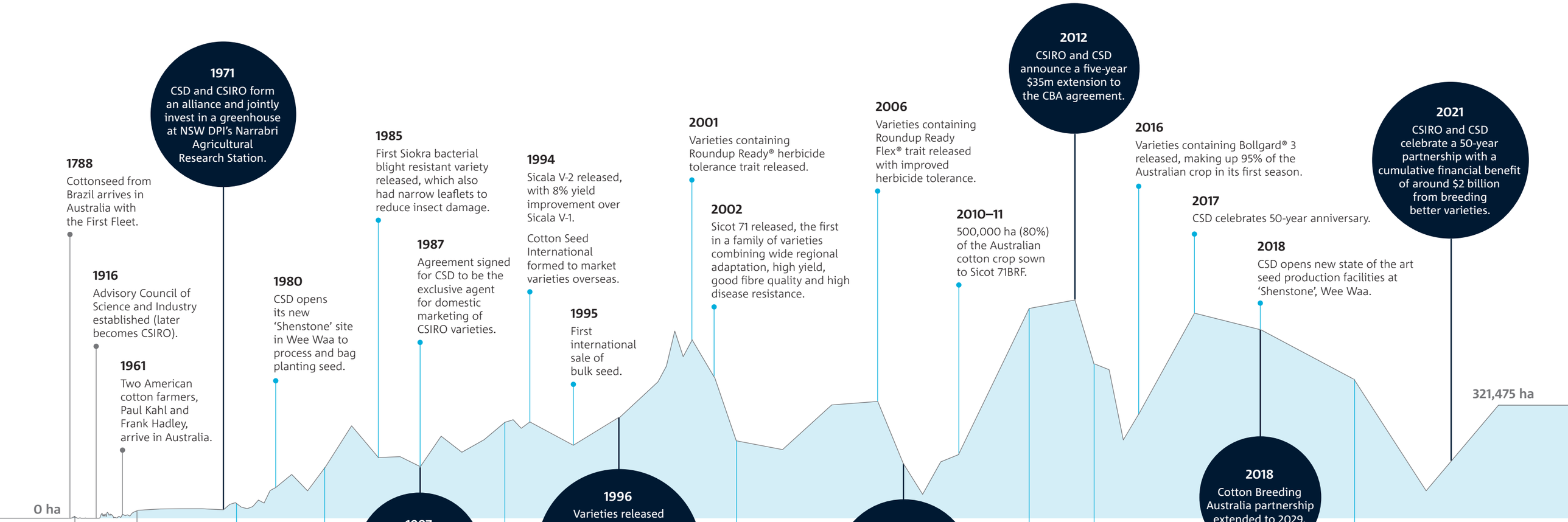
The CSD–CSIRO story: 1971–2021

Hectares of cotton grown in Australia



1788
Cottonseed from Brazil arrives in Australia with the First Fleet.

1830
Three bags of cotton exported to England.

1916
Advisory Council of Science and Industry established (later becomes CSIRO).

1961
Two American cotton farmers, Paul Kahl and Frank Hadley, arrive in Australia.

1967
Cotton Seed Distributors (CSD) formed by a small group of farmers in Wee Waa, NSW with Frank Hadley as inaugural Chair.

1971
CSD and CSIRO form an alliance and jointly invest in a greenhouse at NSW DPI's Narrabri Agricultural Research Station.

1972
CSIRO establishes a Cotton Breeding Unit, relocating scientists from WA, ACT and Griffith, NSW to Narrabri, NSW.

1980
CSD opens its new 'Shenstone' site in Wee Waa to process and bag planting seed.

1983
Sicot 1, 2 and 3 varieties released, better adapted to Australian growing conditions and pests than imported US varieties.

1985
First Siokra bacterial blight resistant variety released, which also had narrow leaflets to reduce insect damage.

1987
Agreement signed for CSD to be the exclusive agent for domestic marketing of CSIRO varieties.

1987
Sicala 3-1 released; the first local variety with significant industry adoption.

1991
Sicala V-1 released, with improved resistance to Verticillium wilt.

1994
Sicala V-2 released, with 8% yield improvement over Sicala V-1.

Cotton Seed International formed to market varieties overseas.

1995
First international sale of bulk seed.

1996
Varieties released containing Ingard® trait. Australia's first GM cotton, with built-in protection against insects. (GM pest resistance would go on to reduce pesticide use by 85%)

2001
Varieties containing Roundup Ready® herbicide tolerance trait released.

2002
Sicot 71 released, the first in a family of varieties combining wide regional adaptation, high yield, good fibre quality and high disease resistance.

2003
Varieties containing Bollgard II® insect resistance trait released.

CSIRO cotton breeding and biotechnology teams awarded CSIRO Chairman's Medal for delivering varieties containing GM traits to the cotton industry.

2006
Varieties containing Roundup Ready Flex® trait released with improved herbicide tolerance.

2007
CSIRO and CSD form Cotton Breeding Australia (CBA) to jointly invest in breeding for the long-term.

2010–11
500,000 ha (80%) of the Australian cotton crop sown to Sicot 71BRF.

2011
CSIRO cotton breeding and biotechnology teams awarded CSIRO Chairman's Medal for outstanding industry impact.

2012
CSIRO and CSD announce a five-year $35m extension to the CBA agreement.

2013
CSIRO analysis shows industry yield improvements of 1 bale/ha/decade.

2016
Varieties containing Bollgard® 3 released, making up 95% of the Australian crop in its first season.

2017
CSD celebrates 50-year anniversary.

2018
CSD opens new state of the art seed production facilities at 'Shenstone', Wee Waa.

2018
Cotton Breeding Australia partnership extended to 2029.

2019–21
CSIRO invests $25 million in upgrading facilities at the Australian Cotton Research Institute, Myall Vale.

2021
CSIRO and CSD celebrate a 50-year partnership with a cumulative financial benefit of around $2 billion from breeding better varieties.

B&M | 21-00176