



# Introduction To The Cotton Industry

By Michael Bange (CSIRO)

The cotton fibre is unique in generating a host of products that sustain and make life more comfortable and aesthetically appealing. Australian cotton is viewed worldwide as an excellent fibre. It is generally purchased with the intention of producing high quality yarns for use in the woven and knitted apparel sector in the Asia-Pacific region. China is also significant market. Australian cotton is often purchased for a premium as it meets many of the spinners' requirements on the basis of quality and consistency. It has the specific fibre qualities required to spin high-quality combed, ring-spun yarn and produce desirable high value textile products.

Cotton fabrics dating back to 3000BC are proof of the long history of the cultivation of cotton and its importance as one of the most popular natural textiles around the world.

Two cotton species are grown in Australia, *Gossypium hirsutum* and *Gossypium barbadense*. The cottons are called New World cottons and originated in Central America. *Gossypium hirsutum* (called Upland) represents more than 90% of Australia's and the world's cotton production as it is most productive and has suitable fibre properties for modern textile production. *G. barbadense* cottons have a number of names – Pima, Egyptian, Peruvian, Sea Island, and so on. These cottons have very good fibre properties demanding a significant price premium from spinners for manufacture of fine garments. It has lower yield and narrower climate requirements – requiring specific management. In Australia, Pima production has been limited to western NSW locations such as Bourke, Hillston and Tandou.

The First Fleet brought cotton with them to Australia in 1788, however the first plantings in the Sydney area were disappointing, due to the unfavourable climate. Early production was then confined almost entirely to Queensland, with the first commercial crops grown at Moreton Bay Queensland in 1840.

Australia's 'modern' cotton industry as we have come to know it today was started in the early 1960s, largely in the Namoi Valley of NSW. From these modest beginnings, the industry has expanded the growing region as far south as Hay and Griffith in NSW to Emerald in Queensland.

The Australian cotton industry is one of the nation's biggest rural export earners and is vital for the prosperity of many regional communities. Despite exposure to



(Photo: Cotton Australia: Jenni Seigmeier)

droughts and floods, the industry responds proactively and as a result, communities continue to prosper with cotton farming. Much planning, investment, and effort is being undertaken by all sectors of the industry to address current and future challenges to ensure the industry remains prosperous and resilient.

The industry has also invested heavily and relied upon vast experience and research in the development of industry best management practices. **'myBMP' is a key tool growers can use to help achieve best practice in growing cotton sustainably and responsibly.** It can also be used to help direct growers to the latest information from the industry and the cotton research community on specific issues relating to cotton farming as a whole.

Go to the *myBMP* website – [www.mybmp.com.au](http://www.mybmp.com.au) for more details and to register.

Cotton Research and Development Corporation [www.crdc.com.au](http://www.crdc.com.au)

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

Department of Primary Industries NSW [www.industry.nsw.gov.au](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au)

Qld Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry [www.daff.qld.gov.au](http://www.daff.qld.gov.au)

CSIRO [www.csiro.au](http://www.csiro.au)

Alternatively to receive the latest industry information and publications, add your details to the Cotton Industry Mailing list by contacting Dave Larsen – [david.larsen@industry.nsw.gov.au](mailto:david.larsen@industry.nsw.gov.au) or 02 6799 1534.

## Cotton Industry Organisations

### Cotton Australia

After more than 40 years of service, Cotton Australia continues to support and represent the interests of Australia's cotton growers.

Cotton Australia determines and drives the industry's strategic direction, retaining a strong focus on R&D, promoting the value of the industry, reporting on its environmental credibility, and implementing policy objectives in consultation with its stakeholders.

Cotton Australia works to ensure an environment



conducive to efficient and sustainable cotton production. It has a key role in the cotton Best Management Practices (BMP), an environmental management program for growers.

Cotton Australia pushes for better funding for rural R&D and provides grower-driven feedback to the CRDC on where it should invest its research dollars. The organisation helps to safeguard the industry by remaining vigilant and prepared for risks like biosecurity threats and exotic pest incursions.

One of Cotton Australia's key roles is that of advocacy, positioning the industry within the political framework to reduce the regulatory burdens on cotton growers and advancing their interests at all levels.

The organisation lobbies hard on a huge range of political issues that confront growers and defends the industry from the impacts of new legislation, often dealing directly with senior politicians and policy makers in both Federal and State Parliaments. A good example is Cotton Australia's leading role in the very heart of the water debate for over a decade, fighting hard on all fronts for growers' rights and coordinating industry responses alongside other groups such as the National Farmers Federation.

Cotton Australia also works to ensure an environment conducive to efficient and sustainable cotton production. Attending to grower issues at a local level, Cotton Australia's Regional Managers often provide a direct pathway for growers to ensure that policy is directed to the areas that matter most. Cotton Australia has expanded its team of Regional Managers, offering a broader service across the major cotton growing areas.

It has recently increased its resources to promote the cotton industry to the Australian community, and works hard to position the industry in a positive way.

Cotton Australia is funded by a voluntary levy of \$2.00 per bale of cotton and growers can be confident of an efficient and truly grower-representative structure.

Cotton Australia will continue to work with and on behalf of growers to Advance Australian Cotton.

To learn more about Cotton Australia, visit [www.cottonaustralia.com.au](http://www.cottonaustralia.com.au)

## CRDC – Science underpins the success of the Australian cotton industry

Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) invests in research and development for the world leading Australian cotton industry. As a partnership corporation involving equally the industry and government, CRDC is focused on a better farming future for Australian cotton growers.

CRDC plays a key leadership role in working with industry to set and manage the strategic direction of the R&D that keeps the Australian cotton industry competitive. In doing so it is accountable to the industry, through Cotton Australia and also to the Australian Government, through the Minister for Agriculture,

Fisheries and Forestry. For their part, growers influence the direction of industry R&D through their membership in Cotton Australia.

All cotton farmers pay an R&D levy of \$2.25 for each 227 kilogram bale of cotton. This is collected by cotton ginners on behalf of the Australian Government. The Australian Government then provides CRDC with the resultant growers' levies together with R&D funding.

From 2013 to 2018, CRDC intends to invest \$100 million in a balanced portfolio of research, development and extension projects. The main themes of focus are farmers, industry and customers. Balancing these major programs are focus themes of people and performance. In the next five years, up to five per cent of investments in R&D will seek answers to industry's future success in 'blue-sky' R&D. CRDC partners with and collaborates with a broad range of publicly funded research organisations and commercial providers to provide world-leading research findings. All investments are selected on the basis of improved environmental, social and economic benefits to the industry and the nation.

The CRDC participates in a joint venture with Cotton Australia and Cotton Seed Distributors to provide support to the Australian Cotton Industry Development and Delivery Team (D&D) for the effective delivery of campaigns and research to the industry that supports improved practices, R&D communications and responsiveness to emerging or emergency issues.

In addition CRDC produces a range of publications about corporate activities and disseminates research outcomes through industry media and the Corporation's website.

For more information go to [www.crdc.com.au](http://www.crdc.com.au)

### Key research partners

Rural Research and Development Corporations  
CSIRO

Universities

Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs)

NSW Department of Primary Industries

Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

State Government Departments

Crop Consultants Australia

Cotton Australia

Agribusinesses

*myBMP –  
for growers  
powered by research  
supported by industry*

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