planted than last year, and an almost doubling of the dryland crop, the Namoi Valley was close to full production this season. Rain through the season was well received, except when floods and storms unfortunately caused damage to growing crops. With the mild season, yields are expected to be very good, particularly in the dryland crops. Irrigators will be looking forward to another good year ahead, as their storages are full and their allocations should be excellent in the new water year." Alec Macintosh

Macquarie Valley, New South Wales

REGIONAL MANAGER:
Craig Chandler

HECTARES GROWN IN 2021-22:
34,348 ha total
(32,781 ha irrigated; 1,567 ha dryland)

BALES PRODUCED IN 2021-22:
369,696 bales (estimate)



Craig Chandler joined Cotton Australia in 2021 and worked to support growers.

COTTON AUSTRALIA ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

- + Worked collaboratively with the local CGA on initiatives including field days, industry specialist field walks, the cotton grower awards program, charity golf day, and training courses.
- + Engaged extensively with growers to update them on Cotton Australia's activities, listen to feedback, and be a conduit of information back to the CA team.
- + Helped facilitate AgSkilled training for growers, including around first aid, forklift and truck licencing, and safely using drones on-farm.
- + Provided extensive assistance to growers involved in the myBMP program, to help them achieve certification. Three growers were re-certified during the year, and planning is underway to increase uptake and have several growers ready for audit in the coming year.
- + Worked as a committee member in the SOS Macquarie group to help mitigate off-target spray drift, and extensively promoted SataCrop to growers.

- + Participated in meetings and initiatives organised by the Macquarie River Food and Fibre group as an industry representative.
- + Played a key role supporting the organisation of the Macquarie Cotton Growers' 2021 Awards Dinner, which saw 130 people attend to celebrate the 2021 growing season.
- + A highlight of the past year was Quigley Farming taking out Bayer Cotton Grower of the Year for 2021.
- + Enhanced local students' knowledge of cotton, with planning underway for a Teach the Teacher event to be held once pandemic restrictions ease to ensure optimum attendance.
- + With 100% water allocation in the Macquarie Valley moving forward, supporting growers will be key, as the next two seasons, perhaps longer, look very strong.

"The first year in my new role has proved to be an interesting and challenging task with big shoes to fill from the previous RM, a pandemic, and floods; but with things settling down, good rain and full storages in the Macquarie Valley, cotton growers and the rural communities they live in will enjoy several good years ahead." Craig Chandler

Walgett and Bourke, New South Wales

REGIONAL MANAGER:
Alec Macintosh

HECTARES GROWN IN 2021-22:
27,594 ha total
(26,032 ha irrigated; 1,562 ha dryland)

BALES PRODUCED IN 2021-22:
328,736 bales (estimate)



Regional Manager Alec Macintosh worked with growers in the Walgett and Bourke areas throughout 2021.

COTTON AUSTRALIA ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

- + Supported the implementation of the AgSkilled training program and encouraged growers to develop their skills further by being involved in the initiative's offerings.
- + Supported growers in enhancing their involvement in myBMP, with an additional two farms achieving certification over the past year.
- + Extensively promoted spray best practice and the use of SataCrop to growers and agronomists, to mitigate the risk of spray drift incidents.
- + Attended and presented at a grower information meeting in Bourke.

"Excellent areas of irrigated cotton were planted this season. With the mild summer and rain, the expectation was that yields would be excellent, and with continued good flows, storages have been refilled for another strong season coming." Alec Macintosh

Southern Valleys (Lachlan, Murrumbidgee, Murray), New South Wales

REGIONAL MANAGER:
Harriet Brickhill

HECTARES GROWN IN 2021-22:
Lachlan Valley: 14,462 ha;
Murrumbidgee and Murray Valleys: 64,866 ha

BALES PRODUCED IN 2021-22:
759,014 bales (estimate)



Regional Manager Harriet Brickhill with grower Lachie Danckert during a myBMP visit on his property near Hay.

COTTON AUSTRALIA ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

- + Supported growers in successfully completing the myBMP program, with three growers reaching certification.
- + Fostered grower collaboration and industry collegiality by piloting two grower 'Cotton Catch Up' groups at Coleambally and Whitton with CottonInfo and CSD. The groups met at critical management times throughout season and provided individual benchmark reports at the end of the season.
- + Worked with the local Cotton Growers Association to support projects and initiatives, including the SVCGA Can Assist Golf Day, which raised \$20,000 for the cancer support charity.
- + Encouraged growers to participate in training initiatives provided through the AgSkilled program. The inclusion of the electrical testing and tagging course through AgSkilled will enhance the ability of growers to become legally compliant in their workshops.

- + Promoted spray best practice and SataCrop to growers and agronomists to mitigate spray drift incidents.
- + Worked with the Griffith Clontarf Academy to visit Southern Cotton Gin to showcase employment possibilities within the industry for Indigenous students.

"It was great to start my first cotton season with the second-largest ever planting in the Southern Valley, with plenty of energy and enthusiasm that could be felt right through local towns. After an incredibly challenging, cool start to the season, with 15% re-plant and lower plant stands, the warmer temperatures at the back end of summer and high prices meant there was a quiet optimism coming into picking. A large winter crop is already underway, and with full dams you will be hard pressed to find empty paddocks over the next 12 months, as growers look to take advantage of the higher crop prices." Harriet Brickhill

COTTON AUSTRALIA BOARD



NIGEL BURNETT
Chairman
Cotton grower
– Emerald, Qld



BERNIE BIERHOFF
Deputy chairman
Cotton grower
– Rowena, NSW



FLEUR ANDERSON
Grower & Community
relations executive
– Theodore, Qld



BOB DALL'ALBA
Executive Director and
Country Head – Olam



ROB DUGDALE
Industry representative
– Lower Namoi Cotton
Growers' Association



HAMISH MCINTYRE
Cotton grower –
St George & Dirranbandi, Qld



MATT MCVEIGH
Cotton grower
– Dalby, Qld



ANGUS O'BRIEN
Cotton grower
– Warren, NSW



ARTHUR SPELLSON
Industry representative
– ADM Trading
Australia Pty Ltd



ELIZABETH STOTT
Cotton grower
– Leeton, NSW

COTTON AUSTRALIA TEAM



ADAM KAY
Chief Executive Officer



MICHAEL MURRAY
General Manager



RENEE ANDERSON
Regional Manager
Central Highlands
(part-time)



JANET BARKER
Regional Manager –
Darling Downs
(part-time)



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



HARRIET BRICKHILL
Regional Manager –
Riverina



JENNIFER BROWN
Policy Officer (part-time)



SALLY CEENEY
Policy Officer (part-time)



CRAIG CHANDLER
Regional Manager –
Macquarie Valley (part-time)



ROB CROTHERS
myBMP Manager



DARRIN DAVIES
Communications
Manager – Stakeholder
Engagement



JENNY HUGHES
Education Manager



ALI KUCHEL
Content and
Communications Coordinator
– Cotton to Market



ALEC MACINTOSH
Regional Manager –
Northern NSW



SALLY RIGNEY
Regional Manager –
St George, Dirranbandi &
Mungindi (part-time)



NICOLE SCOTT
myBMP Customer Service
Manager



PAUL SLOMAN
Policy Officer



BROOKE SUMMERS
Supply Chain Consultant –
Cotton to Market



CLAUDIA VICARY
Project Officer –
AgSkilled



ROBERT VIRTUE
Communications Manager
– Digital Strategy



CATE WILD
Regional Manager –
Macintyre Valley
(part-time)



THERESE WOODEN
Finance Manager



ROCHELLE ZAKHER
Executive Assistant

Financial summary

Photo: Dana Gluzde

INCOME		
YEAR	LEVY	OTHER INCOME
2020/2021	687,584	811,888
2021/2022	2,892,330	35,116
EXPENDITURE		
	OPERATING EXPENDITURE	
2020/2021	3,306,804	
2021/2022	3,577,973	
EQUITY		
31/03/2021	11,136,146	
31/03/2022	10,485,623	
LEVY CONTRIBUTION:		
2020/2021	78%	
2021/2022	69%	

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





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