



# AUSTRALIAN COTTON SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2019: SNAPSHOT



The Australian cotton industry's second five-year sustainability report



Following the industry's first five-year Sustainability Report in 2014, this Australian Cotton Sustainability Report meets the industry's commitment to provide a balanced summary of the industry's sustainability performance for the five years to June 2019. The report is focused on the sustainability topics most important to the industry and its stakeholders. Through a process of consultation and review, eight environmental, economic and social topics have been chosen for reporting on. Read the full report at <https://cottonaustralia.com.au/sustainability> or [www.crdc.com.au/publications](http://www.crdc.com.au/publications).



## 2014 to 2019 sustainability results



By comparing performance against 2014, we have a clear indication of our performance over time in the areas most important to our industry. The Sustainability Report shows the industry is doing some things well, and can improve in other areas.



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**9.4%**



**Water:** A long-term decrease in the volume of water used to grow a bale of cotton has continued.
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**12.6%**



**Carbon:** Carbon emissions have increased, mainly from increased nitrogen fertiliser use. The amount of carbon stored on farms is not currently measured.
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**Biodiversity:** The area of land managed for conservation has declined slightly or remained steady.
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**18.2%**

**Pesticides:** The amount of toxic pressure on human health and the environment from pesticides has continued to decrease. Work to reduce the hazard and volume of pesticides is ongoing.
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**9.9%**

**Efficiency:** The amount of cotton grown per hectare continued its long-term increase.
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**75.8%**

**Profitability:** Increased yields and historically high cotton prices increased profitability.
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**Quality of work life - safety:** Injuries have decreased, but fatalities have increased.
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**Quality of work life - diversity and training:** Most diversity indicators increased; the proportion of young people decreased.
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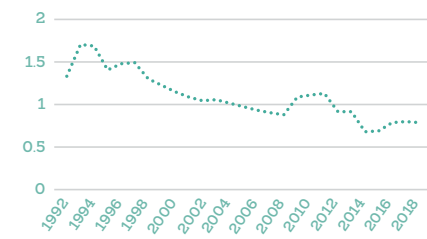
**Wellbeing and social capital:** The wellbeing and social capital of growers and their communities was measured for the first time.

## Long-term sustainability trends

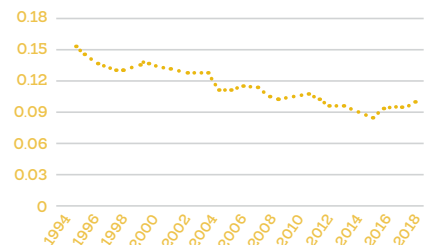
In agriculture years of drought or a bumper season can distort the true picture: a longer view is often needed. In 1991 cotton became the first Australian agricultural industry to benchmark its environmental performance. Since 1992, producing a bale of irrigated cotton now takes:

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**48% LESS WATER**
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**34% LESS LAND**
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**97% LESS INSECTICIDES**

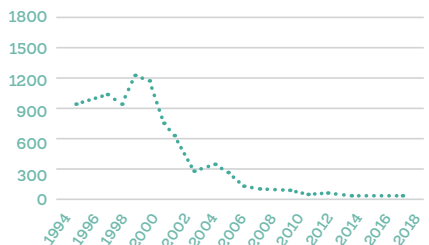
Water use\*: ML/bale



Land use: hectare/bale



Total insecticide use: grams a.i.\*\*/bale



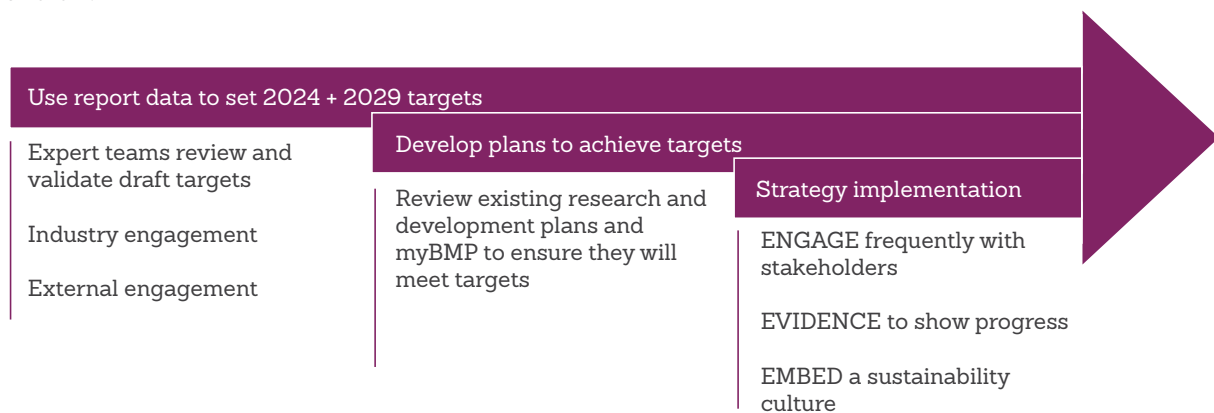
## What next? Setting sustainability targets.

Cotton Australia and the Cotton Research and Development Corporation are now using 2014 and 2019 Sustainability Report data to set 2024 and 2029 sustainability targets.

Bold, achievable targets are needed to meet our vision of being a global leader in sustainable cotton production. Working to achieve these sustainability targets will benefit the natural environment and cotton industry communities. If we get it right, it will also directly benefit the industry through:

- Reduced risk, by being more aware of stakeholder expectations
- Increased productivity, by continuing to do more with less
- Market growth, by meeting increasing customer demands for evidence of sustainability performance.

To ensure we set the right level of ambition, we will engage with stakeholders on our draft targets before we finalise and publish them.



## Achieving the Targets: PLANET. PEOPLE. Paddock.

The many positive changes we've seen in the industry over the past three decades are the result of planning, perseverance, and a genuine whole-of-industry commitment to continuously improve.

Achieving bold sustainability targets will be no different. An Australian cotton sustainability framework called PLANET. PEOPLE. Paddock. has been created to guide work to:

- Set sustainability targets in the areas most important to industry and stakeholders
- Coordinate a whole-of-industry strategy to achieve these targets
- Engage effectively with stakeholders on actions and progress.

PLANET. PEOPLE. Paddock. is guided by a Sustainability Working Group comprised of representatives from Cotton Australia, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation, myBMP, CottonInfo, the Australian Cotton Shippers Association and growers.

## What does this mean for you?

Growers and others in the Australian cotton industry have been quietly improving their sustainability for decades. The industry has created the world-leading myBMP cotton certification standard to establish best practice and developed the CottonInfo program to drive grower adoption of research. PLANET. PEOPLE. Paddock. does not add a new layer to this proven structure. These existing channels will continue to drive industry continuous improvement right across farm operations. They will remain the path for researchers to connect with growers to adopt change.

Growers are asked to continue to use these critical programs, and if needed, to rise to the challenge of improving performance in areas to benefit them and the entire industry.

Customers of Australian cotton and other external stakeholders are interested in Australian cotton's long term sustainability. The industry wants you to know PLANET. PEOPLE. Paddock. is its framework to improve further, and that your involvement is a fundamental part of its sustainability progress. You will see the industry increasingly ask you about how it is doing, and provide new ways to engage with you on sustainability.