

FACT SHEET

THE FEATURES AND BENEFITS OF COTTON



Cotton is the world's favourite natural fibre. Its beauty, comfort, durability and versatility make it the perfect choice for clothing, bedding, textiles and many other products. As an industry, cotton supports the livelihoods of millions of people – both directly and indirectly – around the world.

Cotton has been cultivated for at least 7000 years, making it one of the world's oldest known fibres. Despite this, its use did not become widespread until the invention of the cotton gin, which mechanised production. Cotton is now the most widely used natural fibre in the world and remains ever-popular with consumers.

WHY CHOOSE COTTON?

Cotton is comfortable

The concept of 'comfort' is a very personal thing, and cotton has characteristics that consumers look for in garments and homewares:

- > **Softness:** cotton fibres are substantially finer than other fibres, so the feel – also known as the 'hand' of the fabric – is very soft.
- > **Cotton loves moisture:** it wets easily, and can hold much more water than synthetic fibres can. Cotton draws moisture away from the body which then evaporates through the fabric, allowing the skin to 'breathe'.
- > **Cotton is cool:** how a fabric interacts with the body determines how comfortable it is. Because it is breathable, cotton allows heat produced by the body to escape, keeping it cool and dry.

Cotton is naturally sustainable

Cotton is made from plants, not plastics. It is a renewable resource that is 100% natural. Unlike synthetics, cotton is biodegradable. It breaks down fast in terrestrial and aquatic environments, so it does not contribute to the microplastic pollution problem.

Because cotton is breathable and doesn't retain odours as synthetic fabrics do, cotton requires fewer washes between wears. Not only does this save time, it also saves money, water and energy, and helps clothes and homewares last even longer.

Cotton supports farmers and communities

Cotton fibre is grown on farms, not produced in factories. As a crop, it is planted in more than 100 countries around the world and contributes to the livelihoods of 300 million farming families and their communities.



Cotton supports the livelihoods of millions of farming families world-wide

Sleep better with cotton

Research has shown that you get a better night's sleep on cotton sheets than sheets made from synthetic fibres. This is because cotton allows your skin to breathe and it doesn't trap heat under the covers.

Cotton is hypoallergenic

Cotton is natural and hypoallergenic. It is gentle on the skin and does not cause irritation, and so is the perfect choice for people with allergies and respiratory conditions such as asthma. These properties, as well as cotton's resistance to high-temperature washing and its ability to be sterilised, make it the ideal material for use in medical products, hygiene and cosmetic products. Because of its hypoallergenic nature, cotton is an excellent choice for towels, bedding and baby clothes.

Cotton is odour-free

Whether you're cooking, working out at the gym, or engaged in other day-to-day activities, your clothes can absorb odours. Cotton releases these substances more readily than other fabrics during washing.

Cotton is low maintenance

Cotton is easier to wash and care for than other fabrics, because it is durable and can withstand high temperatures, so let your washing machine do your dirty work and enjoy the money you'll save on dry cleaning.



Research shows you get a better night's sleep with cotton

Cotton isn't clingy

Unlike synthetic fabrics, cotton is unable to hold an electric charge, so cotton clothes won't stick together, or worse, stick to you.

Cotton is versatile

Cotton is found in workwear and leisure wear, evening wear and performance fabrics. The fibre is so versatile that it can be woven, blended or knitted into fabrics as diverse as denim, corduroy, chambray, lace and velour. Its superior insulation qualities make it an excellent choice for bed linen and textiles. No matter what the purpose, cotton has you covered.





Cotton is high-tech

Because of its versatility, heat-resistance and suitability for blending, cotton has long been considered an ideal material for functional fabrics. Functional fabrics are materials designed or engineered to meet specific performance requirements. Examples include fabrics or products with antimicrobial or water-repellent properties.

There are a number of high-tech cotton fabrics and products available to brands and retailers and many more coming down the pipeline. These have been developed by Cotton Incorporated in the U.S. who can assist brands in sourcing them. Some examples include:

- > TransDRY® – patented moisture management application that allows fabrics to wick and spread perspiration as well as, or better than, most high-tech synthetic fabrics.
- > TOUGH COTTON™ – a combination of resin and catalysts that improve fabric strength and prevent breakages.
- > PUREPRESS™ – a cross-linked resin treatment to resist wrinkles and abrasion and improve durability.
- > STORM DENIM™ – a water-repellent finish that maintains comfort and breathability.

In the future, the raw materials for functional fabrics may exist even before the cotton leaves the farm gate. Scientists at Australia's CSIRO are currently working on breeding a cotton variety that produces fibres that won't wrinkle.

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INTERESTING COTTON FACTS

- > The word 'cotton' is derived from 'qutun' or 'kutun', an Arabic word used to describe any fine textile.
- > In an average year, Australia's cotton growers produce enough cotton to clothe 500 million people.
- > Cotton and its by-products are used in the production of a huge range of products including bank notes, margarine, rubber and medical supplies.
- > The fibre from one 227kg cotton bale can produce 215 pairs of jeans, 250 single bed sheets, 1200 t-shirts, 4300 pairs of socks or 680,000 cotton balls.

MORE INFORMATION

www.cottonaustralia.com.au
www.thefabricofourlives.com
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