

Safety everyone's responsibility on farm

■ By Michael Murray – General Manager, Cotton Australia

EVERY day across Australia, farmers don their boots and hats, say goodbye to their loved ones, and venture off for another day on the land.

Most of the time, they return home in the evening, sweaty, dirty and tired after a long day.

But sometimes, they don't return home at all.

Safety must be a priority for everyone working in agriculture. In the Australian cotton industry, safety is at the forefront of our thinking about what we do and how we do it.

While farms can be terrific, idyllic places to live and work and have meaningful careers, they can also be riddled with dangers that can leave people injured or dead. From machinery, to vehicles, to chemicals and isolation, the risks are many and varied.

In July, the agricultural community marked National Farm Safety Week. The week was an important time for us to take a moment to reflect on the policies and procedures we have in place on farm, and to make the necessary changes to ensure those safety practices were as comprehensive as possible.

For Cotton Australia, during that week, we took the opportunity to impress upon our growers the need for them to take Work Health and Safety (WHS) seriously, and to act now, when it may be quieter and cotton is not in the ground, to boost safety on farm.

We were also proud to partner with Bec Fing at House Paddock Training and Consulting in staging a WHS webinar for growers. More than 60 people logged in to the session, and it was pleasing to see so many growers take up the opportunity and invest their time in obtaining handy information and tips to better their WHS practices.

Being a safe, efficient, and effective industry has long been a priority for Australian cotton. A core component of the Australian



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cotton industry's work in the WHS space has been around our best practices program, *myBMP*.

myBMP began in 1997 and was reviewed and redeveloped in 2006–07, with the current online system re-launched in 2010.

I'm proud the program has been widely adopted across the industry, with it providing our growers a range of benefits, including safer, compliant farms operating at the highest social and environmental levels.

The *myBMP* program covers key 10 areas of farm operations, with a dedicated HR and WHS module guiding growers in how to ensure their farms are as safe as possible.

Within the WHS module, there are 33 best management practices standards covering safety; and in 2019, 68 per cent of surveyed growers said they had improved workplace health and safety as a result of these modules.

I encourage all growers to review the WHS *myBMP* module to ensure they're operating at the highest level. Carrying out checks on things like signage, protective equipment, first aid supplies, machinery maintenance requirements and electrical hazards around the farm can all be beneficial steps to take when addressing potential risks.

As with anything *myBMP*-related, growers can always contact Cotton Australia's *myBMP* team at their convenience to ask any questions they have about the modules and checklist items.

Ensuring safety is everyone's responsibility, and by fostering a culture on farm where it is encouraged and expected that people will speak up about safety risks and hazards, we can collectively look out for each other and save lives. By working on safety together, we will strive towards making our farms and industry as safe as possible – for the sake of ourselves, our employees, our families and our communities.



myBMP accredited chemical storage.