

Cotton Australia: Current and Future Activities

APRIL 1ST – JUNE 30TH 2022

Policy updates      

Water

- With the election of a Labor Government, the new Federal Minister for Water is Tanya Plibersek. Cotton Australia is already working with the valley irrigator groups on how to engage with Minister Plibersek on issues affecting our industry.
- We expect the Labor Government to re-commit to fully delivering the Basin Plan, and while Labor has stated that re-introducing direct buy-backs is not its preferred position, it has not ruled them out.
- Cotton Australia will continue to strongly advocate its opposition to direct buybacks.
- In NSW, while Cotton Australia has continued to support the volumetric licencing of floodplain harvesting and associated metering/measurement, the licencing will lead to approximately a reduction of one-third of the average annual amount made available through this resource, and some growers feel the process has provided them with an inequitable share of the available licence.
- In Queensland, Cotton Australia continued to work very closely with the Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF), and Cotton Australia chair's QFF's Water and Energy Policy Committee. We have particularly focused on the above lower bound pricing issue, metering, and leasing water from the Dawson Valley Strategic Infrastructure Reserve.
- Cotton Australia has continued to encourage the Queensland Government to promote opportunities in North Queensland where good soil and water availability coincide and represent opportunities for agricultural development opportunities.

Stewardship

Spray drift

- Cotton Australia has continued its work supporting the use of SataCrop as a tool for identification of the location of sensitive crops. In the 2021/22 season, 69% of the total area of cotton was mapped on SataCrop, with some regions having 100% mapped.
- As preparations begin for the next season in the coming months, Cotton Australia will be working to further enhance uptake of SataCrop, and also enact its proactive awareness campaign to mitigate off-target spray drift, including promotion of the new inversion towers.

Biosecurity

- Cotton Australia recently updated and communicated the guidelines around the movement of cotton from Western Australia and the Northern Territory for ginning to mitigate risk of the spread of pink bollworm and any other potential pathogens.
- Grey mildew has been identified in cotton in Northern Australia. Cotton Australia has been advising growers in the Northern Territory, North Queensland, and Western Australia to monitor and report any unusual symptoms in their crops. Cotton Australia has also been investigating permit options for control.

Research Direction

- Cotton Australia and CRDC convened the R&D Priority Forum on Wednesday 25th May 2022. This forum helped to identify grower research priorities and will help guide CRDC's research investment.

Sustainability

- The latest update on the Australian cotton industry's progress in key sustainability areas has been released. The [full report can be read here](#), or a [two-page summary can be found here](#).
- The report shows continuing improvement in many areas such as water use efficiency, greenhouse gas emissions and insecticide use.

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- The report also pinpoints parts of the cotton production system not trending in the direction we would like. For example, wetter seasons over the past two years – after a period of severe drought – have seen more weeds in fields and higher use of herbicides to control those weeds.

Energy

- The two-year project we have been working on with the Queensland Farmers' Federation called 'Flow on Benefits of Microgrids for Agriculture' is in its writing up stage.
- Over the past 12 months, the four field sites that were selected (including a cotton farm at St George in Queensland) had 65 smart meters installed. The modelling of the energy data considers 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 also considered the opportunity for farmers to generate renewable energy and whether it can reduce overall energy costs.
- Cotton Australia and QFF were in Mackay in late June with other members of the Microgrids in Agriculture project team, visiting one of the four locations used for the feasibility study.
- A session outlining the microgrids project's findings will be held at the 2022 Australian Cotton Conference.

AgSkilled

- AgSkilled is a NSW Government funded initiative that Cotton Australia successfully lobbied for that provides free training.
- Funding for the program will conclude on June 30th 2023. There is a need to demonstrate very strong uptake over the remainder of the program to support our request for extension.
- Courses coming up include:
 - Advanced Spray in Boggabri & Croppa Creek;
 - Drones in Agriculture – next round coming soon; trucks;
 - GROW;
 - Plan to Profit;
 - Safety/Compliance – forklift, confined spaces, working at heights, telehandler, dogging, rigging, heavy machinery operation (dozer, excavator, loader, skid steer) etc.;
 - First Aid;
 - Electrical Test & Tag
 - Introduction to Harvest Operations – harvest prep course for new industry entrants;
 - WHS & HR Fundamentals;
 - Cotton Pest Management.
- Growers are encouraged to please submit any additional training needs/ideas for your region.
- We continue to advocate to the Queensland Government for a similar program.

Submissions made this quarter

- [QCA Draft Determination: Regulated retail electricity prices for 2022-23 - April 2022](#)
- [Renewable Energy & Agriculture in NSW Issues Paper - May 2022](#)
- [Regulatory Review of CSG-Induced Subsidence – June 2022](#)

myBMP update ✓

- A total of 1,036 growers have registered in myBMP. There are 339 myBMP certified farms.
- 116,819 MT or 514,625 bales or 81% of the cotton available traded as Better Cotton for the 2020-21 season.
- Tipperary Station became the first cotton growing property in the NT to become certified.

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- A myBMP visit was held recently in southern NSW, and another is planned for the Macquarie Valley in the coming months. Please contact your Cotton Australia Regional Manager if you would like a one-on-one myBMP session. The most common feedback our team is reviewing post audit is “It wasn’t as hard as I thought it would be.”.
- A myBMP Express workshop will be held in Kununurra, WA on July 18th at ORDCO.
- The myBMP team will also be attending the Darwin and Katherine shows in July to raise awareness of the industry and to take locals on a virtual cotton farm tour using our VR glasses and video.

Communications update

Media (releases generated by CA)

- Statement on NRAR prosecution
- A raw take on cotton, from the farmer’s mouth (podcast launch)
- Cotton Australia looks forward to constructive relationship with new government
- New Agriculture Minister chooses a cotton farm for his first farm visit in Queensland
- Cotton Young Achiever and Researcher of the Year Announced

Digital

- Cotton Australia’s debut podcast *From the Field - Season One* launched in May, as part of our efforts to rebuild trust in the industry. The podcast spanned five episodes and featured conversations with Aaron Kiely, Joe Briggs, Amanda Thomas, Alexandria Galea and Nigel Burnett around five core themes.
- Audio advertising – a campaign was launched in May on audio streaming platform Spotify to promote the *From the Field* podcast and Australian cotton industry in metropolitan audiences. The campaign has made 31,000 impressions in city audiences.
- As part of Cotton Australia’s 50th anniversary celebrations, [an interactive historical timeline](#) has been launched to document and showcase Cotton Australia’s, and the industry’s, history and achievements.
- Cotton Australia’s 2022 Annual Report has been under production and will arrive in mailboxes in the coming months. The report documents the organisation’s activities and achievements over the past year.
- Cotton Australia’s Newsroom initiative, where the team has created and positioned journalistic-style content about the industry for social media, has been enhanced. Further content will be produced over the coming months. Recent stories of note have included: [Camp Cotton](#), [Sydney Royal Easter Show](#), [Cotton Awards recap](#), [Beardmore Dam 50th anniversary](#).
- Cotton Australia’s *A Season At Saunders* series has wrapped up after 23 episodes. The social media video series starred growers Craig and Sharon Saunders, and Brooke and Lucas Wuersching, from St George, and was produced by regional manager Sally Rigney. The entire series can be [watched on Youtube](#).

Education update

News

- Cotton Australia will attend the EKKA in Brisbane from August 6th -14th and is activating an educational stand at the event. Cotton Australia staff will man the stand for the nine days of EKKA. We need grower volunteers to help us man the stand and engage with the public; please email Education Coordinator Jenny Hughes now if you can assist (it is very rewarding) – jennyh@cotton.org.au
- Cotton Australia is offering a range of scholarships to the Australian Cotton Conference for educators and students who are passionate about cotton and natural fibres. Scholarships are on offer for undergraduate students, secondary school students, and teachers. More information can be found here: <https://cottonaustralia.com.au/scholarship-info>
- Cotton Australia’s virtual reality film is now available on the [FarmVR app](#). Anyone can now download the free FarmVR app onto their phone to view the 360-degree film using their own VR headsets or cardboard viewers.

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Events

- Cotton Australia presented at Barker College's Agriculture HSC Revision Day in May. It was an incredibly valuable day for Barker students, along with many other schools who brought their agriculture classes from the Greater Sydney Region.
- Cotton Australia's presence at the 2022 Sydney Royal Easter Show was a huge success. About 900,000 people attended the event over the 12 days. Cotton Australia offered our VR headsets to showgoers to virtually visit a cotton farm and interact with the technology, with many saying it was the best activity they did at the Show. It was common to hear adults were surprised that they learnt so much about an everyday product grown in and supporting Australia. 7,000 people watched our immersive virtual reality video over the course of the Show.
- Cotton Australia's Teach the Teacher events have returned in 2022, and have again proven to be successful at connecting the cotton industry with educators in regional areas. Events have been held in Moree, Narrabri, Griffith and Gunnedah. An event will be held in Emerald on July 15th. St George/Dirranbandi/Mungindi, Dawson and Callide Valleys, Macquarie Valley, Macintyre Valley, and Darling Downs have all been hampered by uncertainty and COVID-19 concerns. Cotton Australia will consider conducting Teach the Teacher tours during the planting or growing season in those valleys later this year.

Cotton to Market update

- Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation (ATMAC)
 - Through the ATMAC grant funding, Ashley Hollis has joined Cotton Australia as Brand Relationships Manager.
 - Similarly, Rob Cairns has joined as ACSA's consultant, connecting demand created with brands and retailers to supply chain partners.
- Better Cotton Conference
 - Australia's premium, sustainable cotton was highlighted on the global stage with a number of cotton industry representatives speaking at the Better Cotton Conference at the end of June.
 - The conference brought together brands and industry experts to explore topics across the value chain, including climate action, soil health and regenerative agriculture.
 - Cotton Australia Chair Nigel Burnett sat on two climate change farmer panels, CRDC-funded industry soil scientist Dr Oliver Knox spoke about the Goondiwindi Circular Cotton Project, and Cotton to Market Lead Brooke Summers covered ecosystems services payments and how the industry is working with brands to help fund biodiversity.
- Camp Cotton
 - Fashion brands and retailers saw first-hand how cotton is grown and ginned as part of Cotton Australia's Camp Cotton initiative.
 - About 30 brands and retailers attended the two-day trip in Gunnedah, NSW, after the pandemic halted planned trips in recent years.
 - Delegates participated in a forum on the first day, where they heard from industry and researchers, along with brands who were already using Australian cotton in their business.
 - Unfortunately, wet weather impacted a full day of farm tours, but guests heard from Boggabri farmer Andrew Watson about his work to encourage beneficial insects on-farm and the Country Road Biodiversity Project. Attendees were able to get off the bus and feel the cotton in the paddock at Scott Morgan's property near Gunnedah, as well as look at a picker.
 - Finally, delegates were given an insight into how cotton is ginned, when they saw Scott's cotton being processed at Carroll Cotton Gin, with Scott and Trudy Davies providing tours of the facility.
- Moving forward:
 - ATMAC grant commitments a key focus.
 - Executing a Strategic Roadmap that will cover: traceability, sustainably certified cotton, myBMP governance, Australian cotton brand marketing, supply chain labour risks and industry data.
 - The program will be seeking grower advice and input on these issues.

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Other news

[New Agriculture Minister chooses a cotton farm for his first farm visit in Queensland](#)

The Albanese government's newly appointed Agriculture Minister Murray Watt has chosen a cotton farm in Emerald for his first farm visit in his new role. The Minister travelled to Central Queensland to visit the farm of Ross Burnett who is harvesting more than 1400 hectares of cotton this year on his property. Senator Watt met with Cotton Australia Chair Nigel Burnett and CEO Adam Kay as well as representatives from the National Farmers Federation and local farmers. Subsequently Adam Kay was invited to a roundtable with the Minister to discuss priority issues with the Minister. Currently Minister Watt sees the key issues as 1. Workforce, 2. Input costs and 3. Biosecurity.

[Cotton Young Achiever and Researcher of the Year announced](#)

The 2021 winners of the prestigious Cotton Seed Distributors Researcher of the Year Award and the ADAMA Chris Lehmann Trust Young Cotton Achiever of the Year have been announced at the Crop Consultants Australia dinner in Narrabri. Taking the honours were Dr Iain Wilson, a research scientist with the CSIRO in Canberra and Emma Ayliffe, an agronomist based near Griffith.

[Cotton Australia marks 50th anniversary with engagement events](#)

Cotton Australia commemorated its 50th anniversary by presenting at events in Queensland and New South Wales in June. Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay presented to about 150 people including former Governor General her excellency Dame Quentin Bryce at the Queensland Rural Press Club in Brisbane about the industry and the advances made by growers. Queensland Agriculture Minister Mark Furner hosted an engagement event that evening at Queensland's Parliament House for ministers, politicians, and staffers of all sides of politics to find out more about the industry by engaging with the great cross-section of industry personnel in attendance. Cotton Australia was involved in the NSW Farm Writers lunch in Sydney. Growers Fleur Anderson and Tony Quigley, and cotton market analyst (and NT grower) Pete Johnson sat on a panel and answered attendees' questions about the cotton industry. Cotton Australia's 50th anniversary will be celebrated with growers and all industry personnel at the 2022 Australian Cotton Conference in August.

Dates for your diary

[EKKA – Royal Brisbane Show](#)

6th – 14th August 2022

[2022 Australian Cotton Conference](#)

16th – 18th August 2022

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