

# New Growers' Checklist

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Information provided by Cotton Australia  
<http://cottonaustralia.com.au/cotton-growers/resources/new-growers>

**N**ew growers should have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities before making the decision to grow cotton. 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.

## 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.
- **Who will harvest your crop?**  
Cotton picking machinery is expensive. Most new growers employ picking contractors to harvest the crop, but in good seasons contractors can be in short supply.
- **Have you planned for cotton?**  
Among the critical factors in growing cotton are; fitting cotton into your crop rotation program, sound weed management, good soil management, integrated pest management strategies and effective stubble management after harvest. Review relevant chapters in this manual to help plan and inform your decisions.
- **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 and through to post crop management.
- **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. You must be prepared to apply the industry's Best Management Practices for pesticide use.
- **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. 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. Refer to the stewardship chapter.

- **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. 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](http://www.cottonmap.com.au)).
- **How will you finance your crop?**  
Hail presents a significant risk to summer crop production including cotton which can have high growing costs. This may affect your financial position in relation to growing costs and marketing positions. It is important to discuss hail insurance coverage with an experienced specialist. Refer to Chapter 25.
- **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. For a list of Australian merchants, please see [www.austcottonshippers.com.au](http://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 or for more information, contact the Crop Consultants Australia at [www.cropconsultants.com.au](http://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.
- **Have you contacted a farm inputs supplier?**  
You will need to source suppliers for farm inputs such as seed, fertiliser, herbicides, insecticides, growth regulators and defoliants.

For further information:

Cotton Australia [www.cottonaustralia.com.au](http://www.cottonaustralia.com.au)

Cotton Grower Associations [www.cottonaustralia.com.au/ca/members/](http://www.cottonaustralia.com.au/ca/members/)

Agronomic adviser/consultant [www.cropconsultants.com.au](http://www.cropconsultants.com.au)

Cotton Development and Delivery Team see inside back page

myBMP Information [www.mybmp.com.au](http://www.mybmp.com.au)

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