

SECTION 1
OVERVIEW

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Cotton industry shows its resilience

By David Dowling

In a year in which global warming hysteria reached new record levels, the summer of 2007–08 pervasively produced some of the coldest weather for many, many years. It may not mean a lot in the long run, but it was followed by a cold winter as well.

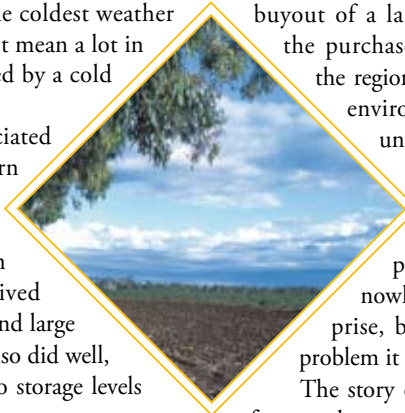
The cooler season was associated with a La Niña weather pattern which overall was a disappointment in terms of fixing the chronic water shortage in eastern Australia. While Emerald received more rain than it could handle and large areas of the rest of Queensland also did well, the rain and subsequent boost to storage levels was less impressive in southern areas.

For the first time in many years, some farms around Bourke and in the lower Balonne were able to at least partially fill storages. A section of the population became convinced that this water could be

the saviour of the Lower Murray and the subsequent political pressure eventually led to a government buyout of a large Bourke property. Of course, the purchase will have an adverse effect on the region and not provide any worthwhile environmental flows, but some people undoubtedly got a warm fuzzy feeling from it.

The pest of the year (insect, that is) went unanimously to the pale cotton stainer. It came out of nowhere and caught everyone by surprise, but only time will tell how big a problem it will become.

The story of the coming season is again one of water shortage, although the outlook is already much better than last season. There is also a tremendous spirit of resilience evident in the industry, suggesting big things in the future when the water situation turns around.



David Dowling.

Australian cotton production estimates 2007–08

	Irrigated			Dryland			Total	
	Hectares	Yield bales/ha	Bales	Hectares	Yield bales/ha	Bales	Hectares	Bales
Queensland								
Emerald	2850	7.0	20,000	200	4.0	800	3050	20,800
Biloela/Theodore	1700	8.8	15,000	220	4.0	880	1920	15,880
Burdekin	830	7.7	6400	—	—	—	830	6400
Darling Downs	10,000	8.6	86,000	5000	4.8	24,000	15,000	110,000
St George	3250	8.3	27,000	—	—	—	3250	27,000
Dirranbandi	50	9.0	450	—	—	—	50	450
Total	18,6800	8.3	154,850	5420	4.7	25,680	24,100	180,530
NSW								
Macintyre#	5400	10.2	55,000	500	4.0	2000	5900	57,000
Gwydir	10,500	9.8	103,000	1000	4.0	4000	11,500	107,000
Upper Namoi	8,000	9.6	77,000	250	4.0	1000	8250	78,000
Lower Namoi	12,000	9.6	115,000	200	4.0	800	12,200	115,800
Macquarie	3210	9.5	30,500	—	—	—	3210	30,500
Bourke	125	7.8	980	—	—	—	125	980
Tandou	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Southern NSW**	3300	9.7	32,000	—	—	—	3300	32,000
Total	42,535	9.7	413,480	1950	4.0	7800	44,485	421,280
Aust. total	61,215	9.3	568,330	7370	4.5	33,480	68,585	601,810

Overall average yield: 8.77 bales/ha (1991 kg/ha).

About 40% of Macintyre cotton is grown in Queensland. **Lachlan and Murrumbidgee Valleys