

Holy sheet! Technology traces bed linen back to Coleambally cotton farm

Larry Walsh

When Southern Cotton's technology and tracking systems enabled cotton sheet producer, It-fits, to trace the cotton back to chairman Larry Walsh's farm in Coleambally recently – it signalled the start of an exciting time for both growers and cotton buyers.

"In this day and age, the market wants to be able to trace food and fibre as proof it's been produced in a sustainable way," Larry says. "This technology allows us to trace a bale to the latitude and longitude point on a farm, rather than a farm pool, as was the case previously."

At Southern Cotton, a Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) transmitter, which is inserted into the John Deere module wrap, is used to provide full traceability. Data is recorded in the picker, with details about the module including date, time, grower, farm, field, latitude and longitude of the picker when the module was produced. Known as Bale Track, this traceability technology provides custom-built reporting via a grower's personal App, csv or email files.

When a module is delivered to the gin, the information is captured and reconciled. The outgoing bales are labelled with a unique number and bar code, which allows buyers to track details back to a specific module.

"The picker data technology can determine the exact spot in the paddock where the cotton has been grown," says Larry. "Growers can measure what they've done, based on accurate yield and quality information, and implement on-farm practices to keep improving."

When 'It-fits' rang Southern Cotton with the bale number, within minutes Southern Cotton could tell them that the cotton was from Larry Walsh's farm from module 13412252751, which was from Farm 157, Field 3.

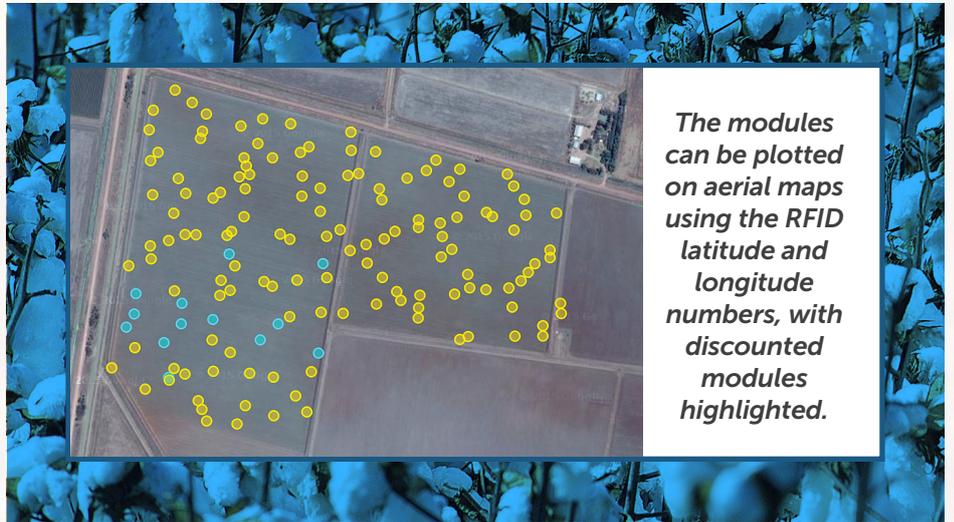
For Larry, who loved seeing his hard work turned into cotton sheets for the first time at the 2016 Australian Cotton Conference in August, he is proud brands are increasing choosing the integrity of pure, 100 per cent Australian cotton.

According to Kate O'Callaghan, general manager, Southern Cotton the other benefits of tracing bales back to the farm are from an agronomy perspective.

"You can look at trends in quality and then overlay your farm management on the results in those areas to make management changes to improve production," she said.



Larry Walsh pictured with his cotton modules and It-fits cotton sheets.



The modules can be plotted on aerial maps using the RFID latitude and longitude numbers, with discounted modules highlighted.



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