



AUSTRALIAN  
COTTON

# ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THROUGH COTTON FROM AUSTRALIA



## INTRODUCTION

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), along with their associated targets and indicators provide a framework for the world to transform for the good of its people and the natural environment.

Sustainable development has been at the heart of the Australian cotton industry for decades, and its goal is to “be a global leader in sustainable cotton production”. The PLANET PEOPLE PADDOCK sustainability framework is underpinned by the industry’s on-farm cotton

certification program myBMP (Best Management Practices) and major investments in research, development and extension.

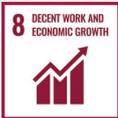
The Australian cotton industry is playing a role in helping the world deliver the Sustainable Development Goals and has made some great progress, although there is still much work to be done. This is a very brief summary - the full report can be found at Australian Cotton and the Sustainable Development Goals.

GOAL	SUMMARY	HOW AUSTRALIAN COTTON IS CONTRIBUTING
 <p><b>2 ZERO HUNGER</b></p>	<p><b>End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; myBMP (Best Management Practices) embedding sustainable agriculture, with over 400 standards included 80% of farmers participating, 20% of crop certified.</li> <li>&gt; myBMP includes practices related to soil health, water, biodiversity, climate change, safety and land use efficiency.</li> <li>&gt; Most land use efficient cotton growers in the world, with yields three times world average.</li> <li>&gt; Australian cotton, itself a food AND fibre crop, is grown in rotation with other food crops.</li> <li>&gt; Through CSIRO partnership, cotton germplasm collections held in Narrabri, NSW and Canberra, ACT.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>4 QUALITY EDUCATION</b></p>	<p><b>Equal access to quality education, training and lifelong learning.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; myBMP Program delivered to farmers through one-on-one, workshops and group training in sustainable agricultural practices.</li> <li>&gt; Over 3,000 farmers accessed 700 training courses through AgSkilled program.</li> <li>&gt; CottonInfo extension program provides free training and capacity building, focused on extending current industry research.</li> <li>&gt; Industry-funded scholarships and leadership programs.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>5 GENDER EQUALITY</b></p>	<p><b>Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Industry organisation Wincott (Women in Cotton) provides free training to develop knowledge, opportunities and capacity for women in cotton.</li> <li>&gt; 23% of cotton farmers identify as female and women engaged in roles such as research, extension, agronomy and marketing.</li> <li>&gt; Across key industry bodies 60% of employees are women.</li> <li>&gt; Cotton Australia is a Foundation Partner of the National Farmers' Federation's Diversity Pledge, to support transformational change in the representation of women in Australian agriculture leadership positions.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION</b></p>	<p><b>Ensure availability and sustainable management of water for all.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Water for cotton irrigation delivered under strict government rules.</li> <li>&gt; Compared to 1992, producing a bale of irrigated Australian cotton now requires 48% less water.</li> <li>&gt; 67 individual practices in myBMP Water Management module largely focused on water use efficiency.</li> <li>&gt; Common practices include more efficient irrigation systems, water budgeting, moisture monitoring, recycling systems, mulching and stubble retention.</li> <li>&gt; Significant ongoing investment in water use efficiency research, development and technologies to continue to drive water use per bale down.</li> </ul>



**Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.**

- > Energy saving practices include diesel water pump efficiency and alternative energy sources such as solar, biodiesel, biofuels and wind.
- > Just over 1 in 4 Australian cotton growers reported using solar energy for farming operations in 2018-19 season.
- > Cotton Australia working on technology projects such as microgrids and Stand Alone Power Systems.
- > Substantial research investments in measuring and benchmarking on-farm energy use, water pumps and fuel efficiency, tools to measure energy efficiency and the application of alternative energy sources.



**Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all.**

- > Profitability is a fundamental sustainability indicator for growers. Profitable cotton growers can re-invest in their own business, and contribute to local communities, economies and the environment.
- > Australia's cotton growers are highly profitable, with industry data showing irrigated profit per hectare trending upwards over time.
- > Up to 1,500 Australian cotton farms employ over 10,000 full-time, part-time and casual employees per year (not including contractors, agronomists, rural suppliers).
- > There is no forced or child labour on Australian cotton farms and the myBMP Work Health and Safety module covers worker's rights, health and safety.



**Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.**

- > Highly mechanised, technology-based industry with culture of innovation.
- > Individual farmers invest in infrastructure technologies including water use efficiency, alternative energy sources and telecommunications.
- > Industry research focused on innovation – including optimised farming systems, transformative technologies and adaptive farming systems.



**Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.**

- > All 10 modules of the myBMP (Best Management Practices) program contribute to the efficient use of natural resources.
- > Compared to 1992, producing a bale of irrigated Australian cotton requires 97% less pesticides, 48% less water and 33% less land.
- > Industry-supported Global Cotton Lifecycle Assessment and other research around textile waste and cotton recyclability.
- > Promoting Australian cotton as a renewable, recyclable, biodegradable natural fibre that is a key to circularity.



**Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.**

- > Industry focussed on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, measuring, increasing on-farm carbon storage and mitigating future effects of climate change.
- > Research to understand impacts of elevated CO<sub>2</sub> and temperature on cotton plants.
- > Further work required on nitrogen use efficiency and measuring soil carbon.



**Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources**

- > Minimisation and containment of pesticides, nutrients and soil on farm - since 1992 Australian cotton farmers have reduced pesticide use by 97%.
- > Promote use of biodegradable natural fibres like cotton as an alternative to synthetics that shed microplastics.



**Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.**

- > myBMP module focused on Sustainable Natural Landscape with practices including revegetation, stock exclusion and managing riparian areas.
- > In 2019, 50% of growers had actively encouraged natural regeneration in the past year, and 70% undertook weed control of natural areas.
- > Industry research benchmarked and mapped biodiversity assets across all cotton landscapes and identified priority management actions for threatened and iconic species.

Sustainable cotton farming has enormous potential to create change. Its production can help reduce some of the negative environmental impacts of the textile industry and create positive benefits for millions of farmers and their communities. With much work still to be done, Cotton Australia believes that every individual, organisation, business, government and industry on the planet has a role to play including the Australian cotton industry.



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**Further links:**

Australian Cotton and the Sustainable Development Goals Full Report  
2019 Australian Cotton Sustainability Report

**For more information:**

[www.cottonaustralia.com.au](http://www.cottonaustralia.com.au) [www.australiancotton.com.au](http://www.australiancotton.com.au) [www.crdc.org.au](http://www.crdc.org.au)