



INTERNATIONAL COTTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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From the Secretariat

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**69TH PLENARY MEETING OF THE
INTERNATIONAL COTTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Lubbock, Texas, USA
September 20-25, 2010**

Improving Water Use Efficiency in Cotton

Water is a scarce commodity and requires careful use, which can be achieved through a variety of means. A Round Table discussion held on September 19, 2010, prior to the formal inauguration of the 69th Plenary Meeting, recognized that water use efficiency should be improved by adopting efficient delivery systems, improved management and performance of systems and reduced “non-water” production limitations.

A speaker from the Texas Agri-Life Research Service stated that half of the water supply in Texas comes from surface collection, while the rest is met from underground water. In Texas, 23% of the water used in agriculture is used to grow cotton. Because of the fact that chemical use on cotton increased during 1970 and 1980s, various agencies are continuously monitoring underground water with respect to residues from plant protection chemicals and fertilizers. Results show that thanks to farmers’ vigilance, underground water does not show any signs of increased use of chemicals on crops.

The discussion during the session indicated that no one system of irrigation can be recommended for all countries, mainly because of variations in soil types. Some systems, like sun-surface drip irrigation and sprinkler irrigation, are superior in water use efficiency but they are too expensive to be installed. Biotech varieties that will require less water to mature could further save water use on cotton, but it is uncertain when such varieties will become available for commercial adoption.

Cotton has done very well with respect to water use in recent decades. Farmers are now producing 3-4 times higher quantity of more cotton now with the same quantity of water used 40 years ago.

There was a consensus that farmers should use appropriate irrigation methods, depending upon soil conditions. They should strive to eliminate water run off, and governments must monitor the status of underground water. Water use efficiency is an important issue for agriculture and will also be discussed at the World Cotton Research Conference-5 to be held in India from November 7-11, 2011.