

Australian Cotton Industry Data Platform: FAQs

Section 1: About the data platform

What is the data platform?

It will be a secure, centralised, industry-owned digital platform developed by CRDC to support the Australian cotton industry. It simplifies, automates, and enhances the way data is collected, accessed and shared – giving growers and the supply chain better insights and more time to focus on what matters.

Why is the platform needed?

Right now, cotton data is scattered, duplicated and time-consuming to manage. The platform will simplify and automate data management, reducing duplication and saving time for everyone involved, from growers and consultants to gins, merchants and brands.

The goal is to create a smarter, more connected and future-ready industry through better use of trusted, grower-controlled data.

What will the platform do?

It will serve as a secure data warehouse that automatically brings together the farm data you're already collecting and supply chain data. With your permission, it will enable the use of data for a range of reasons, from compliance, sustainability reporting, benchmarking and market access. You collect data once and use it many times.

Think of the platform as a trusted digital assistant that brings all your farm data together, helps you do more with less effort, and puts you in full control of who sees what. It will be built to make your work easier, not harder, and to future-proof the Australian cotton industry.

Who is building the platform?

CRDC is developing the platform in partnership with the Australian cotton industry, including growers, gins, merchants, consultants, and researchers. Although CRDC is leading the project, the platform will be valuable digital infrastructure for the whole industry. KPMG Australia has been appointed as the delivery partner to design and build the platform.

How is the platform funded?

It is funded through CRDC's core research and development investment, supported by grower R&D levies and the Australian Government. CRDC plan to invest around \$7 million under the Strategic Plan in the data platform and associated tools and services.

Who will govern and manage the platform?

CRDC will lead governance in partnership with an industry advisory group, ensuring transparency, accountability, and alignment with privacy and data standards. The advisory group is comprised of representatives from across the whole Australian cotton industry supply chain, including growers, consultants, ginners, merchants and industry bodies.

Where did the idea come from?

The concept of a digital platform stems from the CRDC-led Australian Cotton Industry Digital Strategy and builds on years of groundwork, including CRDC's leadership of the Accelerating Precision to Decision Agriculture (P2D) project, which highlighted the need for better data automation, system compatibility, and trust in how data is managed. The platform is part of CRDC's Clever Cotton Strategic Plan 2023–2028 and the Strategic Roadmap for Australian Cotton.

When will the platform be available?

The platform is being developed in phases. The final scoping and build phase is currently underway, with beta testing expected for the 2025-26 cotton season. Services will be rolled out progressively, with full functionality targeted for 2028. You can view the timeline and key milestones at www.crdc.com.au/dataplatform.

Will using the platform be mandatory?

No. Participation is completely voluntary. The platform is designed to offer real value to those who choose to use it.

Will I need to install anything?

No. The platform will be accessed through a secure, web-based portal, with no installation required.

Will there be a cost to use the platform?

No. The platform will be free for Australian cotton growers, as it is funded through CRDC's core R&D investment. Your levy contributions are helping build and maintain this industry-owned resource.

Section 2: Benefits

What are the benefits for growers?

- Save time: Automate data collection and sharing and reduce duplication.
- Own your data: Keep full ownership and control of your data.
- Simplify compliance: Streamline reporting and regulatory requirements.
- Support smart decisions: Use insights to improve sustainability and profitability.
- Boost market access: Improve transparency and traceability for brands and consumers.
- Stay future-ready: Adapt easily to changing technology and market needs

What are the benefits for gins, merchants, agronomists, and brands?

The platform will streamline supply chain data flows and consistency, improve transparency, reduce paperwork and enable verified sustainability claims, helping all stakeholders operate more efficiently and effectively.

Why is the cotton industry building this?

It's a foundational piece of infrastructure to modernise and strengthen Australian cotton. It supports both individual grower success and collective industry competitiveness in global markets.

How does Australia compare globally?

Other countries are developing data tools, but only in parts. Australia has a unique opportunity to build a fully integrated, whole-of-industry platform: something few countries can match.

Why now?

Global expectations around traceability and sustainability are evolving rapidly. This platform will help ensure Australian cotton can meet these rising demands through better data use, without placing the burden on individual growers.

Why should I get involved?

The future of selling cotton will include the data that is behind it. This platform will help you manage that data securely and efficiently. It also supports the bigger picture: positioning Australian cotton as a premium, sustainable fibre.

Section 3: How the Platform will work

How will I access the platform?

Through a secure web-based portal.

What kind of data will it handle?

It will manage a wide and growing range of data, including production, management and environmental, data. A full list will be made available as development continues.

Who enters the data?

You won't need to manually enter data. With your permission, the platform will pull data from systems you're already using (e.g., machinery, agronomy software, lab results).

Will it replace my current farm management systems?

No. It will connect with these tools, bringing data together in one place to simplify analysis, reporting, and sharing.

Will the platform include benchmarking or performance insights?

Yes, over time, you'll be able to compare your performance against aggregated, anonymous industry data, and see how your management has changed over time. Participation will always be optional.

Will it require extra work from growers?

No. The goal is to reduce workload by removing duplication and automating data use across the industry.

How exactly will it work?

Think of it as a secure digital warehouse for your data. It collects data from your existing tools and combines it in one place, so you can use it for multiple purposes, with full control over what gets shared and with whom.

What if I don't use digital tools on my farm?

That's okay. The platform is being designed to accommodate growers at different stages of digital adoption. Support will be available to help you get started.

Section 4: Data Ownership, Privacy and Security

Who owns your data?

You do. Data ownership remains with whoever generates or supplies the data, whether that's a grower, consultant, merchant, shipper, spinner or brand.

How will my data be used?

Only with your permission, and only for agreed purposes. You will always stay in control and can change or withdraw your permissions at any time.

Can I choose what data to share?

Yes. You can share some, all, or none of your data. You can also change your mind at any time.

Do I need to give permission for each use of my data?

Yes, as outlined in the Farm Data Code you will be informed of how your data will be used, and asked for permission if that changes.

Will others be able to see my data?

Not unless you allow it. No one can view your identifiable data unless you give explicit permission. Aggregated data may be used (e.g., for industry scale reporting), but individual identities will never be revealed.

Where will the data be stored?

The data will be securely stored in a cloud-based system that complies with all relevant Australian privacy laws.

What about privacy and data breaches?

CRDC is developing the platform in line with strict government data protection standards, including the Privacy Act 1988, and aligning with the NFF Farm Data Code to ensure security and privacy. In the unlikely event of a breach, it will be managed in accordance with national legislation.

What is the NFF Farm Data Code?

The NFF Farm Data Code outlines best practices for data ownership, privacy, and transparency. The platform is built to align with this Code.

What if I decide to stop using the platform?

You can stop sharing your data at any time. Your data will remain securely stored in the system unless you request its removal. No one will be able to access it without your permission.

Section 5: Integration and Compatibility

How do I connect my existing systems to the platform?

In most cases, you'll just need to approve a connection within your existing software. From there, data integration with the platform will be automatic.

How will my data move between systems?

The platform will connect via secure digital interfaces (APIs) with approved third-party software tools. Once you approve access, data will flow automatically with no manual uploads required. This means your existing systems (e.g. machinery, agronomy software) can integrate seamlessly with the platform.

Do I need to do anything technical?

No, the platform is designed for ease of use. Support will also be available.

What about consultants? Can they access or share data?

Yes, with your permission. Consultants often manage farm data, and the platform will support integration with their systems to make this process as smooth as possible.

How do I know my systems are compatible?

CRDC is working with leading agtech providers to ensure the platform is compatible with major systems. As the platform is developed technology and service providers will be integrated over time.

Section 6: Getting Involved

How is the industry involved in the platform development?

The platform is being developed with growers, gins, merchants, researchers, consultants and other industry partners to ensure it is practical and trusted.



Can I give feedback or be involved in testing?

Yes! We strongly encourage growers and other stakeholders to be part of the platform development. Your input is essential to creating a platform that is useful and tailored to industry needs.

Opportunities to get involved will be shared at key points during development, through email updates, industry networks, and the CRDC website. At any point, you can register your interest in being involved by emailing dataplatfom@crdc.com.au

What does it mean to be 'data platform ready'?

It means making sure your data:

- Is being collected digitally (where possible)
- Is accurate and consistent
- Can be exported from your current systems

Doing this now will make it easier to connect when the platform becomes available.

Will someone help me use the platform?

Yes. Training and support will be available as the platform is rolled out, such as how-to guides, demonstrations, and help from CRDC or partners.

Where can I get more information?

Please email dataplatfom@crdc.com.au if you have specific questions about the platform.