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Editorial...

David Dowling, Editor



THE economy of the Gold Coast, especially Broadbeach, received a major boost in the first week of August. The Australian Cotton Conference has always been the major event on the industry's calendar, but the 2024 edition of the event has taken things to a whole new level with around 2900 delegates flocking to the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre. Despite the huge crowd, the facilities at the Convention Centre handled the event with ease and there were plenty of comments about the marvellous food and service. Some of the overseas visitors rated the Conference as one of the best in the world and experienced exhibitors rated it a must-attend show.

The Conference traces its history back to the first Australian Cotton Research Conference held at Goondiwindi in 1982. Around 150 people packed into the Anglican Church Hall to hear some of the legends of Australian cotton research share their knowledge. The single overhead projector was a far cry from the high-tech audio-visual equipment used in 2024. Many of the topics discussed then are still around in 2024 – varieties, soils, insects and diseases will always be of interest to cotton growers. But precision agriculture had not been heard of, nor concepts such as traceability, circularity and myBMP.

Of course, the other things that are always on the minds of cotton growers are cotton prices and markets. The international cotton market experts at the Conference delivered mixed messages for Australian growers. Worldwide cotton consumption has been lagging badly behind synthetic textiles and a short-term imbalance looms between cotton production and consumption. And the winds of change are blowing through world trade markets including cotton. Australian cotton exports have already felt those chilly breezes when China turned its back on Australian cotton.

The worldwide cotton industry has a major advantage over synthetics which could become an important marketing tool as consumers become more aware of the dangers of microplastics in the environment and to human health. Recent research has highlighted the extent of microplastic pollution in our oceans and the amount that all of us are ingesting in our everyday lives. Cotton is a clean, green natural product with a wonderful environmental story to tell – and much, much better to wear than synthetics.

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