

World Water Day March on 22nd, 2019

Cotton: No Thirsty Plant

Bremen, 21 March 2019: There are many reports on the water consumption of cotton that have been in circulation for years but are desperately in need of an update, such as those which say that cotton counts as a thirsty plant. Or even that it takes between 10,000 and 17,000 litres of water to produce one kilogram of the natural fibre. This is not true.

Since here, as in many other articles on the subject, no updates have taken place, false information is being reproduced. It can be found in abundance on the Internet, in newspapers and magazines, on radio and television, as well as on



Cotton Field Brazil

social media. As a nationally and internationally recognised centre of competence, the Bremen Cotton Exchange wants to actively counteract this type of miscommunication with objectively verified data.

The truth is: Cotton is a so-called xerophyte, a plant that is able to grow especially in dry climates. But, just like any other living thing, cotton needs water at certain times in its growth cycle. In particular, to produce good yields.

Recent global research by the scientific department of the Washington-based International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) shows that producing one kilogram of ginned cotton requires on average only 1,214 litres of artificial

irrigation water worldwide. 41.3 percent of the total volume of cotton production does not require artificial irrigation. This relates to the 55 percent of the global cotton growing area which is irrigated exclusively by rain.

The 2011 study by M. M. Mekonnen and A. Y. Hoekstra, 'The Green, Blue and Grey Water Footprint of Crops and Derived Crop Products' from the Twente Water Centre, at the University of Twente in Enschede in the Netherlands shows that compared to other crops, cotton consumes only three percent of the water used in agriculture for artificial irrigation. Wheat, on the other hand, requires 15 percent, rice 13 percent and corn 10 percent.



Cotton Bloom

In recent years, cotton producers in many countries have used modern irrigation systems, which has led to a huge increase in the efficiency of water use. Thus, it is now possible to produce significantly more cotton using less water. In addition, cotton research is working to further improve the properties of cotton in terms of its high drought tolerance.

Countries such as the USA have set themselves the goal of reducing water use in growing cotton by 18 percent within 10 years. The necessary technical developments include, among other things, state of the art, computer-controlled sensor technology. Significant progress has also been made in cotton-producing countries such as Australia and Israel. In addition, there are many cotton growing projects aiming to reduce water consumption regionally.



For questions concerning cotton and water, we will be happy to provide you with competent, objective answers and further information material.

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About the Bremen Cotton Exchange

Based on its experience gained in over 140 years of dialogue with the market, the Bremen Cotton Exchange is regarded as a recognised authority and a strong partner in the industry. Today, this not only applies to the cotton trade, spinners / weavers and service providers for the cotton industry, but also to the downstream textile and clothing industry.

The Cotton Exchange is an international arbitration body. Judgments made by the Arbitration Court of the Cotton Exchange are in accordance with the New York Convention of 1958. They are internationally recognised and therefore quickly enforceable.

As a joint venture with the International Cotton Association Ltd. (Liverpool), we have been running the International Cotton Association Quality and Research Centre Bremen GmbH since 2011. This has made us the international centre for cotton testing and research, quality training and certification. Bremen is home to a state-of-the-art laboratory equipped with the latest equipment.

Every two years, the cotton world gathers in Bremen: Together with its testing laboratory, the Fibre Institute Bremen (FIBRE), the Bremen Cotton Exchange hosts the International Cotton Conference, which has become the world's leading conference in the field of cotton testing. Around 600 guests from all over the world regularly travel to the Hanseatic city to attend the high-ranking sessions at the Bremen City Hall and take the opportunity to make personal business contacts.