

Got Cotton?

The Sustainable Cotton Project's Cotton Fact Sheet

Cotton is Fiber

Cotton is the “fabric of our lives” and reminds us of soft shirts and dresses, ragged jeans, absorbent towels, comfortable sheets and mattresses, baby diapers, cleaning swabs, and feminine products.

Cotton fibers account for fifty percent of the world textile market.¹

Cotton is the dominant fiber in apparel, having captured two thirds of that market.²

Cotton is Food

Cottonseed accounts for 60% of a field's yield, whereas the fiber accounts for only about 35%.³

On average, U.S. dairy and beef cattle eat 6-8 pounds of raw cottonseed per day.¹²

Products include cottonseed vegetable oil for cooking; cottonseed meal, a high protein supplement for livestock and poultry; hulls, roughage for cattle feed; and linters, cellulose feed stock for explosives and many industrial and consumer products.⁴

Cotton is American

The world's largest cotton producing and consuming countries are China, United States, India and Pakistan. Together these four account for around 60% of world cotton production and consumption.⁵ America ranks second in world cotton production (20.1 million bales in 2001), and third in world consumption (7.7 million bales in 2001).⁵

America is the world's leading cotton exporter, accounting for 25% of world trade during the 1990's.⁵

American exports of cotton and cotton value-added products were at \$8.1 billion in 1995.⁵

Thirty percent of the world's cotton fiber crosses international borders before processing.⁵

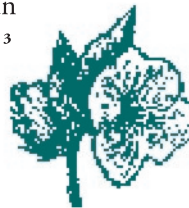
American cotton industry generates more than 400,000 jobs among various sectors from farm to

textile mill, and accounts for more than \$25 billion in products and services annually.³

Cotton is produced in 17 southern States from Virginia to California, and grown in more than 70 countries worldwide.⁵

American manufactures use more than 5.5 billion pounds of cotton annually.³

The world's highest quality cotton is produced in America, Peru and Egypt.³



Cotton is Corporate

Gossypium hirsutum, known as American Upland, accounts for about 97% of the annual American cotton crop.⁵

In 2000, more than 15 million acres of cotton were grown in the America, of this 61% was genetically modified.⁶

In 2001, cotton was the 7th largest crop in California, accounting for 870,000 acres of farmland.⁷

24% of the 2001 California crop was genetically modified.⁶

According to the Census of Agriculture, American cotton farms numbered 31,493 in 1997, down from 34,812 in 1992. While the number of farms has fallen, acreage per farm has risen.⁵

Roughly one-third of American cotton farms planted 500 or more acres of cotton. This third of growers produced three-fourths of all U.S. cotton in 1997.⁵

More than 200 American textile mills have closed since 1998.²

Demand for American cotton is dropping while production has reached record levels, driving prices to a 30-year low to 30 cents a pound.⁷

Cotton is Natural?

Cotton uses about 25% of the world's insecticides and more than 10% of the pesticides.¹³

In California, five of the top nine pesticides used on cotton are cancer causing.¹³

The US Environmental Protection Agency labels all

of the top nine cotton chemicals as either Category I or II materials, the most toxic classifications.¹³

American cotton farmers use about 12 lbs. of synthetic agricultural chemicals per planted acre.¹³

In America, it takes about a third of a pound of synthetic agricultural chemicals to grow one pound of cotton, enough for one cotton T-shirt.¹²

Pesticides used on cotton cause acute poisonings and chronic illnesses to farm workers worldwide.¹¹

In 1995, pesticide-contaminated runoff from cotton fields killed at least 240,000 fish in Alabama.¹¹

In 1994, Australian beef was contaminated with the cotton insecticide Helix (chlorfluazuron), most likely because cattle had been fed contaminated cotton straw.¹¹

In 1996, chemicals Lorsban, Curacron and Danitol drifted into a vineyard from an adjacent cotton field, and sent twenty-one farm workers to a Kern County, CA hospital.⁸

Acute respiratory symptoms and other health effects in communities surrounding cotton farms are correlated with high use of defoliation chemicals.⁹

In California, it is illegal to feed “gin trash” to livestock because of high levels of pesticide residues¹⁰, however, tampons, swabs and cotton balls are products made from this cotton trash and other gin byproducts.

Genetically engineered food and fiber crops are inherently unpredictable and dangerous; these new organisms can reproduce, migrate, and mutate, causing environmental havoc.¹⁶

Organic Cotton is Sustainable

Organic farmers use biologically based, rather than chemically dependent, growing systems to raise crops.¹³

Hundreds of American and European clothing companies have organic cotton programs in place. See our web site for the Organic Cotton Directory.¹³

Organic cotton is now being produced in 18 countries worldwide.¹⁴

Between the Mid-South, Texas and California, approximately 10,000 acres of organic cotton were planted in 1998.¹³

Market analysts report that consumers expect corporate responsibility as a matter of basic business practices. Organic cotton is a great way to implement it.¹³

Large retailers are profitably incorporating organic cotton into their garments.¹³

Companies and farmers taking positions of environmental leadership are gaining market advantages.¹³

Independent third parties and some state agencies certify organic cotton.¹⁴

In 2001, CSU Chico became the first University in the nation to offer a line of organic cotton collegiate apparel.¹⁵

Sustainable Cotton Project

Located on the northern end of the world's most productive agricultural region—California's Central Valley—the Sustainable Cotton Project (SCP) focuses on one of the most widely grown and chemical-intensive crops.

Since 1991, SCP has been working with cotton growers to develop sustainable production systems. In addition, SCP has been building bridges between farmers, manufacturers and consumers to pioneer markets for certified organically grown cotton.

SCP's guiding philosophy of "cooperation for a change" has fostered an unprecedented level of shared information among farmers, manufacturers and others in support of creating a new industry.

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Top 15 Pesticides Used for 2000 California Cotton				
Active Ingredient	Uses on Cotton	EPA Toxicity Class	Human and Environmental Health Hazards	Pounds Applied
<i>Aldicarb</i>	Insecticide	I	Highly toxic; lethal in small doses; toxic to bees, birds, fish, invertebrates; banned in WI, RI, NY;	319,409.20
<i>Chlorpyrifos</i>	Herbicide	II	Cumulative fetotoxin; delayed neurotoxin	289,649.11
<i>Cyanazine</i>	Herbicide	II	Teratogen	39,996.65
<i>Dicofol</i>	Miticide	II, III	Possible carcinogen; moderately toxic; very toxic to bees, birds and fish; moderately persistent	203,428.96
<i>Ethephon</i>	Plant growth regulator	I	Suspect mutagen; toxic to fish and birds.	688,653.71
<i>Glyphosate</i>	Herbicide	I	Suspect carcinogen and mutagen	415,573.18
<i>Metam-sodium</i>	Fungicide Insecticide	I	Moderate to highly toxic; toxic to fish; teratogen fetotoxin	501,610.90
<i>Metolachlor</i>	Herbicide Insecticide	III	Suspect carcinogen, testicular atrophy; equivocal evidence of carcinogenicity; low to moderate toxicity; moderate toxicity to fish; moderate persistence	161,091.33
<i>Naled</i>	Insecticide Acaricide	I	Suspect mutagen	141,655.19
<i>Paraquat</i>	Herbicide	I	Highly toxic; moderately toxic to birds; persistent; restricted use	268,476.73
<i>Pendimethalin</i>	Herbicide	III	Possible carcinogen; moderate irritant to skin and eyes.	169,598.31
<i>Prometryn</i>	Herbicide	II	Kidney, liver, testicular and bone marrow damage	258,786.26
<i>Sodium chlorate</i>	Sterilant	I, II	Extremely toxic; little environmental info; persistent; no regulatory info	2,450,347.56
<i>Sulfur</i>	Fungicide Acaricide	IV	Acutely toxic to skin, eyes, and respiratory tract	187,475.29
<i>Trifluralin</i>	Herbicide	I, II, III	Possible carcinogen; low to moderate toxicity, toxic to fish and other aquatic organisms; moderate persistence	240,287.94

References

- ¹ The Pesticide Trust: Pesticides Used on Cotton, *Pesticide News* 6/95 #28
- ² American Textile Manufacturing Institute: www.atmi.org
- ³ Cotton Incorporated: www.cottoninc.org
- ⁴ National Cottonseed Products Association: www.cottonseed.com
- ⁵ USDA Economic Research Service: www.ers.usda.gov
- ⁶ USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service: www.usda.gov/nass
- ⁷ *Los Angeles Times Sunday Home Edition*, "Tougher times forcing Some Cotton Producers to Give up", January 13, 2002
- ⁸ *Fresno Bee* "Farm workers sickened by blowing pesticides." 9/5/96

- ⁹ Scarborough, 1989. "Acute health effects of community exposure to cotton defoliants." *Archives of Environmental health*. Nov/Dec vol 44 #6.
- ¹⁰ CDFA directive to Feed and Dairy Industry. January 13, 1992.
- ¹¹ Pesticide Action Network: Organic Cotton Briefing Kit.
- ¹² Conversations with Will Allen, Executive Director of SCP.
- ¹³ SCP. 2001. Cleaner Cotton Campaign Tool Kit.
- ¹⁴ Myers & Stolton. 1999. Organic Cotton From Field to Final Product.
- ¹⁵ Alderson, Barbara. "Students Break New Ground in Supporting Organic Cotton production." *Inside Chico State*. January 25, 2001, vol. 31 no. 9.
- ¹⁶ Cummins, Ronnie. 2000. Hazards of Genetically Engineered Foods and Crops. Organic Consumers Association.