

# New report shows greener cotton 10 years on

Australian farmers have taken cotton farming to a new level over the past decade, with a report showing the industry has complied with every recommendation in its first independent environmental assessment conducted in 1991.

The cotton industry has formally responded to the “Second Australian Industry Environmental Audit” that found “the cotton industry has developed and implemented a wide range of improvements in its operations and environmental management practices.”

The second Audit set down further recommendations for improvement, of which almost three quarters have either already been completed or are underway. Four key cotton industry organisations have committed to addressing all 77 recommendations in the report.

## SENATOR LAUNCHES KEY STRATEGY

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Senator Richard Colbeck applauded the industry’s efforts and launched a key strategy in the industry’s response — a Land and Water Management program for cotton farms.

Released at grains, cattle and cotton farm “Mollee”, near Narrabri this program will help growers protect and enhance the natural environments on their farms, improve water use efficiency and improve profitability.

The new program, called the “Land and Water Management Module”, fits within the industry’s Best Management Practices Program (BMP), a set of envi-



Senator Richard Colbeck launching the Land and Water Management Module at “Mollee” in May.

ronmental guidelines under which 60 per cent of the crop is now produced.

“This new section of BMP covers issues of soil health, structure and nutrition, water use efficiency including monitoring and irrigation scheduling and vegetation management including recording, protecting remnant areas, creating nature corridors, stock management and erosion control,” Cotton Australia Chairman, Geoff Hewitt said.

“As with the other areas of BMP, it will assist growers to organise information and records and provide an opportunity to

assess the farm against a set of criteria, clearly identifying areas that need attention,” Geoff said.

Cotton Australia’s team of seven Grower Services Managers will work with individual growers to ensure this program is backed up by real, on-ground action.

## \$6 MILLION RESEARCH

The cotton industry has invested over \$6 million in the research and development of the BMP Program, and more than 50 per cent of the cotton industry’s research and development budget is aimed at reducing chemical use and improving water efficiency.

“This research effort combined with proper implementation appears to be working. We’ve reduced our chemical use by over 75 per cent in the past 10 years and improved water use efficiency by over 11 per cent in the past five years,” Chair of the Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Bridget Jackson said.

“It is through industry partnerships and support from government that we can tackle environmental challenges with real solutions that work on the farm, and ultimately benefit the whole community,” Bridget said.

