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## Editorial...

David Dowling, Editor

The Covid-19 pandemic is possibly one of the biggest black swan events in history. For those who don't know, a black swan is an event which comes as a surprise and was not considered as a possibility before it actually occurs.

According to Wikipedia, "... it is an outlier, as it lies outside the realm of regular expectations, because nothing in the past can convincingly point to its possibility. Second, it carries an extreme 'impact'. Third, in spite of its outlier status, human nature makes us concoct explanations for its occurrence after the fact, making it explainable and predictable."

"As rare as a black swan" was apparently a fairly common expression in England in the 16th and 17th centuries and referred to something that was impossible, because the whole world knew that all swans were coloured white. So when Dutch explorers arrived in Western Australia in 1697 and saw black swans everywhere, it created quite a commotion.

But is Covid-19 really a black swan event? Over the past 50 years, we have seen regular instances of viruses transitioning from animals to humans – think SARS, MERS, bird flu etc – and it seems to be becoming an even more regular occurrence, so we shouldn't be surprised when it happens. The challenge is not to just find a way to defeat the current virus, but to beat the next one and the one after, which may be even worse.

It may not make a lot of difference to the recovery in the cotton market, but the International Cotton Advisory Committee has noted the importance that cotton plays in controlling the spread of disease-causing viruses, bacteria and fungal spores. Cotton has been found to be superior to all other fabrics when used in face masks – better filtration, pathogen obstruction and physical comfort. In trials of eight cloth materials, 100 per cent cotton masks had the highest virus-blocking efficiency.

So it would be great for Australian farmers to grow plenty of high quality cotton next season but the size of the next crop depends, as always, on what nature serves up over the next few months. As I write this, I'm waiting for the BOM to reveal their latest seasonal outlook, for what it's worth. The previous outlook had become quite positive for a wet winter and spring and maybe some dam-filling rain over the next few months. That wonderful La Niña expression was even used. Unfortunately, the hoped-for deluge has not yet arrived, but we have to live in hope.

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#### GOONDIWINDI

9 Pratten St, PO Box 422, Goondiwindi Qld 4390  
Ph (07) 4671 2445; Fax (07) 4671 2561  
Contact: Ralph Kinsella, Mike Henderson  
Email: qld@smk.com.au