Sustainability, global markets dominate second day of record Cotton Conference

The 18th Australian Cotton Conference, currently in session on the Gold Coast, has attracted even more attendees, with more than 1900 delegates now registered.

Cotton growers and industry representatives from across Queensland and NSW have gathered to attend the event, which is being held over three days at the Gold Coast Convention & Exhibition Centre. The event concludes with the Australian Cotton Industry Awards gala dinner on Thursday, August 4.

The Australian Cotton Conference is a joint initiative of Cotton Australia and the Australian Cotton Shippers Association. Cotton Australia CEO, Adam Kay, says a number of late registrants had taken total attendees to 1920.

"We are very pleased to report the huge delegation to the Australian Cotton Conference, it really is inspiring to see cotton growers and industry representatives gathered here to celebrate the industry," Mr Kay says.

"Today we heard from senior representatives from the CSIRO, Monsanto, Rabobank and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. Susi Proudman and Manish Chawla, senior executives of Nike Inc. and H&M, respectively, also spoke about the importance of Australian cotton in the global supply chain."

"Tomorrow promises to be just as exciting, and the Conference will conclude with the 2016 Australian Cotton Industry Awards gala dinner, something the whole industry is eagerly looking forward to."

Highlights from day two of the 2016 Australian Cotton Conference include:

**Sustainable cotton: perspectives from global brands and the supply chain**

Key partners of the global cotton supply chain – including global brands Nike Inc. and H&M, domestic retailer Target Australia and representatives from the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) – joined forces with growers and Cotton Australia to discuss the Australian cotton industry’s sustainability journey. The supply chain forum was chaired by Cotton Australia’s Cotton to Market Project Lead, Brooke Summers.

Session highlights and speakers include:

- Cotton Australia Chair and Goondiwindi cotton grower, Simon Corish reflected on his experiences as a cotton farmer adopting Australia’s myBMP (Best Management Practices) program. Cotton Australia signed a formal partnership agreement with BCI on behalf of Australia’s cotton industry in June 2014, and will continue to manage the industry’s relationship with BCI.
- Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay discussed the Australian cotton industry’s efforts to engage with key brands and retailers here in Australia and around the world, linking Australia’s myBMP program to BCI, and creating value for Australian growers who produce some of the world’s best cotton fibre. He also reflected on the sustainability journey of Australia’s world-leading cotton growers, driven by the myBMP program, which has seen Australian yields excel at more than three times the world average.
Balanced land and water use session addresses critical water policy issues
Session chair and Cotton Australia General Manager Michael Murray led a panel which addressed issues around water use and its impacts on cotton growers and the communities they support. Speakers included Colin Mues (Murray Darling Basin Authority), Tom Chesson (National Irrigators’ Council), Mike Wade (California Farm Water Coalition) and Anthony Lynham (Old Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources & Mines).
Key points from the session included:

- The Murray Darling Basin Authority believes it has a good understanding of the environmental needs of the Basin and the social and economic impacts of the Murray Darling Basin Plan (MDBP), and notes that there are challenges in making triple-bottom-line decisions incorporating input from local communities
- Agriculture representative groups say ‘enough is enough’ - current surface water recovery policy has placed economic pressure on communities and farmers affected by the MDBP
- The ‘simply add water’ approach to environmental health in the Basin is flawed, and complementary measures are more effective, bringing more ‘bang for the buck’ for the environmental while reducing the impost on farmers and communities

Growing tomorrow: new markets, new uses
Innovative future uses for Australian cotton fibres was the focus on the ‘Growing tomorrow, new markets, new uses’ session, chaired by Cotton Australia Board member and Theodore cotton grower, Fleur Anderson.
Session highlights and speakers include:

- Allan Williams, Cotton Research and Development Corporation: Allan updated attendees on the Australian cotton industry’s efforts to counter competition from polyester and other man-made fibres, efforts to influence Australian cotton’s competitiveness globally, the CRDC’s customer’s program and strategic plan that has a focus on customers and end users
- Jared Donovan and Rafael Gomez, Queensland University of Technology’s (QUT) School of Design: The QUT representatives updated attendees on a cotton rapid customisation feasibility study being undertaken, design implications of adopting cotton fibres in a range of garments and products, adapting cotton for use in 3D printing and smart textiles, and garments with embedded technology
- Alice Payne, QUT: Alice updated attendees on macro trends in fashion, the acceleration of fashion trend cycles, awareness and accountability of the various components of the cotton supply chain, including increased supply chain scrutiny of social, economic and environmental issues right down to farm level

People Power: workforce innovation and myBMP
Cotton grower Peter Tuohey (‘Daisy Lodge’, Carrathool NSW) hosted the ‘People power’ session, focusing on the cotton industry’s workforce strategy to nurture our future workforce.
Session highlights and speakers include:

- Ian Taylor, CRDC and Rebecca Fing, Cotton Australia: The joint program between Cotton Australia and CRDC to develop, with industry partners, the Australian cotton industry’s workforce strategy and people investments
- Erin Ashford, the Northern Australian Pastoral Co: practical tips for managing farm staff, effective recruitment strategies that best suit the advertised role and the employer, reducing the gender pay gap, and selecting the right team members

For full program and speaker details, go to: www.australiancottonconference.com.au

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