
World Cotton Day a chance to celebrate a great fibre and amazing biotechnology innovation

07 October 2021 (Canberra) - 07 October is World Cotton Day, a celebration of a fibre like no other and an opportunity to show its enduring important impact.

Cotton is grown in more than 70 countries around the world and in more than 100 regional Australian communities. Although Australia is a relatively small cotton producer on a global scale, it is the world's third-to-sixth largest exporter depending on the season.

Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector, Mr Matthew Cossey, said of World Cotton Day, "2021 marks 25 years that Australian farmers have benefited from the advantages of growing genetically modified cotton, which has assisted them in adopting more environmentally sustainable and profitable farming practices.

"Gaining popularity with cotton growers since 1996, cotton with GM traits now makes up more than 99.5 per cent of all cotton grown in Australia."

GM cotton plants are either herbicide-tolerant, resistant to the major caterpillar pest *Helicoverpa* spp., or both.

Mr Cossey continued, "The positive impact of GM cotton on the environment and on farming practices has been clearly demonstrated through the Australian cotton industry. GM insect resistant and herbicide tolerant cotton has reduced the need for insecticide sprays by up to 85 per cent compared with conventional cotton which in turn reduces emissions through fewer sprays.

"The economic gains and savings have been significant with an average increase of on-farm income at \$27.87 per hectare and the average reduction in weed control costs at \$90.95 per hectare. This has gained Australian cotton farmers an additional almost \$1.1 billion since 1996.

"The plant science industry has been a key partner of the Australian cotton industry for decades now and CropLife member companies are continuing to invest millions annually in research and development to find new innovations in areas like cotton production."

Other environmental, social and economic benefits of GM cotton include: increased populations of beneficial insects and wildlife in cotton fields, reduced spray drift, improved soil quality, improved opportunities to grow cotton in areas of high pest infestation, reduced production costs, increased yield, reduced risks, decreased labour and fuel usage and improved farm worker and neighbour safety.

Mr Cossey concluded, "On a global scale, cotton is a commodity grown in over 75 countries across five continents and traded worldwide. Cotton is also a major source of livelihoods and incomes, providing employment and income to many developing countries around the world.

"The success of GM cotton cultivation in Australia demonstrates the vast potential that production and trade of this valuable commodity can have now and into the future."

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About CropLife Australia

CropLife Australia is the national peak industry organisation representing the plant science sector in Australia. CropLife's members are the world-leading innovators, developers, manufacturers and formulators of crop protection and crop biotechnology products. The plant science industry, worth more than \$20 billion a year to Australian agricultural production, provides products to protect crops against pests, weeds and diseases, as well as developing crop biotechnologies key to the nation's agricultural productivity, profitability and sustainability. CropLife is part of the plant science industry's 91 country international federation.

