Editorial

Analysis without numbers is like painting without colours. Numbers spring to life when they tell you a story — if you choose to listen, that is. Otherwise, they are just dumb and lifeless digits. This edition of the ICAC RECORDER is a teaser for the COTTON DATABOOK 2021, which is full of numbers, graphs and figures that are fresh from the pan. I can vouch that for the hungry, they can be delicious. This edition of the RECORDER presents a flavour of the DATABOOK published this month.

The COTTON DATABOOK is our annual flagship publication. The book has 555 pages of data collected from primary sources including government agencies, private companies, scientists, students and farmers, as well as secondary sources such as databases of several UN agencies. Contrary to what many would think, collecting data is not just getting proforma tables filled from primary sources. Many a times, conversion of local units and local currencies into standard units leads to inadvertent mistakes that warrant data verification. It takes a lot of effort to recalculate to ascertain correctness and verify the authenticity of the numbers from the primary sources, peer groups, scientific publications, independent reports and (sometimes) secondary data sources. However accurate one may wish to be, agricultural data has its own limitations. Therefore, I personally consider these numbers as reliable indicators that could reflect the ground situation to the best possible extent and which tell a story when placed in perspective of the big picture.

The ICAC DATABOOK has details on cotton production, fibre and seed processing, and trade of textiles and cotton by-products for 38 major cotton growing countries comprising more than 95% of the global cotton production. Most of the data from each of the 38 countries has been summarised into figures, tables, charts and annexures. This edition of the RECORDER presents some of the main summary tables, figures and trends on area, production, productivity, quantities and costs of inputs (water, fertilisers, pesticides, machinery, manpower, etc.) used, water footprint, different agronomic methods across the world, cost of production, cost of cultivation, value of production, net returns from investment, trade data on fibres, yarn, textiles, linters, cotton seed, cottonseed oil, etc. For detailed information you may please get a copy of the DATABOOK from publications@icac.org.

The ICAC is known for its reliable data. Researchers, students, farmers, government agencies and the cotton industry contact us often for information and data. We at the ICAC are always on the lookout for good reliable information from the most authentic sources across the world so we can provide you the best possible data. Numbers form the core lifeline of science, trade, policies and good governance. Reliable market intelligence helps in formulating the most remunerative trade policies. Reliable numbers can help governments develop policies that help strengthen their environment, economy and social welfare. Data and trends help scientists design better experiments and discuss their results in perspective. Data on agricultural inputs such as water, machinery, manpower, energy and agrochemicals help to assess sustainability and devise ways to improve it. Needless to say, access to authentic data helps design credible policies.

An Indian proverb says, 'It takes a jeweller to recognize a true gem'. Today, information is an endless ocean. The deeper you dive, the more fathomless the water seems — but you will never return empty-handed from the journey. Searching the web has now become an art. The Internet is a goldmine but it has plenty of 'fool's gold' too. You can collect diamonds or end up in collecting pebbles or dust depending on how good your key words are and how smart you are in selecting the right sources. We did our best to find and dig into the most reliable resources and strive to give you the best. I believe that the DATABOOK is a good data source that provides many things to many people. I wish you happy surfing.

-Keshav Kranthi
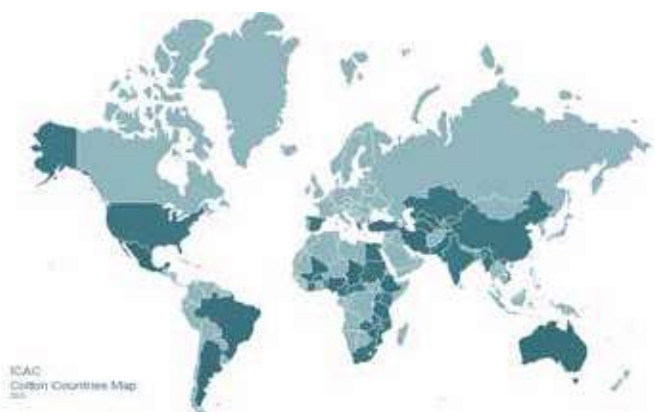
Figures-1a, Cotton growing countries.   Figure 1b, Cotton growing regions