



Connecting **growers** with **research**



# Strategic Plan 2012-18

Updated May 2015 and June 2017

*Best Practice*



# CottonInfo Strategic Plan 2012-18

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## 1. Foreword.

*As of 2012:*

The Australian cotton industry is entering into its third year of resurgence following a long period of drought and industry consolidation. Grower numbers continue to fluctuate driven by seasonal conditions, but have reached or exceeded the pre-drought level of approximately 1,500. The increase in grower numbers includes significant changes in the demographics of location, cotton production experience and the availability of local agronomic services.

That the industry has been able to successfully produce record crops after much adversity and change reflects well on the value of industry research as well as the capacity of its people, businesses and organisations. An enthusiasm for sharing information and innovation continues to serve the industry well. This industry enthusiasm is typified by a thirst for the latest research results and the speed with which new knowledge, practices and technologies are adopted.

With this in mind the industry and its organisations continue to place great importance on both the quality of research and its extension. The industry model for supporting the extension of research results getting to end users has necessarily evolved over time. We have had to adapt to increasing needs for specialist technical R&D knowledge and learn how to do more with fewer resources especially during the drought.

Positively this brought about new skills and productive partnerships with agribusiness, crop consultants and natural resource management organisations. Equally, advances in communication technology offered many new online information opportunities. With the surge in new grower numbers the benefits of having regional positions to facilitate the communication, testing and development of research results is again of great importance.

Adoption of world leading research by the Australian cotton industry has contributed to unparalleled productivity growth and met challenges for improved sustainability, profitability and competitiveness. The importance of high rates of industry R&D adoption will be as important to the future of the industry as it was to the past.

Through a new collaboration between Cotton Australia, Cotton Seed Distributors (CSD) and the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) the industry has the opportunity to build upon the strengths of the existing model for extension by sharpening the strategy and renewing resources where needed.

*As of 2015:*

In early 2015, two years into the delivery of CottonInfo, a review of the CottonInfo Strategic Plan has taken place to update it (moving from the original 'development and delivery' wording to the program's new name, CottonInfo) and to ensure it remains fit for purpose in a dynamic industry environment.

Since the forward was originally written in 2012, a return to dry conditions has increased pressure on the cotton industry, with a reduced planting of cotton and a resulting reduction in R&D funding.

Also of note has been the commencement of the Cotton Australia Cotton to Market Strategy in late 2013 and the strong connections with CottonInfo and the *myBMP* program. The majority of this Strategic Plan remains in force from the 2012 edition: any significant updates or edits have been noted as '2015 addition' to ensure the original intent of the publication remains for context.

*As of 2017:*

In 2017, the CottonInfo Management Committee decreed to extend the CottonInfo Strategic Plan for one year, to bring the plan in line with the strategic planning cycles of partners CRDC and Cotton Australia. The next five year CottonInfo Strategic Plan will run from 2018-2023. As of June 2017, planning for the development of the next Plan has commenced.

From an industry perspective, since the 2015 update the industry has received significant rain, returning the industry to higher planting areas. In the 2016-17 season, this coincided with a season of extreme weather events - both hot and cold shocks - and significant pest pressure, resulting in a very challenging production year for Australian cotton growers.

As per the 2015 update, the majority of this Strategic Plan remains in force from the 2012 edition: any significant updates or edits have been noted as '2017 addition' to ensure the original intent of the publication remains for context.



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## 2. The Plan.

Cotton Australia, CRDC and CSD, through a collaborative arrangement, will be responsible for providing the future leadership and resourcing of CottonInfo and its team members in conjunction with research partners. The principle outcome sought is an efficient and effective pathway for the delivery of the results of industry R&D and innovation more broadly.

CottonInfo is designed to service the commercially unmet cotton R&D information needs of growers and to support industry efforts to improve practices, productivity, competitiveness and environmental performance. In meeting these needs the CottonInfo program has three strategic goals with supporting objectives. They are to:

### 2.1 Strategic goals and objectives:

1. **Improve industry practices:**
  - through promoting R&D knowledge and encouraging its adoption; and
  - is inclusive of delivery of R&D through the *myBMP* program and its ongoing improvement;
2. **Improve R&D communication:**
  - by making R&D information, trusted advice and specialist technical R&D knowledge readily available;
  - in part through the provision of local facilitation support for R&D information access; and
  - by enhancing communication between researchers, growers, consultants, agribusiness, NRM and industry organisations.
3. **Improve industry responsiveness:**
  - by building the capacity within the CottonInfo team, researchers, growers, consultants, agribusiness, NRM and industry organisations to respond to emerging or emergency issues.

### 2.2 The role of the CottonInfo team:

The CottonInfo team will implement the program ensuring it is the principal pathway by which the results of industry R&D and innovation are packaged, promoted and adoption evaluated.

Research results and innovation include new knowledge, tools and technologies. New knowledge is embedded in or linked to the practices that comprise *myBMP* as well as training courses delivered by CottonInfo, like IPM and irrigation.

The CottonInfo team will act as a network that will facilitate industry R&D communication between researchers, growers, consultants, agribusiness, NRM as well as cotton

and other industry organisations. This communication addresses both immediate and longer term or over the horizon issues. It provides an important feedback loop on needs, priorities and the usefulness of R&D outputs.

The CottonInfo team will be the key resource for industry's capacity to respond to emerging or emergency issues. Whether it is at a regional or national level the team will assist industry to respond to challenges whether they are agronomic, farming systems, biosecurity or a natural disaster event. They will provide essential support to the industry's biosecurity preparedness and surveillance effort.

The CottonInfo team will be equipped with experienced people who have a range of complementary knowledge and skills. Some positions are targeted at helping regions, which may have specific support needs e.g. large numbers of new growers or remoteness. Others have specialist technical knowledge. The nature of the advice provided by the CottonInfo team is complementary to, not competitive with the role of agribusiness and private consultants.

In the context of the strategic goals, the functionality of CottonInfo and *myBMP* are integrated recognising the linkage between R&D, industry performance and social licence. The success of *myBMP* as a key pathway for R&D adoption is enhanced by the CottonInfo team support for users, updates of *myBMP* module content and ongoing improvements to the program. *myBMP* certification is not a role undertaken by the CottonInfo team: a separate group of trained *myBMP* auditors will perform this function and report to the Audit Office.

The CottonInfo team will proactively target higher and more rapid rates of adoption by growers and industry of the research in which they have invested; magnifying the impact of cotton industry R&D and provide responsive capacity that contributes to industry resilience. They will also promote and encourage new technological and practice based innovations, through a range of processes including on-farm trials, where these have a clear benefit to the industry. Where appropriate, the CottonInfo team will actively engage and collaborate with other like-minded groups or organisations such as CSD's E&D team to achieve their outcomes.

*As of 2017:*

The rapid increase in digital technology presents an increased opportunity for commercialisation as a pathway from R&D to practice. This has implications for the development and marketing of new technologies and the role CottonInfo plays in extending them. This highlights the importance of CottonInfo understanding issues of Intellectual Property and working with commercial partners.



### 2.3 Measures and targets:

Goals	Objectives	Measures of Success	Targets
Improved practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver R&amp;D knowledge and encourage its adoption</li> <li>Best management practices defined and adopted by growers</li> <li>Measures of resilience and system stability developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farmers increase productivity by three percent per hectare per year.</li> <li>Survey and M&amp;E results indicate that greater than 65 percent of growers are utilising CottonInfo products and resources to source information.</li> <li>Industry is able to define and assess best practice adoption, and the <i>myBMP</i> program is the primary resource for farmers accessing best practice knowledge and tools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice change in focus areas of biosecurity, stewardship, carbon, water, NRM, cotton quality, IPM, Soil Health, Energy, Nutrition, (HR &amp; OH&amp;S targets to be led by Cotton Australia).</li> <li>Achievement of agreed target adoption rates for R&amp;D for specific practices and technologies.</li> <li>80 percent of growers registered in the <i>myBMP</i> program.</li> </ul>
Improved R&D communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make R&amp;D information, trusted advice and specialist technical R&amp;D knowledge readily available</li> <li>Delivery of R&amp;D knowledge through the CottonInfo and <i>myBMP</i> systems (and their ongoing improvement).</li> <li>Provide local facilitation support for R&amp;D information access; and</li> <li>Enhance communication between researchers, growers, consultants, agribusiness, NRM and industry organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growers receive timely information appropriate for their farming enterprise to enable the production of best practice cotton.</li> <li>The CottonInfo team make R&amp;D information, best practices (<i>myBMP</i>), trusted advice and specialist technical R&amp;D knowledge readily available.</li> <li>100 percent of growers know of the CottonInfo team and greater than 60 percent agree that the CottonInfo team assisted them to improve practices.</li> <li>Surveys indicate that growers and consultants are committed to and supportive of the CottonInfo program.</li> <li>Local issues are reflected in R&amp;D investments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surveys demonstrate that the measures of success are achieved.</li> <li>CottonInfo is the primary delivery channel for cotton R&amp;D information by 2018, with <i>myBMP</i> the primary delivery channel for best practices.</li> </ul>
Improved responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build the capacity within the CottonInfo team to assist researchers, growers, consultants, agribusiness, NRM bodies and industry organisations to respond to emerging or emergency issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industry are able to respond effectively to a biosecurity incursion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External review affirms this measure as achieved (refer to industry biosecurity plan for specifics).</li> </ul>



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### 3. Our guiding principles.

- Commitment to industry benefit as the key outcome.
- Progressive leadership and proactive management.
- Credible and trusted people, products and performance.
- Accountable to industry and public stakeholders.

### 4. Situation Analysis.

The Australian cotton industry successfully competes against subsidised cotton producers in a global textile market on the basis of continuous improvements to the yield and quality of its fibre, as well as the dependability of its selling system. Australia whilst a relatively small cotton producer is one of the top five export suppliers of quality upland cotton. In 2012 the value of Australian cotton exports is estimated to be in excess of \$2.5 billion.

The industry places great importance on its R&D to drive ongoing improvements in yield and quality and to overcome problems throughout the supply chain whether they are pest, disease, classing or human capacity related. In 2012-13 it is estimated that the Australian cotton industry in partnership with the Australian government, public and private research providers will invest over \$50 million in R&D. Supporting the communication and adoption of R&D results with an industry program to develop and deliver knowledge is seen as fundamental in ensuring the maximum return on this investment.

Australia leads the world in achieving high cotton yields. In part this is due to the large proportion of irrigated cotton grown in Australia compared to rain-fed in other nations. Historically, lint yields have been increasing at approximately one bale/ha per decade. Half of this improvement can be attributed to the contribution of breeding and the other half as a function of the improvement of management systems and the enabling factors such as disease and insect tolerance.

The importance of focusing on practices also arises from evolving community, government and market demands for improved environmental and social performance. The Australian cotton industry has and continues to be well positioned to pursue improved practices given the level of education and skills of its producers, the commitment to investment in research capability and a BMP program that assists growers to understand and address risks to their business, the industry generally and the potential impacts on the community in which they operate.

The BMP Program that commenced in 1997 in response to public concerns for pesticide impacts underwent review in 2006 and redevelopment from 2007 culminating in the myBMP program launched in 2010. The myBMP program still attends to risk management and supports industry's social license but has been redesigned in an online form to enhance useability and access to the results of R&D.

The Cotton CRC and CRDC worked together from 1994 to resource and manage support for the adoption of industry R&D. A process of transformation has also been underway with the industry model for supporting R&D adoption. Drivers for change to what was historically a highly successful regional extension model included erosion of public sector extension support, inability of state organisations to attract and retain key personnel, new communication technologies, changing industry circumstances of drought, consolidation, maturation, information needs and delivery preferences.

A new model guided by industry strategy and adoption targets was developed with key ingredients being adoption of a commercial like approach (marketing) with customer focus, flexible and multiple delivery pathways including extension, agribusiness and BMP. In 2010 a new collaboration between the Cotton CRC, CRDC and Cotton Australia commenced with a General Manager – Research Implementation appointed by the Cotton CRC and each of the then D&D team members being given responsibility for a national target e.g. weed management.

Implementation of the new model commenced on the back of four consecutively low years of production and grower numbers. Within six months it faced the challenges of a record crop, a doubling of cotton grower numbers, including many first time producers and two consecutive flood emergency seasons. Successes during these challenging times included the timely production of publications subsidised by commercial sponsorship and the roll-out of myBMP and its associated accredited advisor program. The collaboration between the Cotton CRC, CRDC and Cotton Australia wound-up with the cessation of the Cotton CRC in June 2012.

Dealing with flood emergencies and exotic pest incursions such as mealy bug have demonstrated the importance of having the capacity within the industry to proactively prepare and respond to natural, industry practice and regulatory challenges. The industry has sought to integrate this responsibility with the technical capacity, communication and human network of CottonInfo.



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## 4.1 Extension

There are a number of terms applied to the process by which the results of research and new innovations get to end users. Adoption, extension, commercialisation, marketing and product development are terms often applied to this process. Often they mean different things to different people.

That aside, in reviewing and recasting what was the industry extension model it was considered that these approaches are separate and valuable ways of getting the results of research to end users that should be exploited as and when appropriate. It is recognised that adoption is something done by the end user e.g. growers, classers, ginners and consultants. Cotton industry extension is distinctly different from extension approaches applied in other rural industries that often focus heavily on printed communication and other passive extension services.

The role of industry extension is separate from, but complementary to the role consultants, agribusiness and NRM organisations perform. These groups would not provide the same functions in the absence of a CottonInfo delivery team given the lack of collective industry and/or commercial drivers.

The outputs of industry R&D rarely have exclusivity or direct financial value to a commercial service provider. Campaigns run by the CottonInfo team predominantly address issues where there is “market failure” for them to be addressed otherwise by the private sector. Positively though there are still more opportunities for working with consultants, agribusiness and NRM groups that can be realised.

## 4.2 The myBMP program

As described in the introduction to the Situation Analysis, the myBMP program has evolved from the industry’s initial and highly successful BMP program.

The myBMP program still has the original BMP program’s focus of maintaining a social licence for the industry to operate, which it does through the provision of a comprehensive resource for growers to assess risk to the environment and to their business from their cotton production operations. However, in contrast to the original paper-based BMP program, myBMP is a system accessed via the internet which provides 11 new BMP modules incorporating the latest knowledge from R&D as well as direct access to a range of resources and tools to help

explain and support the BMPs.

myBMP has been designed with three levels. Level 1 covers a grower’s legal obligations particularly with pesticide, chemical, fuel and oil storage and handling. Level 2 covers practices that are considered to be industry standards including Level 1 legal requirements. Level 3 is more aspirational in nature and cover practices which are quite likely to be considered “best practice” in 5 to 10 years. Alternatively Level 3 can be considered to represent levels of performance that are well above current industry standards (see diagram on next page).

*2015 addition:* As of 2015, there is a current focus on reducing the number of practices and the complexity of the system for growers.

One of the major differences between myBMP and the original BMP program is the recognition that a grower owns their BMP system along with the rate and level they choose to achieve under any of the modules. There is no obligation for a grower to be audited once they have become a registered myBMP user. On the other hand the industry has maintained the capacity to professionally audit farms which have requested an audit after completion of their myBMP modules.

The challenge for myBMP and the CottonInfo team is to continue to improve the program with a focus on its value to the business of cotton growing while at the same time encouraging as many growers as possible to complete all BMPs for their farm(s) and request an audit.

The balance of this focus is critical as evidenced by grower’s feedback on myBMP in recent surveys. For example the Cotton Grower Practices Survey 2011 (conducted by GHD on behalf of the Cotton CRC and CRDC) clearly indicated that myBMP is not a highly valued source of information or website as yet.

On the other hand the grower survey conducted by Inovact as part of the Australian Cotton Industry: Third Environmental Assessment showed that a high percentage of growers (46 percent) are receptive to becoming certified under myBMP and there are a range of positive reasons growers have for using the program.

Despite this there remain some strongly held perceptions which act as barriers to growers using the myBMP program. Understanding these barriers will be important in ensuring the success of activities undertaken to support myBMP adoption targets.

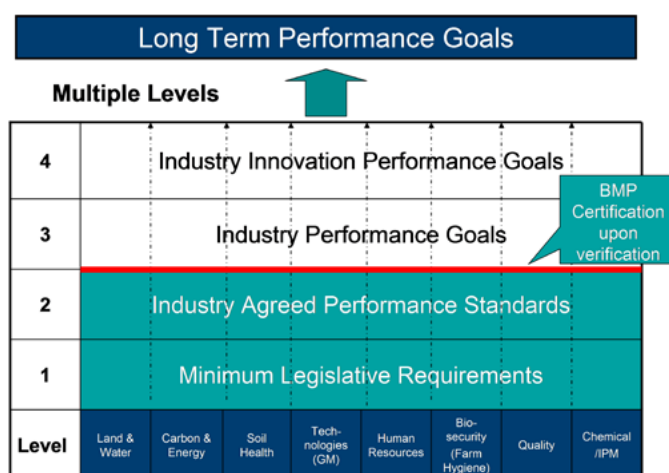


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2015 addition: In October 2014 CA & CRDC confirmed the three strategic goals for myBMP are:

1. Supporting responsible cotton production that meets regulatory requirements, so the industry can sustain its social license.
2. Access to market initiatives for growers wishing to take advantage of commercial opportunities for marketing responsible cotton production.
3. Supporting growers and post-farm gate businesses to continuously improve their practices.

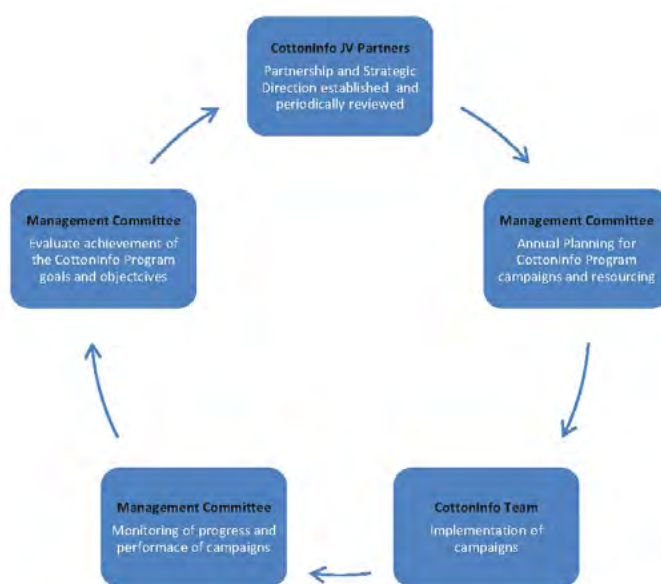


## 5. Implementation strategy.

This CottonInfo Strategic Plan will be the primary guide to the allocation of resources for CottonInfo from 2012-18.

Each year Cotton Australia, CSD and CRDC, through the Program Management Committee, will review the performance and achievement of the strategic goals, objectives and measures of success and approve the directions for the coming year in the form of an annual plan. Every three years the Committee will consider the strategic importance of changes in the operating environment and whether this Strategic Plan requires review. In forming decisions the advice of the industry research organisations will be sought through the Cotton Innovation Network.

The CottonInfo program will be implemented by a team of skilled professionals responsible for integrating, developing and extending results of industry R&D to the Australian cotton industry. An Annual Operating Plan will detail the CottonInfo activities to be undertaken each year to service the priority R&D information needs of individual growers, cotton regions and the industry. The information outputs of industry R&D will be processed and packaged and delivered campaigns utilising as appropriate a mix of active extension activities publications, BMPs, and electronic applications.



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2015 addition: In October 2014 the following organisation roles were reviewed and agreed in implementing *myBMP*.

Function	Tasks	Role Responsibilities	Organisational Responsibilities
Delivery to growers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion (awareness) of the program (media, face to face, meetings)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CottonInfo team and CA Regional Managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint Venture Partners</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Getting growers registered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CA Regional Managers (primary role)</li> <li>REOs (secondary role)</li> <li>Third party contractors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint Venture Partners</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for working in the program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questions – All</li> <li>IT Platform – <i>myBMP</i> Office</li> <li>Technical – CottonInfo technical specialists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint Venture Partners</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training of delivery team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>myBMP</i> Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cotton Australia</li> </ul>
Maintain the product (modules)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content up to date</li> <li>Consistent style</li> <li>Simplified and aligned to strategic purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical specialists with oversight from <i>myBMP</i> Manager or external contractor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CRDC &amp; Cotton Australia</li> </ul>
Maintain the program (IT Platform)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance that meets user expectations</li> <li>Stable &amp; Security</li> <li>Functionality aligned to strategic purpose &amp; product</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>myBMP</i> Manager with external contractor support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cotton Australia &amp; CRDC</li> </ul>
Audits of growers, classers & ginnerers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise and conduct</li> <li>Mentor auditors</li> <li>Issue certificates</li> <li>Liaise with Monsanto</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>myBMP</i> Manager and Lead Auditor (contractor)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cotton Australia</li> </ul>
BCI Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collecting grower data</li> <li>Registering growers</li> <li>Reporting to BCI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>myBMP</i> Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cotton Australia</li> </ul>
BMP Bale Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handling merchant requests</li> <li>Issuing certificates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>myBMP</i> Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cotton Australia</li> </ul>
Program Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direction &amp; Coordination</li> <li>Priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CottonInfo and <i>myBMP</i> Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint Venture Partners</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocations of tasks</li> <li>Allocation of resources</li> <li>Monitoring &amp; evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>myBMP</i> Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cotton Australia</li> </ul>



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### 5.1 Resource allocation:

Cotton Australia, CSD and CRDC will individually invest in the necessary projects, personnel and operating funds to ensure the strategic goals and objectives can be achieved. The respective organisational commitments to resourcing include:

- Cotton Australia – up to \$400,000 per annum for myBMP including employment and resourcing of a myBMP Manager;
- CSD – up to \$1,000,000 per annum for employment and resourcing of regional support roles; and
- CRDC – up to \$2,000,000 per annum in funding technical roles, employment and resourcing of the CottonInfo Program Manager.

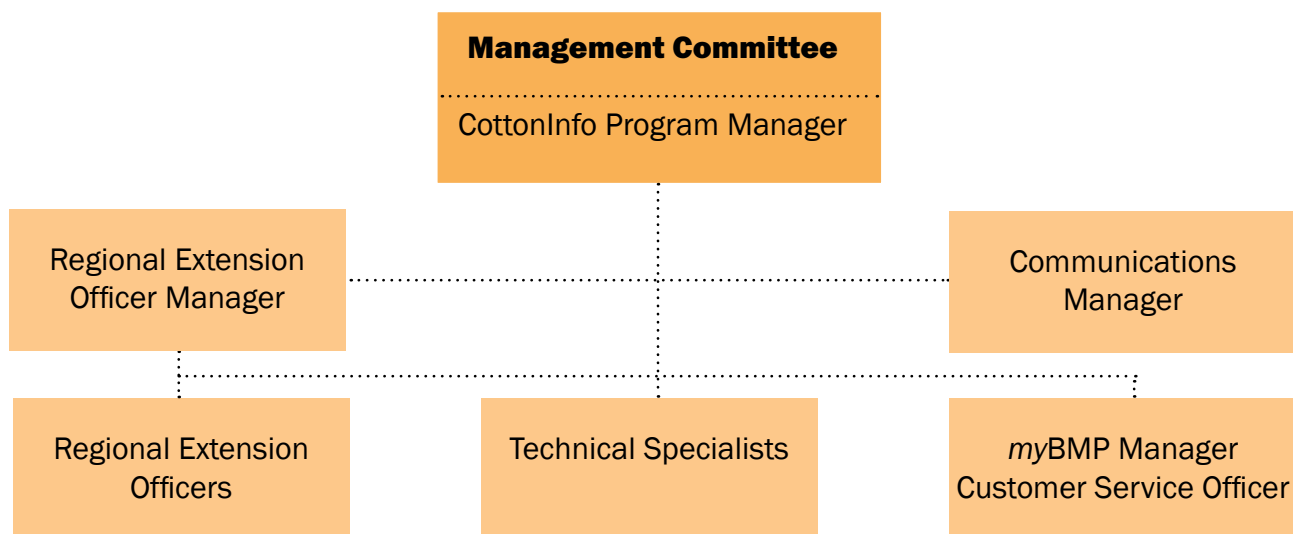
### 5.2 Governance:

The CottonInfo program will be governed by a Management Committee comprised of representatives of Cotton Australia, CSD, CRDC and the CottonInfo Program Manager.

The Committee will meet at least quarterly to:

- approve plans and guidelines
- monitor progress and performance against approved plans and guidelines
- communicate with and provide direction to the CottonInfo team through the CottonInfo Program Manager
- consult with the Cotton Innovation Network on the direction of the CottonInfo program.

### 5.3 Organisational structure:



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