

Project Title: Cotton Field to Fabric

Commenced: September 4th

Completion: September 6th

I travelled to Geelong for 3 days to participate in the twelfth Cotton Field to Fabric training course held at the CSIRO Materials Science & Engineering facilities Colac Rd Belmont Victoria. The course is held to give all attendees a overview how all segments of the Cotton industry work together and gain a understanding of the workings of each of these different segments.

The course started on Tuesday with the selection of varieties by the grower & progressed through the growing, harvesting, ginning or processing and over the following days covered agronomy, marketing and finally the spinning and manufacturing of the final marketable product.

The course made me aware of several important facts

1. Just how dominant China is as a market for all fibres both natural and manmade(up to 70%) and that it can manipulate the market basically overnight by shutting factories .

2. Even though china is seen as being the source of all cheap labour, a small but steadily growing of textile manufacturing is coming from other asian and middle eastern countries because of their even cheaper labour costs E.g Bangladesh, Pakistan , Idonesia

3. All yarn manufacturing is done using a blend of cotton from different countries and Australian cotton because of its quality and uniformity is used in high quality yarns and as a base for others.

4. Being a grower I have never fully understood how cotton is turned from raw fibre into threads. Several short highly but educational tours of the CSIRO spinning facilities were the highlight of the course and has given me invaluable knowledge of this process

5. As is mentioned in point 3 Australian cotton is often blended with cotton from other sources with inferior qualities and consistencies which to me raises issues such as why colour is such an important issue for marketers especially since most fibres are dyed as part of the manufacturing process

Also much is made of the issue of base grade prices being moved but once again this only seems to be coming from a marketer's perspective as most spinners seem to be happy where the quality levels are

The knowledge gained from attending this 3 day course and the networking opportunities that arose has given me a greatly enhanced view of the whole industry. In several discussions with other growers since I have been able to pass information learned such as that above and will continue to do so at every opportunity as well as recommending attendance.