

When we think about what the 2022 Australian crop will be like in terms of quality, it would be fair to say that most would be a little concerned. This growing season the crop has endured many variations in weather events - the most obvious being the frequent rain events. What is notable about these frequent rain events is the cloud cover before, during and post rain. Sunshine is vital to the cotton plant's growth to deliver the high-end quality cotton that Australian cotton is well-known for.

The delayed crop this year has meant finishing off the crop in a different temperature window with cooler days. You could say that we've had the perfect storm for a sub-par quality production year.

It is very pleasing to see however, that despite what Mother Nature has thrown at us over the past eight months (and continues to do so), the quality coming through the classing rooms is encouraging. The word resilience springs to mind, and this is certainly what we are seeing at this point of this late season.

We will no doubt see more Middling this year than what is normally produced. Australia will produce the full suite of colour grades in the white group from Good Middling down to Strict Low Middling and everything in between. For the markets that Australia now sells to, having the choice of colour grades will support all Australian bales in finding their way to a mill before our next crop in 2023 comes online.

I mentioned resilience earlier and it is our superior fibre quality that is standing up and leading the way as it normally does year in, year out. It is the parameters of length, strength and micronaire and no matter what colour grade they are associated, with they are standing up.

Australian cotton for some years now has had an average length of 1-3/16" which is two lengths higher than the base length of 1-1/8". Indications even at this early stage suggest Australian cotton will again produce an average length of 1-3/16". In a year like we have had with the growing conditions being less than ideal, the Australian crop will still deliver to the export market consistent and uniform length parameters that are superior to any other Upland growth.

Micronaire is another very important quality characteristic and spinners need to have optimal micronaire specifications for their finished yarn. Of the three main fibre characteristics (length, strength and micronaire), my view is that micronaire it is the most sensitive to growing conditions. It is sensitive to heat, cooler temperatures, soil, water, lack of water and general growing conditions during the life cycle of the plant. Looking back on the growing season we have had, and time in the ground, I am truly amazed by what we have seen so far. Again, remarkable resilience with the season average (YTD) around 4.5-4.6 – noting the premium range within the G5 range (3.5–4.9) is 3.8–4.5.

Strength is a quality characteristic that has somewhat surprisingly stood up well to the growing conditions and weather events that our growing regions have experienced. Strength too can also be a little sensitive like micronaire, however indications at this point in time suggest that the strength of this 2022 crop will give spinners the necessary needs for spinning a fantastic high-quality yarn.

In summary I think it is fair to say that our overall Strict Middling and better colour grades appear to be down in terms of the percentage of the crop but what is there, and what will continue to support the sale of Australian cotton, is our high-end, consistent, and reliable fibre properties. Our export

markets rely on Australian cotton's reputation for producing Upland cotton that is long and strong, and the 2022 crop will certainly not disappoint.

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