

# The Many Faces of Cotton

**C**otton is a miracle of nature...  
It's a fiber, feed and food crop.



**T**he fiber of a thousand faces and almost as many uses, cotton is noted for its versatility, appearance, performance and above all — its natural comfort. From all types of apparel...to sheets and towels... tarpaulins and tents...cotton in today's fast-moving world is still nature's wonder fiber, providing thousands of useful products and supporting millions of jobs as it moves year after year from field to fabric.

About two-thirds of the harvested crop is composed of the seed, which is crushed to separate its three products — oil, meal and hulls.

Cottonseed oil is a common component of many food items, used primarily as a cooking oil, shortening and salad dressing. The oil is used extensively in the preparation of such snack foods as crackers, cookies and chips. The meal and hulls are used as livestock, poultry and fish feed and as fertilizer.

**Here are some of the most frequently asked questions about this miracle fiber. If your question isn't answered here, check out [www.cottoncounts.net](http://www.cottoncounts.net) for a wealth of cotton information.**

### **What state grows the most cotton?**

Texas, which annually grows about 4.5 million bales of cotton, is the leading cotton-producing state.

### **What country grows the most cotton?**

Historically, China is the largest grower. The Chinese produced approximately 20 million bales of cotton in 2000. The U.S. is second, with 17.2 million bales of production in 2000.

### **When is U.S. cotton planted?**

Planting begins as early as Feb. 1 in South Texas and as late as June 1 in northern areas of the Cotton Belt.

### **Where is cotton grown in the U.S.?**

Ninety-eight percent of the cotton is grown in 14 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. The remaining two percent is grown in Kansas, Florida and Virginia.



### **How is cotton harvested?**

Three mechanical systems are used to harvest cotton. Cotton picking machines use rotating spindles to pick (twist) the seed cotton from the burr. Doffers then remove the seed cotton from the spindles and drop the seed cotton into the conveying system. Cotton stripping machines use rollers equipped with bats and brushes to knock the open bolls from the plants into a conveyor. A third kind of harvester uses a broadcast attachment similar to a grain header on a combine.

All harvesting systems use air to elevate the seed cotton into a basket where it is stored until it can be dumped into a boll buggy, trailer or module builder.



### **When is U.S. cotton harvested?**

Harvesting of the crop begins in July in South Texas and extends to late November in more northern climates.

### **How much does a bale of cotton weigh?**

A bale of cotton weighs about 480 pounds.



### **What is a module?**

Once cotton is harvested, it is stored in modules — which hold 13 to 15 bales — for protection against the weather. Modules are stored in the field or on the gin yard until the cotton is ginned.



### **How many cotton farms are there in the U.S.?**

Cotton is produced on about 35,000 farms in the U.S.

### **How many acres of cotton are harvested each year in the U.S.?**

In 2001, about 14 million acres were harvested, producing an estimated 20 million bales.

## What is a boll weevil?

The boll weevil is the primary insect enemy of cotton.



An adult is one-quarter to one-half inch long, appearing tan to dark brown or gray in color, has a hard humpback-shaped shell and the characteristic snout accounting for about one-quarter of its

length. This pest has plagued U.S. cotton producers since 1892. It can complete an entire life cycle in three weeks, lay 200 eggs per female — each in a separate cotton square or boll, ensuring the destruction of each — and spread rapidly, covering 40 to 160 miles per year.

## What is transgenic cotton?

Transgenic cotton is a cotton variety genetically altered by the addition of genetic material (DNA) from another variety. Examples include cotton that is resistant to certain insects or herbicides.

## What percentage of the U.S. cotton crop is planted in transgenic varieties?

In 2001, 69 percent of the U.S. crop was planted in transgenic varieties.

## What percentage of the U.S. cotton crop is exported?

Over the last five years, approximately 31 percent of the U.S. cotton supply was exported.

## How much cotton is used by U.S. textile mills?

Over the last five years, mills consumed an average of 8 to 10 million bales per year.



## How much business revenue does the U.S. cotton crop stimulate?

In the U.S. in 1997 (date of last Census of Agriculture), the cotton industry generated \$40 billion in revenues to various industry segments. Cotton's value at retail is estimated at \$120 billion.



1918 North Parkway • Memphis, TN 38112  
[www.cottoncounts.net](http://www.cottoncounts.net)