

Global Water Usage

As the population continues to soar, worldwide water conservation and management in agriculture has become increasingly important. Agriculture accounts for 73% of global water usage, cotton is only responsible for 3% of that¹.

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Agriculture

Cotton

In fact, **cotton's natural drought tolerance, minimal irrigation needs and ability to thrive in arid climates make it one of the most versatile crops on the planet**. And over the next 10 years, improvements in irrigation technology and new cotton varieties will likely result in further decreases in cotton's water demand.

Make Every Drop Count

Cotton is drought tolerant, requiring little to no extra water other than natural rainfall in most regions of the world^{3,4,5}. When it comes to irrigation water needs in cotton production, in the U.S. it breaks down like this:



Requires no irrigation at all^{4,5}



Receives supplemental irrigation^{4.5}



5%

Fully irrigated4.5

Irrigation, where required, is critical. In some cases, irrigation can provide a 400% increase in overall yield⁶, which makes precise usage crucial. Advanced technologies such as moisture sensors, weather modeling, and low-energy precision application (LEPA) irrigation are helping to acheive water reduction targets.

^{1:} Hoekstra, A. Y. & Chapagain, A. K. (2007). Water footprints of nations: water use by people as a function of their consumption pattern. Water Resource Management, (21)1, 35–48.

^{2:} Mekonnen, M. M., & Hoekstra, A. Y. (2011). The green, blue and grey water footprint of crops and derived crop products. Hydrology and Earth System Sciences, 15(5), 1577–1600. https://doi.org/10.5194/hess-15-1577-2011

^{3:} D.T. Rosenow, J.E. Quisenberry, C. W. Wendt, L. E. Clark. (1983). Drought Tolerant Sorghum and Cotton Germplasm. Agricultural Water Management, 7, 207–222.

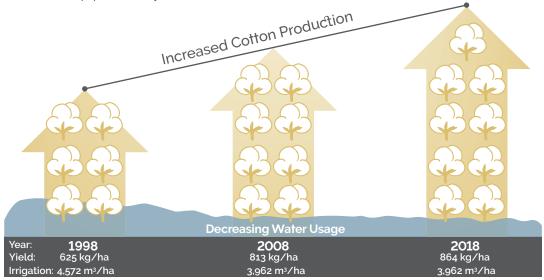
^{4:} United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service. (2019). 2019 Agricultural Statistics, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Ag_Statistics/2019/2019_complete_publication.pdf

^{5:} United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service (2018). 2018 Irrigation and Water Management Survey. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/Farm_and_Ranch_Irrigation_Survey/fris.pdf 6: Jalota, S. K., Sood, A., Vitale, J. D., & Srinivasan, R. (2007). Simulated crop yields response to irrigation water and economic analysis: Increasing

^{6:} Jalota, S. K., Sood, A., Vitale, J. D., & Srinivasan, R. (2007). Simulated crop yields response to irrigation water and economic analysis: Increasing irrigated water use efficiency in the Indian Punjab. Agronomy Journal, 99(4), 1073–1084. https://doi.org/10.2134/agronj2006.0054

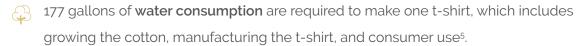
Water Usage Improvement

Compared to 20 years ago, we produce much more cotton per acre of land, with virtually no increase in water usage4. In fact, some areas are using even less water than before. This is thanks to improvements in irrigation technologies and the emergence of insect-resistant varieties that help preserve yield.



Source: Adapted from USDA Farm and Ranch Irrigation Surveys and National Agricultural Statistics Service Data 45

Cotton Water Facts





- The water consumption of cotton is less than 3% of the global average of a person's total water footprint^{5,6,7,8}.
- Nearly all of the water applied to the plant is evaporated and returns to other fields as rainfall. This is part of the earth's natural water cycle⁵.
- Cotton grown by conventional and organic methods can both benefit from soil health building practices (regenerative agriculture, use of cover crops, crop rotations, etc.) to increase soil organic matter and water holding capacity9. All plants require water to grow, therefore it is important to implement best management practices to increase water use efficiency in any agricultural system.
- Cotton is drought tolerant and can grow in a variety of climatic conditions^{3,4,5}, meaning cotton can grow where other crops cannot making it an important source of global food and fiber¹⁰.

For more information about water usage in cotton visit cottontoday.cottoninc.com

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10: Cotton Incorporated. (2017). Power Plant: Fiber and Food from Cotton - Cotton Today. https://cottontoday.cottoninc.com/power-plant-fiber-and-food-from-cotton/

