

NEWS & NOTES

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Fiber Competition

COTTON MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

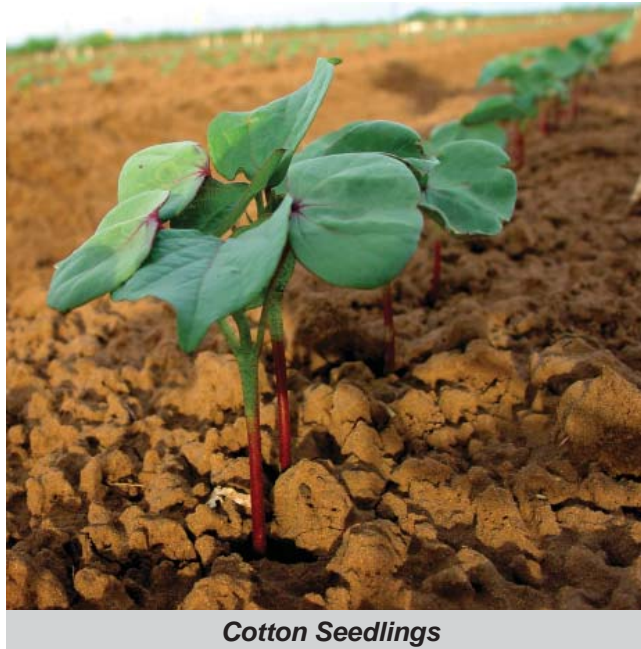
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Spotlight on ... Agricultural Research

What are cotton breeders looking for to help mills, and how are they doing it?

Today's cotton breeders are working hard to improve all high volume instrument (HVI[®]) properties in new cotton varieties, but a special effort is directed at improving fiber length and uniformity. A number of years ago, fiber strength was the primary focus in cotton breeding programs due to the predominance of rotor spinning. However, with dramatic increases in the number of ring spindles in use around the world, fiber length and uniformity have become more important because both significantly affect yarn quality produced using the ring-spinning process. Regardless of the HVI[®] property being improved in the cotton plant, producing new varieties is a costly and time-consuming process.

Researching and developing new cotton varieties involves both genotyping and phenotyping. Genotyping, which is conducted in the laboratory, refers to the process of determining the genetic nucleotide makeup of the cotton variety. Phenotyping, which is conducted in field environments, is the process of collecting "observable characteristics" of the cotton plant. One of the newer tools used in genotyping is the discovery of single nucleotide polymorphism markers (SNPs). If a SNP marker is identified, it can be quantified to determine if it associates with a particular trait of interest.



Cotton Seedlings

Likewise, a second SNP marker may associate with another desirable trait. In a practical breeding program, if a SNP marker is present in individuals with long fiber length, and a second SNP marker associates with improved uniformity, then selection for both markers would increase the odds that a breeder may identify varieties with both superior traits. This process holds the promise of increasing fiber length while simultaneously improving uniformity.

Developing new cotton varieties takes years of hard work and research. Cotton breeders start with hundreds of crosses and thousands of segregating families, conduct multi-year experiments in a range of environments to test tolerance to drought and insects, and eventually commercialize varieties about eight years after the initial testing. Along the way, the use of genotyping and phenotyping plays a crucial role in adding to the body of knowledge that allows commercialization of products that perform well not only in the mills of today, but equally well in the mills of tomorrow. Cotton breeders continue to work on traits such as fiber length and uniformity that benefit mill operations as technology continues to change.

The Future of the EFS[®] System

The Engineered Fiber Selection[®] (EFS) System has continued to be an important part of the cotton industry since its introduction in 1982. As the cotton industry changes and grows, the EFS System will also change to adapt to an export-driven market.

In 1982, Cotton Incorporated introduced MILLNet[™] software, a DOS-based software program designed to help textile mills manage their cotton spinning process. Today, much has changed in the cotton industry, and the EFS System has changed and grown with it. Software programs currently under development at Cotton Incorporated will allow the EFS System to branch out and serve merchants and co-ops in more depth. The most important factor is that the domestic cotton market is becoming more export driven. To better serve the needs of the domestic cotton industry, the EFS System must adapt as well.

The software currently being developed by Cotton Incorporated will streamline the flow of cotton and cotton information. This will allow not only merchants

and co-ops to manage their cotton inventory better, but it will also allow domestic textile mills to interact with merchants and co-ops more efficiently. This does not mean that the EFS System will abandon its mill-based software programs. Mill-based software programs will become more refined and function within a suite of programs designed to be completely integrated. This means that the information flow between merchants, co-ops and mills worldwide will become more efficient and timely.



Attention: Economic Adjustment Assistance Program

It is our understanding that the Economic Adjustment Assistance Program is still in development and will not be in place until possibly October 2008. Once the program is in place, an update for EFS System software will be sent to all EFS System users for reporting the consumption of U.S. Upland cotton within the assistance program.

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