

Welcome to the Australian cotton industry - and welcome to your new responsibilities - wise advice from a Queensland cotton farmer.

The cotton industry is firmly focussed on both economic and ecological sustainability. That vision embraces a high degree of responsibility - responsibility to neighbours, to the local community, to the broader cotton industry, and to the environment.

As part of its vision, the cotton industry - including dryland farmers - is committed to developing and adopting **Best Management Practice**. BMP embraces the whole of farm management and includes the adoption of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques, sound resource protection management, and above all, avoiding any detrimental impact on the environment or the community.

Over the last 30 years, research and farmer experience have combined to generate a formidable reservoir of knowledge. New farmers, and particularly raingrown farmers, are now able to tap in to that reservoir.

This reservoir contains knowledge on pest management, safe spraying techniques, regional variety selection, planting configurations and optimum planting windows, crop rotation and soil management, moisture conservation, mechanisation and market risk management.

Luckily the industry is well served by many very professional cotton field consultants. They can help guide and advise you - but remember, the final decisions, and responsibilities, are yours.

The best simple guide for raingrown cotton farmers are the 'Three T's' - Timeliness, Thoroughness and Thoughtfulness. Timeliness and thoroughness are critical in farming and marketing decisions. Thoughtfulness encourages you to think of the consequences of everything you do to your own crop, your own farm, to beyond your fenceline.

The old attitude that 'near enough is good enough' is unacceptable. Not only can it contribute to local and industry problems, it can also hasten the loss of the family farm.

However raingrown cotton does offer good dryland farmers an exciting opportunity to diversify, and possibly to survive economically. Management is demanding but the potential rewards are attractive.

The Australian cotton industry is often seen as a 'young' industry, and one of agriculture's 'success stories'.

Actually cotton has been grown - both as an irrigated, and a raingrown crop - for over 3,000 years. It accounts for well over 40% of all world fibre consumption.

In Australia it is a major contributor to regional development, and to the national economy. Today cotton earns around \$1.5 billion in export income, and supports an important value adding domestic textile industry.

Cotton is very much a natural fibre and this again highlights the essential need for wise resource management and sustainable farming practices.

Welcome, and good Luck!

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