

# AUSTRALIAN COTTON SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE 2021



**PLANET. PEOPLE. Paddock.** is the Australian cotton industry's framework to achieve its vision of being a global leader in sustainable cotton production.

It guides work to set sustainability targets in the areas most important to industry and stakeholders, coordinate a whole-of-industry strategy to achieve these targets, and engage effectively with stakeholders on actions and progress.

Sustainability for the Australian cotton industry means running profitable and efficient cotton farms while creating environmental, economic and social value. It also means being accountable to stakeholders for the industry's actions and impacts. Since becoming the first Australian agricultural industry to independently assess its environmental impacts in 1991, the Australian cotton industry has been quietly improving its sustainability. That work continues.



AUSTRALIAN COTTON SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK  
**PLANET. PEOPLE. Paddock.**

# 2020/2021 SUSTAINABILITY

This snapshot provides a summary of the Australian cotton industry's sustainability progress for the 12 months to 30 June 2021 across its most important PLANET (environment), PEOPLE (social) and PADDOCK (economic) topics.

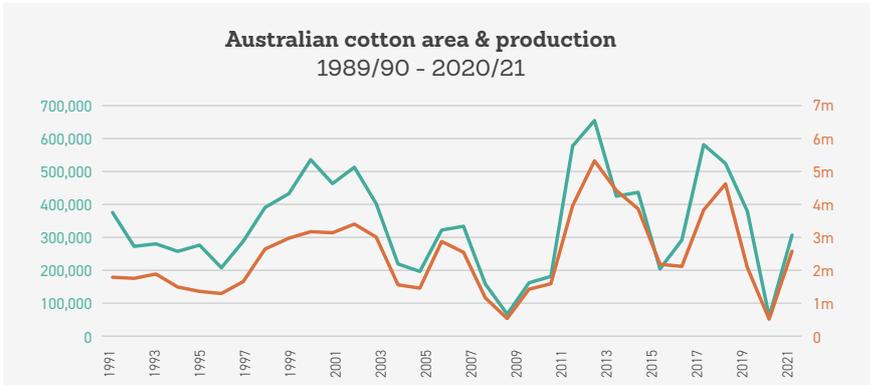
THE FULL 2020/21 SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE IS AVAILABLE HERE 

ADDITIONAL DETAILED INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE IN AN ONLINE DATA PACK HERE 

## 2020/2021 SEASON

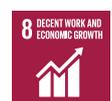
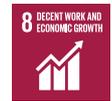
As cotton is an annual crop, growers adjust the area of cotton they plant each year to reflect water availability.

Following two years of severe drought, improved seasonal conditions in 2020/21 saw 2.8 million bales picked with a gross value of \$1.6 billion.



Source: Cotton Australia

— Area planted (ha) — Bales picked

| TARGETED OUTCOMES |   | 2020/21 SUMMARY   | SDG ALIGNMENT  |
|-------------------|---|---|--|
| PLANET            |  <b>Water</b>             | Continuous increase in the efficiency of water used for cotton irrigation, within sustainable river & ground water system limits. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water use efficiency improved</li> <li>48% less water now needed to grow a bale of cotton compared to 1993.</li> </ul>  |
|                   |  <b>Greenhouse gases</b> | Contribute to the Paris Agreement's aim of a climate neutral world.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emissions per bale estimated to have reduced 6% from the previous year</li> </ul>                                      |
|                   |  <b>Biodiversity</b>     | Native vegetation management in the cotton landscape is in line with regional priorities <sup>1</sup> .                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21% of an average cotton farm is remnant native vegetation</li> </ul>    |
|                   |  <b>Pesticides</b>       | Pesticide use supports optimal crop production while having no negative impact on human & environmental health.                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insecticide hazard reduced</li> <li>Herbicide hazard increased: more rain = more weeds</li> </ul>                      |
|                   |  <b>Soil Health</b>      | Sustained cotton productivity growth by improving soil health.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soil health measures are being developed</li> <li>30% of growers use cover crops</li> </ul>                            |
| PEOPLE            |  <b>Wellbeing</b>        | Contribute to improved wellbeing of people living and working in cotton communities.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical health and community involvement has increased</li> <li>Mental health has decreased</li> </ul>                |
|                   |  <b>Workplace</b>        | Injury-free cotton farms, skills for innovative and modern agriculture, & a diverse workforce that is treated ethically.          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better workplace data is a priority</li> <li>Industry workplace strategy in development</li> </ul>                     |
| PADDOCK           |  <b>Productivity</b>     | Increase Australian cotton yield and quality within sustainable environmental boundaries.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yield increased from previous two drought years, but remains below long-term trend</li> </ul>                          |
|                   |  <b>Profitability</b>    | Growers have sufficient profitability to confidently re-invest in their business & community.                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No insights on 2021 profitability due to a data lag.</li> </ul>    |

<sup>1</sup>The Australian cotton industry is working with NRM Regions Australia to explore if the cotton industry can align to regionally-specific biodiversity priorities.