



Advancing Australian Cotton

New Grower Checklist

Last updated August 2011

The 2011-12 cotton season is expected to be a record planted area for the Australian cotton industry and it is absolutely critical that new growers arrange machinery contractors, product suppliers, merchants and processors (ginners) before planting.

Welcome to the Australian Cotton Industry

This kit will provide growers who are considering growing cotton, or who are new to the industry with practical advice and information on how to get started, your responsibilities, things to consider and who to talk to. You should first ask yourself the questions outlined, and then make sure you have a thorough understanding of your responsibilities before making the decision to grow cotton.

If you are new to the cotton industry, you are probably about to experience some different thinking and some new challenges. There is no single recipe for producing a highly profitable and sustainable cotton crop, but you will find that to be successful you must approach cotton production with long term planning and commitment.

The good thing is that once you have made the choice to grow cotton, you will not be on your own. The Australian cotton industry operates in an extremely cohesive and cooperative environment, where a number of industry organisations exist specifically to support growers, from research extension to agronomy, community relations and lobbying. You will also find that your fellow cotton growers are prepared to willingly share their experiences and offer invaluable advice.

The Australian cotton industry is committed to:

- Sustainability
- Water-use efficiency
- Profitability
- Efficiency
- Research and technology
- Problem solving
- High quality fibre production

Some Questions for First Time Cotton Growers

How Committed are You to Cotton?

- To be successful you must apply good planning, thoroughness, timeliness and careful management to all your business and cotton production practices.
- Cotton production will definitely affect your crop rotation program.
- Unless the farm is already set up for cotton production, investments in infrastructure, advisory services, contracting services and additional personnel will most likely be required.
- The cotton that you grow will most likely be genetically modified (GM) this brings potential benefits and responsibilities (although be aware that conventional varieties are available).

Who Will Harvest Your Crop?

- Cotton picking machinery is expensive. Most new growers employ picking contractors to harvest the crop.
- In good seasons contractors can be in short supply. Discuss your expected needs with them prior to planting.
- If you employ contractors, be aware of farm hygiene issues and ensure machinery entering or leaving your farm is washed down and clean to prevent the spread of weeds and diseases (as per the industry's Come Clean Go Clean protocols) found at <http://tools.cotton.crc.org.au/Assets/PDFFiles/FrmHygi.pdf>

Have You Planned for Cotton?

- The decision to grow cotton must be a deliberate one
- Successful growers plan well ahead
- Among the critical factors in growing cotton are:
 - Fitting cotton into your crop rotation program
 - Previous paddock history and assessment of the potential for herbicide residues to affect cotton
 - Sound weed management
 - Good soil management and adequate available moisture profile
 - An understanding of a range of effective and integrated pest management strategies
 - Effective stubble management after harvest

How Much of Your Time Does Cotton Require?

- Cotton is a relatively complex crop to grow, requiring specific agronomic knowledge and some farming techniques that you may not have used before.
- A cotton crop will require constant attention from planting to picking.
- Due to the high investment, timeliness of operations is critical.
- You can contract others for operations and advice, but you cannot exchange this for the time you must also commit.

How do You Feel About Using Chemicals?

- In the last decade, the Australian cotton industry has reduced its reliance on insecticides by more than 90%, however, some chemical usage may be required.
- Cotton farming requires the safe and minimum application of a range of pesticides (insecticides and herbicides). Are you comfortable using these chemicals?
- You must be prepared to apply the industry's Best Management Practices for pesticide use.
- In NSW it is a legislative requirement to keep particular records regarding all pesticide spray operations. Advice is available from your local Cotton Australia Regional Manager.
- In NSW it is also a legislative requirement that all people employed on your farm involved in the use and application of Pesticides hold a ChemCert (or equivalent) certificate.

How do You Feel About Complying with GM Cotton Regulations?

- Growing a genetically modified cotton means that you must sign a contract with the owner of the technology (i.e. Monsanto or Bayer in Australia at present).
- You will be required to attend an accreditation/information session for each trait/technology that you intend to grow.
- GM technology licences may contain a range of conditions. Read the contract with the biotechnology provider carefully.
- All commercial GM cotton technologies in Australia require compliance with resistance management plans that form part of the licence conditions.
- You should be aware of all the requirements of the resistance management plans and crop management plans for the respective products.
- Discuss these requirements with the technology provider (Bayer or Monsanto) and /or their agents prior to signing these agreements. They will also be able to advise the time and location of accreditation sessions for the technology.
- You will not be able to order GM cotton planting seed unless you have been accredited.

Have You Talked to Your Neighbours?

- It is your responsibility to ensure chemical drift is minimised on your farm and does not occur outside your property boundaries. This is addressed carefully by adopting myBMP on your farm.
- The risk of chemical drift may worry some of your neighbours.
- Whilst Endosulfan is registered for use on cotton until October 2012, it is a restricted chemical product that has specific application requirements. Please be aware of the strict label conditions. Discuss with your advisor the use of other pest control strategies that may be available to you.
- Discuss your plans to grow cotton with your neighbours early. Address the concerns they have and come to joint decisions on the practices you implement before you start spraying.
- Similarly your neighbours' farming practices can affect your cotton. By communicating early and maintaining contact with them you can minimise any risks to your crop.
- Cotton is very sensitive to Phenoxy herbicides. You need to take great care in decontaminating any spray equipment used on your cotton crop.
- The web based application Cotton Map enables cotton growers to map their fields so that people in the neighbouring areas can see that there is cotton in the vicinity.
www.cottonmap.com.au

How Will You Finance Your Crop?

- Relative to other summer crops, the costs of growing cotton is higher.
- Organise finance with your bank/lending organisation or arrange for crop credit well prior to planting (before ordering seed).
- Hail presents a significant risk to summer crop production including cotton. This may affect your financial position in relation to growing costs and marketing positions. It is important that you discuss hail insurance coverage with an experience broker in cotton insurance.

Who Will Buy Your Cotton?

- Cotton has unique marketing parameters based around fibre quality. Discuss premium and discount sheets as well as price with an experience cotton merchant/marketer.
- Australia enjoys an open, sophisticated and highly competitive marketing system whereby growers sell their crops forward directly to a range of marketing companies.
- The forward-selling occurs before crops are sown, up to three years in advance, generally through a processor/marketing company.
- The world price of cotton is dependent on factors such as world cotton supply/demand, the state of the world economy, agri-politics, fashion trends, the price of synthetic fibres, weather and natural disasters, and there are a wide range of options available for marketing your cotton in Australia.
- Consult with local experienced cotton growers; there are many merchants available to you with numerous marketing options.
- For a list of Australian merchants, please see www.austcottonshippers.com.au

Is Your Current Machinery Adequate to Grow Cotton?

- Can you adapt your existing machinery? Or will you need to engage the services of contractors?
- Minimise machinery acquisitions until you are sure about your long term commitment to cotton growing.

Have You Contacted a Consultant?

- Seek the services of a cotton consultant early for management advice and crop planning, particularly if you have limited cotton agronomy experience.
- Speak to experienced local cotton farmers for advice on the selection of a well-reputed consultant (your local Cotton Grower Association is a good place to start).
- Select a consultant with whom you are comfortable.
- Remember in some districts there are few consultants available so again you should try to arrange this early.
- Some Ag Chem distributors offer crop management services.
- For more information, contact the Crop Consultants Australia at www.cropconsultants.com.au

Have You Contacted a Spraying Contractor?

- Unless you plan to do all of your own spraying you should discuss your requirements with an aerial and/or ground rig operator before the season commences.
- Ensure you use a reputable and accredited spray contractor with adequate insurance coverage.
- Prior to using any spray equipment on a cotton crop ensure it has been thoroughly and appropriately decontaminated. http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/26_4257.htm
- To find a suitable spray contractor try the NSW Groundsprayers Association <http://www.nsw-groundsprayers.org.au/>
- Utilise the cotton industries myBMP program to identify best practice in pesticide application and storage. www.mybmp.com.au

Have You Contacted a Farm Inputs Supplier?

- You will need to source suppliers for farm inputs such as seed, fertilizer, herbicides, insecticides, growth regulators and defoliant.
- These suppliers depend on growers effectively communicating their requirements
- Shopping around for inputs such as chemicals may save some money, but you could be left short if supplies become tight.
- Some ag chem products are specific to cotton growing, these proprietary products may require pre-purchase or consignment commitments.
- It is better to develop a close working relationship with your preferred local cotton product supplier.

For further information

Cotton Grower Associations

There are local Cotton Growers Associations in most cotton growing regions, through which experienced growers and local information can be accessed. To find the CGA nearest you, visit www.cottonaustralia.com.au/ca/members/

Agronomic adviser/consultant

To find a cotton agronomist near you, contact Crop Consultants Australia at www.cropconsultants.com.au

Cotton Australia Regional Managers (RMs)

To find your nearest Cotton Australia RM who will help with a range of issues including the introduction of Best Management Practices. Contact;

James Houlahan - Northern NSW 0407 956586

James Hill – Southern NSW 0408 892 317

Renee Anderson – Central Queensland 0448 125 156

Michael Murray Southern Queensland 0427 707 868

Or visit <http://www.cottonaustralia.com.au/ca/staff/>

Cotton CRC Development & Delivery Team For a full list, visit:

myBMP Information

Visit: www.mybmp.com.au

Certified Advisors: <https://www.mybmp.com.au/Resources/CertifiedAdvisors.aspx>

Pesticide Application and Decision Support

For training: www.billgordonconsulting.com

For decision support: www.spraywisecisions.com.au

For Phenoxy sensitive crop mapping: www.cottonmap.com.au

Biotechnology Suppliers and Product Stewardship Requirements

Bollgard II and Roundup Ready Flex www.monsanto.com.au

Liberty Link www.bayercropscience.com.au/cs/products/productdetails.asp?id=281

For general information on cotton growing and a range of useful links:

www.cottonaustralia.com.au

Australian Cotton Production Manual 2011

http://www.cottoncrc.org.au/content/Industry/Publications/Australian_Cotton_Production_Manual.aspx

For research information including free resources and publications:

www.cottoncrc.org.au

www.crdc.com.au

For cotton varieties and seed information:

www.csd.net.au

For ginners, merchants and cotton marketers:

www.austcottonshippers.com.au

Understanding Your Role and Responsibilities

Cotton farmers; you do not work in isolation. The practices you use on your farm can impact on the whole cotton farming community and therefore you have responsibilities not only to yourself, your workers and the local community, but to the cotton industry itself.

If you seek it, you will get every kind of support and advice imaginable from your fellow cotton growers and from the industry's research and representative bodies. You should be ever mindful that the farming practices you adopt will come under the close scrutiny of your neighbours and through them, the wider community.

Australian society rightly expects industry and agriculture to employ best practice in everything it does. Cotton growing is no exception – not only does the broader community demand it, the cotton industry also expects all growers to seek the adoption of management practices that, after many years of grower led research, lead the world in cotton production.

Best Management Practices (myBMP)

Best practice in all aspects of cotton production is set out in the cotton Best Management Practices Program (myBMP), a set of guidelines for sustainable and profitable cotton production. www.mybmp.com.au

The myBMP Program sets out your legal responsibilities, allows you to benchmark progress and develop action plans to address a number of issues relating to cotton production. These include:

- Natural Assets
- IPM-Insects, Weeds and Diseases
- Energy and Greenhouse gasses
- Fibre Quality
- Human Resources
- Pesticide Management
- Petrochemical Handling and Storage
- Biotechnology
- Biosecurity
- Water Management
- Soil Health

Implementation of myBMP is primarily the responsibility of the cotton grower, with assistance and advice from the Cotton Extension Team including CA's Regional Managers. For more information on myBMP, please contact the Cotton CRC Extension Team or your Cotton Australia Regional Manager for details.

www.cottoncrc.org.au/content/Industry/About_Us/People/Extension.aspx
www.cottonaustralia.com.au/ca/staff/

Cotton Grower Associations

There is most likely to be a local Cotton Growers Association (CGA) in your area, of which you can become a member. CGA's are members of Cotton Australia, the cotton industry's peak grower representative body. Through your membership, you can have voting rights, become active in the local cotton growing community, have an industry voice and share and receive information. For details of your nearest CGA, go to www.cottonaustralia.com.au/ca/members/

Acronyms used in the Cotton Industry

AAAA	Aerial Agricultural Association of Australia
ACIC	Australian Cotton Industry Council
ACRI	Australian Cotton Research Institute
ACSA	Australian Cotton Shippers Association
APVMA	Agricultural Pesticides & Veterinary Medicines Authority
BRR	Black Root Rot
CAPA	Cotton Agricultural Products Association
CCA	Crop Consultants Australia Inc.
CA	Cotton Australia
CBT	Cotton Bunchy Top
CCC CRC	Cotton Catchment Communities Cooperative Research Centre
CGA	Cotton Grower Association
CMP	Crop Management Plan (Roundup Ready Flex)
CRDC	Cotton Research Development Corporation
CSD	Cotton Seed Distributors
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (Federal)
DECCW	NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water
FOV	Fusarium oxysporum f. vasinfectum
HVI	High Volume Instrument (used to test cotton fibre quality)
ICAC	International Cotton Advisory Committee
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IRMS	Insect Resistance Management Strategy
NSW DPI	NSW Department of Primary Industry
myBMP	Best Management Practices
OGTR	Office of the Gene Technology Regulator
PAMP	Pesticide Application Management Plan
PHA	Plant Health Australia Limited
QDEEDI	Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (formally QDPI)
RMP	Resistance Management Plan (Bollgard II)
TIMS	Transgenic and Insecticide Management Strategies Committee
TRC	Technology Resource Centre
TSP	Technology Service Provider
TUA	Technology User Agreement