



# COTTON INDUSTRY ON-FARM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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*Driving industry competitiveness*



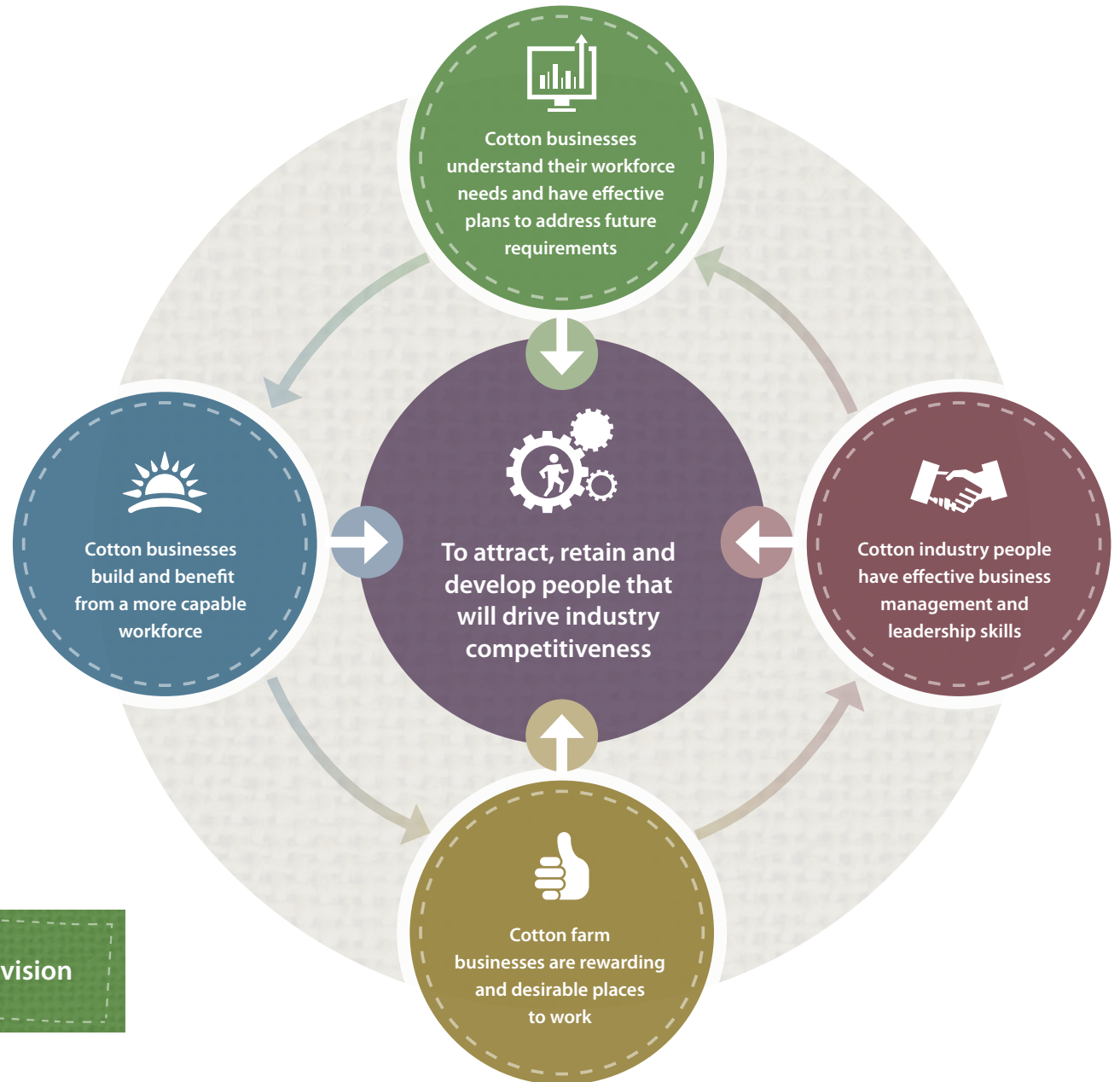
# COTTON INDUSTRY ON-FARM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

## PURPOSE

*to attract, retain and  
develop people that  
will drive industry  
competitiveness*



Cotton workforce development vision



# COTTON INDUSTRY ON-FARM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

## FOCUS

*Providing a shared and focused plan to ensure the cotton industry's organisations investments in workforce target key priorities, are well coordinated and deliver maximum outcomes*

## INTRODUCTION

This document summarises the key elements of the cotton industry workforce development strategy, developed between CRDC and Cotton Australia with the assistance of Agrifood Skills Solutions (AFSS). AFSS is the consulting arm of Agrifood Skills Australia, the key body on skills and workforce development for the Australian agrifood industry and regional Australia.

The cotton industry workforce development strategy is focused on delivering workforce outcomes for growers on-farm, and ultimately, will ensure that the cotton industry is able to attract, retain and develop people that will drive industry competitiveness. The strategy provides a shared and focused plan to ensure the cotton industry's investments in workforce target key priorities, are well coordinated and deliver maximum outcomes.

The industry's existing extension and delivery resources – myBMP and CottonInfo – are integrated into many of the tactics. To extend the impact, the strategy's tactics will also be supported by communications, including case studies, and a focus on return on investment.

The strategy development drew on a significant amount of research and documented work, including from previous CRDC and industry funded projects and industry forums. It was also informed by consultation, including validation interviews with growers, and researchers. Cotton Australia and CRDC Boards have endorsed the draft strategy. As a final consultation step, the strategy was considered by a wider industry representative group (involving researchers, growers and Cotton Australia and CRDC representatives) at an industry forum held in late 2015. Feedback from this forum has been incorporated into the plan.

Simple governance and approaches to evaluation have been agreed on as part of developing the strategy, to ensure effective implementation and coordination between the strategy partners. These are explained further at the end of the document.



**Australian Government**  
**Cotton Research and  
Development Corporation**

## THE STRATEGY

PROGRAM	STRATEGY	TACTIC (CA AND/OR CRDC)	ROLE/RESPONSIBILITIES	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
<b>Workforce Planning</b>  <b>OUTCOME</b> <i>Cotton-farm business people understand their workforce needs and have effective plans to address future requirements</i>	Support cotton businesses in understanding the value of people to their enterprise and the ROI of improving the capability of their workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research develops a set of metrics (est. by 2019) that enable cotton growers to assess and evaluate the value/ROI to their business enterprise of investing in the development of human capacity. Metrics are made available through the HR module of <i>myBMP</i>.</li> <li>Development of a benchmarking indicator for metrics to enable self-assessment against generalised data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CRDC: invests in development of metrics and ROI on investing in enhanced capability</li> <li>CA: <i>myBMP</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of human capacity and ROI of workforce development initiatives understood by Australian cotton businesses ('value' and 'ROI' to be defined)</li> <li>Metrics are understood and used in <i>myBMP</i></li> </ul>
	Build an understanding of industry-wide workforce needs to meet current and future requirements  Equip cotton businesses with the knowledge and tools to identify their future workforce needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of cotton labour market needs undertaken to establish workforce numbers and skills base within cotton industry across permanent, casual, contract and seasonal workers</li> <li>Understand future drivers of change to cotton workforce requirements (e.g. interaction between climatic factors and workforce and digital agriculture)</li> <li>Implement the cotton industry skills benchmark tool on farm</li> <li>Develop and communicate suggested practice for farm business workforce planning</li> <li>Establish an ongoing process for the collection of relevant cotton workforce and skills needs data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CRDC invests in skills profile and labour supply project work</li> <li>Future drivers: Industry Data as part of the above project and relevant past research</li> <li>Ongoing collection of industry data – consider as part of future CRDC grower practice surveys. Data on skills could also be collected through use of the Cotton Skills Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full Skills needs analysis implemented by June 30 2018</li> <li>10% of cotton businesses utilising industry suggested practices and tools for workforce planning by 2020</li> </ul>
<b>Workforce Development</b>  <b>Business Capability</b>  <b>OUTCOME</b> <i>Cotton farm business people have effective business management and leadership skills</i>	Support initiatives that enhance the Business Capability & Leadership skills of cotton business owners and farm managers developed by participation in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership programs</li> <li>Business skills development programs</li> <li>On-farm management programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CA and CRDC support the participation of emerging and established leaders in recognised agricultural leadership courses.</li> <li>Longitudinal and impact evaluations of industry leadership courses in place based around a benchmarking process. Lessons learned inform future investments.</li> <li>Business skills planning course for cotton growers and women in cotton developed focusing on:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business planning</li> <li>Business performance</li> <li>Risk management (including climate)</li> <li>Financial Management</li> </ul> </li> <li>People, HR and WHS (IR course and WH course already delivered)</li> <li>Networking like-minded growers and mentoring</li> <li>Supporting business skills plan developed and available through CottonInfo and <i>myBMP</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CA and CRDC support the placement of chosen individuals into recognised leadership development courses</li> <li>CRDC invests to understand the impact and benefit to industry of participation in leadership courses</li> <li>CRDC invests in CottonInfo Manager and CottonInfo to support/facilitate business acumen.</li> <li>CRDC supports the development of business skills planning through appropriate channels</li> <li>CA supports training and development of growers, and <i>myBMP</i>.</li> <li>CA contributes to course development, coordination (with funding sources and service providers) and aspects of delivery. Relevant training modules developed through CA WHS workshops and CA's Cotton Industry Skills Development Project support ongoing development through <i>myBMP</i></li> <li>CottonInfo will be integrating business management into their extension program.</li> <li>Currently, CottonInfo participates in developing suitable extension projects through Rural R&amp;D for Profit program.</li> <li>CA and CRDC support industry events (Conferences) and awards which could be utilized to facilitate networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30% of farm businesses participate in business capability and leadership knowledge, skills, attitude, development</li> <li>5% increase in on farm profitability over 5 years from participants of business and leadership skills programs</li> <li>Business skills planning tools accessed and utilised by 30 % of cotton farm business owners in order to change practices over 5 years.</li> <li>Representation of cotton representatives on recognised workforce forums, committees</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup>This online tool was developed through a CRDC funded project by Tocal College in partnership with industry - [www.agskills.com.au](http://www.agskills.com.au)

<sup>2</sup>Business skills planning would be available to all, and Agrifood have also suggested that specifically targeting women in cotton as part this would be an effective strategy.



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<p><b>Workforce Development</b> <b>Business Capability</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>OUTCOME</b></p> <p><i>Cotton Industry people have effective business, management and leadership skills</i></p>	<p>Create opportunities to drive innovation, adaptability, and collaboration in cotton businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate through <i>myBMP</i> (People in Ag ) sharing networks (community of practice) to increase collaboration and information sharing on workforce development issues, training initiatives and projects</li> <li>Innovation training programs focusing on how to foster a culture of change, capital management, risk management, new technologies and adaptive business skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CA: my BMP and supporting promotion, workshops and RM support</li> <li>CRDC invest in People in Ag project which will enhance the industry's resources incl <i>myBMP</i>. The site provides ongoing access to templates and materials for HRM on farm.</li> <li>CRDC currently invests in Agribusiness with the development of an agribusiness pathway enabling matching of students/employers within the cotton industry</li> <li>CA manages the CRC Legacy Scholarship fund which attracts students into the industry and exposes them to the industry and its workplaces, facilitates networking at events.</li> <li>CA hosts work experience placements and promotes industry opportunities to uni students (through hosting events etc)</li> <li>CA promotes value of VET training and encourages employers to host work placements</li> <li>CRDC invests in innovation development through Rural R&amp;D for Profit</li> <li>CA hosts the industry conferences, Collective and supports the Awards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People in Ag site developed and accessible through <i>myBMP</i> by December 2016.</li> <li>Participation and impact measured and tracked</li> <li>Industry identified as a leader in innovation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Workforce Development</b> <b>Attracting and Retaining People</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>OUTCOME</b></p> <p><i>Cotton Farm businesses are rewarding and desirable places to work</i></p>	<p>Support cotton businesses to attract and induct suitable candidates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With Dairy Australia develop and Implement People in Ag program incorporating the Agriculture Employment Starter Kit Initiative (ESKI ) and delivery via <i>myBMP</i></li> <li>Implement Employer of Choice initiative</li> <li>Commit to participation a simple 'Reconciliation Action Plan' Identify cotton farm businesses who are willing to provide employment opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CRDC invest in development of the transition to People in Ag – and linkage to <i>myBMP</i> through continued maintenance support from CRDC</li> <li>CA: Update relevant <i>myBMP</i> modules incl specialist advice, and maintenance.</li> <li>CA and CRDC support the development of Employer of Choice initiative: (Needs to be defined. Could be supported through <i>myBMP</i> and CA promotion as well as CottonInfo potentially).</li> <li>CA encourages growers to engage with the Clontarf Foundation and AES locally</li> <li>CA and CRDC jointly consider the development of a cotton Indigenous action plan or commitment</li> </ul>	<p>Improved knowledge and capacity of growers to attract and induct staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cotton businesses participate in and are identified as employers of choice</li> <li>Industry recognition of 'employer of choice' classification</li> <li>Opportunities for greater indigenous participation understood</li> <li>Current status of indigenous people in the workforce understood</li> <li>Meaningful indigenous cotton workforce partnerships created</li> </ul>
	<p>Equip cotton businesses with the information and tools to retain and develop key staff</p>	<p>Cotton Industry implements a best practice professional development program providing farm managers with the knowledge and instruments to identify and respond to impediments to retaining their employees. Cotton businesses consider succession planning as a critical success factor in workforce planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CRDC investment in current Ruth Nettle project provides impact on workforce turnover</li> <li>CA supports <i>myBMP</i>, RMs support for growers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farm management teams understand the impact of staff turnover</li> <li>Adoption of People in Ag site/tools</li> <li>Farm managers have increased capacity to manage and reduce turnover</li> <li>Employment metrics demonstrate cotton workforce turnover is declining</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup>This is a current collaborative RDC project designed to share information on workforce development issues, training initiatives and projects. It will extend the already established 'People in Dairy' IR/HR resources through to other industries.

<sup>4</sup>ESKI is a package of resources that already exists in Dairy, and provides a useful foundation of grower support material to manage employment

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<b>Workforce Development</b> <b>Attracting and Retaining People</b> <hr/> <b>OUTCOME</b> <i>Cotton Farm businesses are rewarding and desirable places to work</i>	Ensure cotton farms are safe and healthy workplaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health, welfare and safety of cotton workers is the preeminent objective of cotton business</li> <li>All cotton farms conform to at least level one practices identified in the WHS key area of the Human Resources module of <i>myBMP</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CRDC provides foundation science through Tony Lower (Uni of Sydney)</li> <li><i>myBMP</i> supported by CA</li> <li>CA provides WHS information, communications to growers (sourced from Tony Lower et al)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% of farms conform to level 1 practices in WHS of <i>myBMP</i></li> <li>A year on year reduction to achieve zero fatalities on cotton farms.</li> <li>A 20% reduction in cotton farm related injuries and hours lost by 2018</li> </ul>
	Career pathways are identified and promoted	Conduct a careers/skills progression analysis that focuses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirming the skills licenses, attributes and knowledge required by the range of senior supervisor and manager roles on farm</li> <li>Identify the key skills required in similar roles in broader agriculture</li> <li>Farm careers pathways mapped</li> <li>Expose University and VET students to high performing innovative work cultures through work experience programs, cadetships and other industry engagement mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Careers progression analysis undertaken by CRDC through skills analysis</li> <li>CA promotes career pathways via education program and website, also to government and other stakeholders</li> <li>CA promotes work experience and traineeship opportunities to growers and helps to identify placement opportunities. Also engages with relevant uni and VET programs in order to promote on-farm opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farm workers have improved understanding of the potential for career progression in the Australian cotton industry.</li> <li>5 VET/University students paired with high performing businesses annually</li> </ul>
<b>Workforce Development</b> <b>People Capability</b> <hr/> <b>OUTCOME</b> <i>Cotton businesses build and benefit from a more capable workforce</i>	Industry bodies engage with key training programs to ensure relevant training is appropriate and meets on-farm needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in the continuous improvement of training package development through maintaining industry representation on the relevant Skills Council's Industry Reference Committee</li> <li>Assess development and application to the cotton farm sector of new hybrid university/VET programs</li> <li>Communicate training opportunities to on-farm employers/employees</li> <li>Encourage employers to offer work placements on-farm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CA coordinates and supports input where relevant to training package reviews through the involvement of the Regional Manager (Border Rivers)/Training Coordinator's representation on the Rural and Related Standing committee.</li> <li>Cotton Info: technical specialist to provide input to training package review when necessary</li> <li>CA and CRDC support continuation of involvement in the national training package review/Standing Committee role</li> <li>CA and CRDC respond to hybrid program needs as necessary and as new opportunities arise.</li> <li>CA encourages employers to offer work placements on-farm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AHC10 training package updated to reflect skills gaps</li> <li>Training and work placement opportunities are promoted</li> <li>Increased cotton industry training completion and work placements</li> </ul>
	Training opportunities are promoted where relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify appropriate skillsets for positions within the cotton industry</li> <li>Develop and implement a training register/skills tool that enables farm managers to identify skills and licences held by casual and temporary employees</li> <li>Through People in Ag and <i>myBMP</i> develop resources and procedures for farm managers to perform job analyses, create position descriptions and related workforce planning processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CRDC skills analysis identifies skillsets for positions in industry</li> <li>CA/<i>myBMP</i> provides procedures and resources, will incorporate new resources from People in Ag project</li> <li>CA provides <i>myBMP</i> support for growers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skillsets for positions on cotton farms identified</li> <li>Human resource management procedures and resources not available in People in Ag or <i>myBMP</i> developed and added to resource library by Dec 2017</li> <li>Up to date People in Ag and <i>myBMP</i> resources ensure Farm managers have access to resources and guides to develop position descriptions and related workforce planning materials</li> </ul>
Role and position descriptions are defined, documented and available to employees				

# COTTON INDUSTRY ON-FARM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

## KEY POINTS

*The strategy incorporates measures of success against each tactic to ensure that effective monitoring and evaluation are considered from implementation*

## GOVERNANCE

### Industry Workforce Strategy Working Group.

An industry Workforce Strategy Working Group will be established, to meet every 6 months, to manage the delivery of the strategy. CA will chair the group.

Its proposed members are: Ian Taylor (CRDC R&D Manager), Warwick Waters (Manager CottonInfo), Angela Bradburn (CA Policy Manager), Rebecca Fing (CA Regional Manager and training coordinator), and CA Education Coordinator where relevant.

The first meeting is to be scheduled for March or April 2016.

### Industry Workforce ('People') Strategy and Research Forums.

In addition, Industry Workforce ('People') Strategy and Research Forums (modelled on CRDC discipline forums) will be held with a wider group (eg including key researchers and grower representatives) to track progress against the strategy, provide two-way feedback, and as an opportunity to share updates on current R&D activities.

The first Forum was held on 11th December 2015 and at this stage it is proposed to hold a forum annually.

## EVALUATION

### Evaluation will be overseen by members of the Strategy Working Group.

The strategy incorporates measures of success against each tactic to ensure that effective monitoring and evaluation are considered from implementation. This will prompt the Working Group to consider further development of measures and methods ('the how') if needed as each strategy is progressed. Data capture methods, for example, could be implemented as part of key tasks and via existing mechanisms (e.g. through myBMP or use of survey tools developed). Any gaps in monitoring may need to be addressed through additional evaluation steps, e.g. via surveys to gain feed-back on the results of specific programs.

It is also intended that Workforce Forums be utilised as key points for evaluation, to capture progress, consider contribution towards outcomes and any 'lessons learned' along the way.

The Strategy incorporates key research projects (such as skill needs analysis and labour analysis) which will be critical to confirming a baseline of industry workforce metrics.

The industry will conduct an overall review of the entire strategy at the end of the first three years.



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