

What We Are Doing with Your BMP Cotton

Arthur Spellson
Vice Chairman - Australian Cotton Shippers Association
PO Box 4276, FOREST LAKE, QLD 4078

Introduction

The potential for marketing Australian BMP cotton has been recognised within our industry for some time. At the 1998 Australian Cotton Conference the then Cotton Australia Chairman, Mr Peter Corish, spoke about “capturing the green market” with BMP cotton, stating that sustainable production has the potential to become our principal comparative advantage. More recently the three year Allan Williams led Australian Government funded EMS Pathways project, completed in June 2007, investigated the market’s (especially retailers’) desire for ‘sustainability’ attributes. Also it sought to determine whether the existing BMP Program could meet those requirements by trialling a whole-of-chain BMP approach to producing ‘Australian BMP cotton’ (to be made into garments and sold overseas).

As part of the EMS Pathways project two independent studies were carried out by consultants; in 2005 SWAT Marketing carried out a study entitled “Business Case for Branding Australian Cotton” and, also in 2005, Cato Purnell Partners were employed to identify and develop a brand for Australian Cotton. While these studies and the EMS Pathways project concluded that broadly speaking BMP cotton had potential as a branded product it became increasingly obvious to the industry that we were delving into very complicated and potentially very expensive territory. The search for a universally accepted brand name for Australian cotton, like that of Fibremax in the USA, basically failed on the grounds that a brand name and logo could not be found which satisfied all the requirements, especially those of quality and environment.

Since the completion of the EMS Pathways project the Australian Cotton Shippers Association (ACSA) and Cotton Australia (CA) have been committed to maintaining the momentum the project created by taking on the following activities: continuing with initiatives taken during the project, actioning some of the project’s findings and developing new BMP promotional initiatives. This paper gives some brief background information before detailing how ACSA and CA are going about actioning these activities.

Background

Why Grow, Promote and Market BMP Cotton?

In order to make this concept less complicated and more manageable it is important that we think about what we are actually trying to achieve. We can do this to a certain extent by answering the question, “Why are we looking to promote Australian BMP Cotton in the market place?” There is no one simple answer to this question as it depends on where in the chain you sit as a stakeholder. This is a basic answer to the question from an ACSA perspective:

- It differentiates Australian cotton in the global marketplace, capturing the growing consumer awareness of eco-friendly products and sustainable production methods.
- By capitalising on this growing market we hope to create a demand pull for Australian BMP cotton which will ultimately underpin the viability of the industry against:
 - Competing crops
 - Legislative changes to do with the environment.
 - Negative consumer sentiment in relation to cotton's environmental footprint.
- To obtain a premium? Not necessarily, dependent on supply and demand.

The Age of Environmental Responsibility

It is impossible not to notice the huge emphasis western society is currently placing on the environmental and social impact of everything. "Greenies" have been around for a long time but it is now the world's mainstream population who are being taught to "think green". Terms such as "climate change", "global warming", "carbon footprint", "certified organic" and "environmental sustainability" are now used every day by every day people. These every day people are the consumers of today and their children are the consumers of tomorrow. These are the people to whom we are looking to purchase and wear garments made from our product, garments made from nature's fibre, cotton. These consumers are increasingly questioning the traceability and origin of products and the impact their production had on the environment.

In response to and as part of society's increasing environmental awareness, businesses throughout the world are considering their own environmental credentials both from the point of view of how they run their own businesses as well as the environmental credentials of the products they buy and sell. Most businesses now have a sustainability or environmental policy as part of their corporate governance guidelines. An example is that of clothing retailer Gap Inc. quoted below from their website:

"Our business operations rely on our planet's natural resources. We believe that our success should not come at the expense of the environment, so we strive to operate in a way that is mindful of long-term environmental sustainability."

The Australian cotton industry was forced to look at its environmental credentials sooner than many other businesses or industries. As a result of ongoing criticism and scrutiny of its practices by local communities, relating largely to pesticide use, in 1990 the 1st Cotton Industry Environmental Audit was carried out. It found that improvements were needed especially in the area of chemical use (CA website). Further to the audit in 1991 a joint initiative research project investigating the impact of pesticides on the riverine environment was carried out by the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) and the Land and Water Development Corporation. This study recommended that a Best Management Practices (BMP) program be developed for the Australian cotton industry.

As a proactive step the cotton industry, led by the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC), then spent the next six years developing the BMP program with the first manual launched in 1997. Ross and Stanley (2008) state that in 2008, 17 years since the concept first commenced, the level of practice change as a result of the BMP program is estimated at 80-90%. This relatively early start down the environmental track places the Australian cotton industry in a unique position during this age of environmental responsibility. The industry is 17 years along the way when many industries are only just starting out.

The big question for us to consider is **“How can the Australian cotton industry benefit from this position of apparent comparative advantage?”**

Ongoing ACSA and CA Promotional Activities

Validating Environmental Credentials of BMP Cotton - BMP & Organic

If users of cotton are looking to source raw materials which minimise the environmental impact of their production, Australian BMP Cotton is perfectly placed to be one of their raw materials of choice. The challenge we face is convincing brand owners, and then consumers, of the environmental credentials of BMP cotton when in many cases the market perception is that cotton growing, per se, is bad for the environment and that in order for anything to be environmentally friendly it needs to be “organic”.

Everything “organic” is the flavour of the month. You just have to go to the supermarket and see that entire sections are now devoted to organic produce. So too in the textile sector. To date, if retailers or brand owners have wanted to stock an environmentally friendly range of cotton clothing, it is organic cotton that they have looked to for their raw material. The message we need to sell is **COTTON DOES NOT HAVE TO BE PRODUCED UNDER AN ORGANIC SYSTEM TO BE CLASSIFIED AS ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE**, and in fact BMP cotton production is closely aligned to organic production in many ways.

Both organic and BMP cotton producers are endeavouring to minimise the environmental impacts of cotton farming while trying to sustainably produce a fibre which is used to satisfy nearly 50% of the world’s fibre requirements. One must look beyond chemical use to gain a real understanding of how cotton production, and all agricultural production for that matter, interacts with the natural environment and what actually makes a production system qualify as sustainable.

This is a view which is shared by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) which states that *“Better Management Practices” (BMP’s) are locally-adapted farming methods that generally help farmers to improve their profitability while reducing key impacts. The use of ‘Better Management Practices’ in cotton cultivation help achieve measurable reductions in key environmental impacts while improving social and economic benefits for cotton farmers worldwide”*.

By definition organic farming is farming “without using artificial chemicals” (Oxford dictionary). WWF has recognised that there is more involved in developing

environmentally friendly farming systems than stopping the use of artificial chemicals. In fact it is recognised that organic farming could have a negative impact on the environment if it resulted in additional acres needing to be farmed in order to maintain output levels. A study carried out by the Centre for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, University of California, found that average 6 year yields for organic cotton were 34% lower than those for conventional cotton and costs of production per bale were 37% higher for organic cotton than for conventional cotton. This suggests that the premium for organic cotton would need to be huge for the farmer to maintain financial viability and additional hectares would need to be planted if total output was to be maintained.

While there are many different definitions of what qualifies as organic cotton the Organic Exchange, one of the more recognised sources of organic information, defines organic cotton as detailed in Appendix 1 of this paper entitled “About Organic Cotton”. Appendix 1 also includes Organic Exchange’s opinion on how conventional cotton is grown in contrast to organic cotton. Something which stands out about this comparison is that if BMP Cotton is analysed in the same way one would have to say it is much more closely aligned with the organic production system than it is with the conventional. In relation to chemical use while “organic” production concentrates on not using chemicals at all, BMP acknowledges that chemicals can be used in an environmentally friendly manner protecting the natural environment, farm workers and the local community.

The Australian BMP program aims to manage cotton production’s entire environmental footprint including:

- Land and Water
 - Soil Health
 - Biodiversity
 - Climate change and energy
 - Bio-security
 - Chemicals and Integrated Pest management (IPM)
 - Human Resources
 - Technology
- (CA Website BMP)

WWF recognises Australia’s approach in its Cleaner Greener cotton publication stating that the Australian “*cotton industry has developed a manual of Best Management Practices that outlines safe pesticide handling; integrated pest management; farm design, and land and water management. By the end of 2006 46% of the Australian cotton crop was being audited according to the best practice guidelines, and applications of pesticides had dropped from 7.8kg of active ingredients per Ha in 1997/98 to 2.8kg in 2005/06 on average*” this represents a reduction of 64%.

Others are trying to Catch Up

It is not only in Australia that the benefits of holistic environmentally responsible farming systems are being discovered. Gibbs (2008) reported on the Sustainable Cotton Project (SCP) in California which started out trying to convert acres into organic cotton in 1996 but then realised that it had greater potential to impact thousands of acres of California cotton if it focused on what it refers to as Biological

Agricultural Systems in Cotton (BASIC), concluding that the BASIC programme is more achievable for cotton growers than organic, and so, BASIC has the potential to be a more effective tool than organic cotton to reduce chemical use.

This is one of many projects going on around the world in recognition of society's demand for more environmentally responsible textile products. Other examples include the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) and the Cleaner Cotton™ Campaign in California. Something we as an industry need be mindful of is that although some of these countries might be well behind Australia with environmental stewardship, they can potentially steal our position in terms of environmental promotion and marketing campaigns. The WWF project in India and Pakistan is a good example of this as they are using the term BMP but replacing “best” (from our BMP) with “better”.

As outlined in the article “IKEA and WWF in India” on the WWF website, in India and Pakistan “WWF and IKEA are collaborating in a project to actively promote and implement better management practices (BMPs) for cotton at a district level... and to spread the ‘good example’ as far as possible throughout the state and the country”.

Endorsement of BMP by NGOs

It will be very difficult to sell the BMP concept if we are simply singing our own praises. The US cotton industry has recently learnt that it is very difficult to promote your product based on its environmental credentials as any small question regarding the validity of the claims leaves you exposed.

The advertisement in Appendix 2 of this paper stating “*Soft, Sensual and Sustainable. It's Cotton USA.*” was banned by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in the United Kingdom after receiving three complaints about the use of the word “sustainable”. The ASA banned the ad “*because there was no universally agreed definition of the term "sustainable" and there appeared to be a significant division of informed opinion as to whether cotton production in the US could be described as "sustainable" or not... [the] ad was likely to be ambiguous and unclear to consumers*”.

The Australian cotton industry has worked closely with WWF through the EMS Pathways project and continues to do so. During the course of the project WWF-Australia undertook a case study of the Australian BMP program and made certain recommendations. The industry is working towards actioning those recommendations in return for further endorsement from WWF. Part of this is involvement in the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) of which WWF is one of the founders.

As stated on the BCI website “*BCI endeavours to initiate global change in the mass market, with long-term benefits for the environment, farmers and other people dependent on cotton for their livelihood. 'Better Cotton' is being defined through a collaborative multi-stakeholder approach that leverages the commitment of global buyers of cotton and/or cotton products to demand large and increasing amounts of 'Better Cotton'.*”

CA has recently made a submission to the Global Better Cotton Initiative on how BMP cotton might fit into this framework and endorsement. It is believed that

Australian BMP cotton is well placed to get the BCI tick but it is yet to be confirmed. Something that is seen as a challenge is that BCI is trying to cover cotton production in all countries and we know that Australia grows cotton in a very different manner to countries like India and Africa. It will be interesting to see how BCI can apply the same standards to such differing production systems, if indeed it tries to do so.

Endorsement of BMP by Government

In terms of seeking some level of recognition for BMP and therefore the growers who are certified to the program, CA has been active for at least 5 years at both a federal and state level. Some of this has been general policy work, and some specific and targeted activities such as the accreditation agreement in Queensland.

The Land and Water Management Plan (LWMP) accreditation agreement in Queensland is probably the most recent and most high profile activity that links to endorsement of the BMP process and outcomes it delivers against. That took 4 years of negotiations to deliver on. CA has also done extensive work with regional bodies, mostly Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) in attempting to get them to understand BMP and how it contributes to delivering on catchment and natural resource management (NRM) targets. This has been successful in varying and different ways. Examples include the Condamine Alliance in Queensland in the past and currently the Namoi CMA partnering the industry in funding BMP implementation officers to assist in the delivery of BMP. This would not happen if they did not consider that through BMP we are delivering NRM outcomes.

CA is also working closely with the relatively new Federal Government to try and educate the relevant office bearers on BMP and the facts on cotton production's interaction with the environment. This is an ongoing and very challenging task.

Certification, Authenticity and Traceability

An area in which we know our Australian BMP product is strong is with regard to its Certification, Authenticity and Traceability. This is certainly a strong point of advantage when we are being compared to competing eco-textiles, especially organic cotton. At the production and export level the certification process for BMP cotton in Australia is quite simple;

1. A Farm is Certified by Cotton Australia as Meeting BMP Guidelines
2. Cotton produced on that farm is ginned and a merchant buys the bales.
3. A declaration is signed stating that the bales being certified, per their bale numbers, were produced on the accredited farm.
4. Cotton Australia issues a certificate for those specific bales to the exporting merchant.

Certifying and identifying organic cotton is far more difficult. Firstly it depends on whose rules you go by as to whether or not you classify as organic, there are many different bodies certifying organic cotton. As, by most definitions, it is very difficult to actually grow organic cotton, it is also very difficult for regulators to actually

confirm the practices of the farmer. This task is especially difficult in the lesser developed countries in which most organic cotton is grown.

The 2006/7 Organic Cotton Production Numbers according to the 2007 Organic Exchange Fibre Report showed that 265,515 bales of organic cotton were grown worldwide in 2006/7 which equates to 0.02% of world cotton production. Of that production 44.9% was produced in the Middle East, 32.9% in India/Pakistan, 7.1% in Africa, 7% in China and the balance in Nth and South America, Combined Independent States, (former Soviet States), and European Union.

At the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) Organic Fibres and Textiles conference held in Italy this year, Tadeu Caldas from Ecotropic, an organic agriculture consultancy based in Germany, said he could not, *“sit back and allow to go unreported certain issues in India that were potentially undermining the credibility of the organic cotton movement; most serious of which was...most worryingly the widespread falsification of paperwork resulting in some cases in up to 40% of the crop being certified as organic when it was not.”* Ecotextile News (Aug 2008)

Brand Protection

Protection of the BMP name is very important especially when the term is already being used in cotton production programs in other countries. Cotton Australia has applied for trade marking of the BMP name and logo in Japan, Indonesia, China, Thailand, Taiwan and Korea. It is quite a process from beginning to end and CA were told at the time of application it could be a year or more to secure the trademark. As the applications have been lodged we will enjoy the protection of registration. Australian trade marking already exists. Something for CA to consider for the future might be trademark registration in Europe and the USA.

ACSA's EMD Program

Since 2003 ACSA has been involved in Austrade's Export Market Development Grant scheme (EMDG). In most of the past 5 years ACSA has carried two EMD trips per annum where time and resources have permitted. The EMD program has involved ACSA members visiting our Asian markets to run seminars promoting Australian cotton, presentations at Cotton Trade Conferences in our markets and, more recently, bringing our key buyers to last years ACSA conference and this year's Australian Cotton Industry Conference.

In more recent years as part of EMD seminars ACSA has promoted Australia's "Clean and Green" image in conjunction with BMP cotton. As ACSA member's traditional customer base is spinners, it soon became obvious to us that we were selling our message to the wrong people. Spinners thought the environmental approach was nice but at the end of the day their main concerns are quality, consistency and reliability of supply and price. This takes us back to the EMS Pathways project and SWAT Marketing's analysis which distinguished between "demand push" and "demand pull".

Promoting BMP cotton to spinners is a demand push strategy, we are looking to spinners to go to their customers and push BMP cotton through the supply chain. The alternative to this is promoting BMP to brand owners and retailers and have them pull BMP cotton to spinners. It is apparent that the latter is a better tactic for creating demand for BMP cotton. However from an ACSA perspective this is not a simple fit for our usual activities, as all our contacts and influence are located at the spinner level. This has meant ACSA has had to try to establish a brand new customer set further down the supply chain.

Japanese and Other Brand Owners

During the EMS Pathways Project the industry began working with a large Japanese department store chain, Izumia, on a promotional campaign for clothing made from 100% Australian BMP Cotton under the “Good-i” brand. The initial run went on the shelves in April 2006 and the product line has continued to grow from there with Izumia continuing to market BMP products.

With the help of Austrade in Osaka, whose services ACSA has employed, ACSA has continued to work with Izumia as well as a growing list of other Japanese brand owners. Particular time and effort has been spent on the certification and licensing side of arrangements in order to protect the authenticity and traceability of our product and retailers’ brands. We have learnt a great deal about some of the complexities of such arrangements. To the credit of all involved the consumption of BMP cotton in Japan to date is over 1 million garments and seems set only to expand. We as an industry owe a big thank you to the Japanese brand owners who have worked with us over the past few years.

The industry has promoted BMP to brand owners in other markets, including Europe and Hong Kong. Although there has been considerable interest we are yet to have any uptake. ACSA is planning to promote BMP cotton at **International Textile Trade Fairs** but to date opportunities have been limited due to Australia’s reduced production.

Development of www.bmpcotton.com.au

It was identified that the industry needed somewhere to direct people interested in learning more about BMP cotton. In response to this need ACSA and CA have developed a BMP specific website aimed at answering interested parties questions regarding:

- what BMP cotton is
- detail on BMP’s environmental credentials
- how the licensing process works
- endorsements via ABC Television news stories, WWF and Government
- how to acquire BMP cotton, and

As shown in Appendix 3 www.bmpcotton.com.au was launched in the Eco Textile News in July 2008. Activity tracking has shown that interested parties from Europe, USA and Asia have already visited the website. It is planned that the website will be updated as new information comes to light, especially in the areas of suppliers and endorsements.

Domestic Market Development (DMD)

An area which has not received much attention to date is the Australian domestic clothing retail market. ACSA has recently decided that it will start to divert some of its efforts towards research into the potential for uptake of BMP cotton by Australian brands. This effort will not be helped by what some would say is a poor image of cotton in the Australian market place but this actually gives the industry even more reason to promote the attributes of BMP cotton in the local market.

The recent surge in marketing of organic cotton in the Australian market suggests that retailers believe an eco-friendly market exists. As with our international efforts the difficulty will be in convincing brand owners of BMP credentials and then the brand owners deciding whether or not they will be able to convince consumers. Australian generally like to buy Australian so this will hopefully be an added selling point for a certified Australian product. A question which might be asked is could it, in light of the negative publicity our industry receives, actually be a negative to advise consumers that they are buying Australian cotton? One would hope not but it is something we will have to be ready for and, as already mentioned gives us even more reason to push the credentials of BMP cotton.

Conclusions

In ACSA's opinion a market exists for Certified Australian BMP Cotton. The challenge is educating brand owners and consumers so that they recognise and understand the benefits of our product. Our target market is brand owners and consumers who are serious and realistic about doing their bit for the environment. Not extremists or those who are just looking to pick up on a consumer trend or a gimmick. Organic cotton has its place and we are not looking to discredit organic or take its place. We are simply looking to provide an alternative which is a primary fibre source rather than a niche product.

It is going to continue to take a lot of hard work to get brand owners on board and we are attempting to do this with bare bone resources. But while the benefits of BMP cotton can be hard to grasp, as they are in some respects not tangible, ACSA and CA will continue its efforts in promoting the concept as we see it as being an integral part of the Australian cotton industry's future. If consumer sentiments towards sustainability continue to go the way they are going we might be faced with the prospect of only being able to sell our product if its origins are traceable and it is known to have been produced via accredited practices.

References

“Buiness Case for Branding Australian Cotton”, 2005. SWAT Marketing, Melbourne, Australia.

Cleaner, greener cotton. Impacts and Better Management Practices, available at; http://assets.panda.org/downloads/cotton_for_printing_summary_report.pdf

Grower’s Toolkit, Best Management practices, available at; <http://www.cottonaustralia.com.au/toolkit/bmp/>

“Growing pains”, Eco Textile News, April 2008, Issue 13, pp26-27.

Gibbs, M. 2008. IPM cotton comes to market as Cleaner Cotton™. Pesticide News, Volume 80, pp12-14.

“IKEA and WWF in India - The India Sustainable Cotton Initiative”, available at; http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/what_we_do/forests/our_solutions/partnerships/ikea/sustainable_cotton/co_operation_on_better_cotton_production/index.cfm

“Organic cotton is different”, available at; <http://www.aboutorganiccotton.org/>

Ross, Chaseley and Stanley, John (2008); UNE Cotton Production Course Notes: Topic 8: BMP - The Australian Cotton Industry's Environmental Management System.

Six Year Study Between Organic, IPM and conventional cotton production systems in North San Joaquin Valley, California – Centre for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA.

Williams A (2007) Final Report for EMS Pathways Program Project "Enhancing the Cotton Industry's BMP Program to Improve Adoption", 6 June 2007 (Australian Government and CRDC).


ORGANIC COTTON is different

By choosing organically grown cotton, you can reap all the benefits of cotton's beauty, comfort, and strength, while minimizing harm to people and the planet.


Seed Preparation

CONVENTIONAL	ORGANIC
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically treats seeds with FUNGICIDES or INSECTICIDES. Uses GMO seeds for approximately 70% of US-grown cotton. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses UNTREATED seeds. NEVER USES GMO (genetically modified organism) seeds.


Soil & Water

CONVENTIONAL	ORGANIC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies SYNTHETIC fertilizers. Loss of soil due to predominantly MONO-CROP culture. Requires INTENSIVE IRRIGATION. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds strong soil through CROP ROTATION. Retains water more efficiently thanks to increased ORGANIC MATTER in the soil. 

Weed Control

CONVENTIONAL	ORGANIC
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies HERBICIDES to soil to inhibit weed germination. Repeatedly uses HERBICIDES to kill weeds that do grow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PHYSICAL removal rather than chemical destruction. Controls weeds through cultivation and HAND HOEING.

Pest Control

CONVENTIONAL	ORGANIC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses INSECTICIDES heavily, accounting for approximately 25% of world consumption. Uses PESTICIDES: the nine most common are highly toxic; five are probable carcinogens. Frequently uses AERIAL SPRAYING, with potential drift onto farm workers, neighboring wildlife and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains a BALANCE between "pests" and their natural predators through healthy soil. Uses BENEFICIAL INSECTS, biological and cultural practices to control pests. May use TRAP CROPS, planted to lure insects away from the cotton. 

Harvesting

CONVENTIONAL	ORGANIC
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defoliates with toxic CHEMICALS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relies mostly on the seasonal FREEZE for defoliation. May stimulate defoliation through WATER management.

Appendix 2 – Environmental claims will be intensely scrutinised.

**SOFT, SENSUAL AND SUSTAINABLE.
IT'S COTTON USA!**

www.discovercottonusa.com

Feel the difference

COTTON USA is the natural choice of many leading brands. Look for the COTTON USA Mark as a reassurance of quality.

THIS MONTH



AUSSIE BMP COTTON TICKS BOXES

QUEENSLAND – With its branded 'BMP' or Best Management Practice raw cotton product, the Australian cotton industry says it can provide reliable suppliers, authentic, audited processes and fully traceable clothing supply chains.

"It's a short but enviable list for providers of raw eco-fibre and one that the Australian cotton industry feels it can deliver," said the organisation. The BMP program has been operating in Australia for the past 10 years, with close to 50% of the country's production now voluntarily produced and independently audited according to BMP processes.

Cotton Australia chief executive officer Adam Kay says the BMP program is the Australian industry's blueprint for growing cotton in harmony with the natural

environment. "It is basically a set of guidelines to minimise the footprint each cotton farm has on the ecosystems in which they operate. BMP aims to reduce water and pesticide usage on farms, maintain and improve soil health – and importantly, ensure the safety and wellbeing of our farm workers.

"All of the processes involved are monitored, recorded and ultimately independently audited to ensure that a BMP cotton farm ticks all the boxes," Mr Kay said.

In the meantime, the Queensland State Government has recognized BMP cotton farms as automatically complying with stringent environmental standards set out for the State's Land and Water Management plan regulatory requirements. In addition, the World Wide Fund for

The Australian cotton industry has reduced its pesticide usage from 7.8kg of active ingredients per hectare in 1997/98 to 2.8kg per ha in 2005/06.

Nature has recognised dramatic reductions in pesticide usage since the implementation of BMP, stating that "the Australian cotton industry has been able to reduce its pesticide usage from 7.8kg of active ingredients per hectare in 1997/98 to 2.8kg per ha in 2005/06."

Australian Cotton Research and Development Corporation also suggests dramatic leaps forward in water use efficiency since BMP's implementation, with statistics showing cotton produced in Australia is three times more water efficient than the global average.

Further down the supply chain, the Australian Cotton Shippers Association (ACSA) and Cotton Australia have been working together to develop a robust, traceable licensing and registration process for spinners, weavers and brand owners for BMP cotton – and finally the hard work looks to be coming to fruition.

The BMP message has been "drip fed" to spinning customers for years according to ACSA chairman, Pete Johnson – but the industry is now preparing to take a more aggressive promotional stance at the "pointy end" of the supply chain.

"We know we have the product – and most importantly we have spent the time developing the integrity of our authentication processes – so that if a customer purchases a product with a BMP swing tag, they know they are getting the real deal.

"We are now working more closely with brand owners to develop a demand pull for our product – and will this month be launching our consumer oriented website." The website contains important information about registration and licensing as well as the processes that go toward producing Australian BMP cotton.

Web: www.bmpcotton.com.au

H&M ups organic use

STOCKHOLM – European retailer H&M is to intensify its use of organic cotton by expanding the amount it uses in all departments this Autumn as well as using organic wool, recycled wool and recycled polyester.

"We are now using organic cotton in all departments. We're proud that we're able to meet increased interest from our customers and at the same time contribute to the increased demand for organically grown cotton. Garments made from organic cotton include both fashion items and updated basics," says H&M Head of Design Ann-Sofie Johansson. Garments made from organic and recycled wool include a coat with dolman sleeves and a funnel neck, a kimono jacket, Jodhpur style trousers, a tulip skirt and knitted jumpers. In the Menswear department, it's mostly basics that are made from organic cotton, including boxer shorts, socks and scarves as well as T-shirts in several colours. Web: www.hm.com



LOOKING FOR A NATURAL, HIGH
QUALITY, SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE FIBRE?

AUSTRALIAN BMP COTTON

We don't make empty promises – we promise that our product has been grown using world Best Management Practices.

Practices that include reduced water usage; reduced pesticides, ethical labour standards; traceable supply chains; reliable suppliers and we can provide hard, factual data to back our claims.

Want to know more? Go to www.bmpcotton.com.au