



We had the opportunity to catch up with **Emily Wyonzek** with **The Cotton Board** to hear about what she does and what she enjoys most about her job.

1. What is your job title?

I'm the Director of Operations for The Cotton Board.

2. Please provide a short description about what you do.

I started working for The Cotton Board as an Executive Admin in 2008. I've continued to learn about the cotton industry and have taken on a lot of different responsibilities in my organization. Currently, I manage the day-to-day office activities, which over the past 19 months has meant I've spent a lot of time responding to local COVID directives and ensuring our staff is safe.

I also direct and coordinate all our HR activities, including hiring, training, benefits management, our Team Cotton Wellness program, and payroll. In addition, I'm the point staff person for our Cotton Board Officers and Executive Committee.

Maybe the most exciting part of my job is managing our Regional Communications team. This team is responsible for communicating to cotton growers the Cotton Research & Promotion Program does on their behalf. This part of my job allows me to travel across the cotton belt to

see growers on their farms, ginners hard at work in their cotton gins, and other industry partners working around the country.

3. *What is your educational background?*

I have a BA in English Literature from the Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, AR and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Memphis here in Memphis, TN.

4. *What is your favorite part about the job?*

I really love working with people and solving problems. In my role, I'm consistently challenged to support our staff and make sure that policy decisions we make are fair for both The Cotton Board and the employees. I also really love getting to meet such a wide range of diverse growers and importers in my role. On The Cotton Board, we not only have cotton producers as board members, but we also have members who import cotton products into the U.S. That gives us a chance to not only meet growers from California to Virginia, but also importers who work for companies like Wal-Mart, Target, Ralph Lauren, Gap Inc., and Levi's. I've learned so much from this amazing group of people with such diverse backgrounds, it's been life changing.

5. *What are the challenges of the job?*

We have a very small staff, there are only 16 of us when we're fully staffed. That means that we all have to wear a lot of hats and sometimes it can be hard to pivot from different tasks and responsibilities to ensure that all of my responsibilities, my team's responsibilities, and our commitments to the industry are completed in a professional and timely manner.

6. *Any cool experiences or stories you can share?*

I've gotten to do so many cool things in this job. I'll list just a few of them:

- I've visited cotton farms and gins in California, (I haven't made it to any farms in Arizona yet- just waiting for an invitation!), Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida.
- I've gotten to tour the headquarters of Wal-Mart in Bentonville, AR, Levi's and Gap Inc. in San Francisco, CA, and Anne Taylor in New York, NY.
- I've gotten to tour the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, the USDA Cotton Classing Office in Memphis, TN, Frontier Yarns and Gildan Spinning Mills in North Carolina.
- I got to visit the Louisiana State Prison in Angola and see their row crop and vegetable operations at work.
- As the HR Manager of the Cotton Board, I had the great task and wonderful privilege to start our staff wellness program called Team Cotton. This program helps us focus on the physical, mental, and emotional health of our staff. We have a team that races at the St.

Jude Memphis Marathon each year. 2021 is our 10th year to participate in the race and in those 10 years, we've raised over \$50,000 for the kids of St. Jude. I even got to bring Team Cotton to Arizona in 2018. We had about 30 amazing Team Cotton runners running in the Mesa/Phoenix marathon, half marathon, 10k, and 5k.

- I've also worked with our IT Director, Lexie Jones to create and develop a client management application that allows us to strategically plan how our regional team will best work within their territories each year. We call our app Cotton Reporting and Operational Planning (CROP) Hub. Our regional teams can view each farm and gin in the country, see when they were last visited, upload new contacts, and make field notes. The calendar in CROP Hub integrates with our Outlook calendars so it makes planning for the whole cotton belt a breeze. Our app is also how cotton gins and merchants pay their assessment dollars to The Cotton Board, so we have rich records and contact information for all the growers of Upland cotton in the U.S.
- One amazing experience was when I was featured in one of our ad campaigns, Forever Cotton: The Runner. The ad featured me as a (very slow) runner, and I got to talk about the benefits of cotton performance athletic wear. You may not know, but athletic apparel, like your baseball or soccer uniform, is often made of polyester or other synthetic fibers. It was great to get to talk about the benefits of running in cotton and other natural fibers. It was so fun, although we filmed the video over three days in November and it was 28 degrees outside. I don't know that I've ever been so cold. I loved it most because they came to my home and even captured my sweet dog, Olive in the commercial. You can watch it [here](#).

Who is The Cotton Board?

THE COTTON RESEARCH AND PROMOTION PROGRAM

The Cotton Research and Promotion Program's ongoing goal is to develop, fund and implement a coordinated plan of research and promotion designed to strengthen upland cotton's competitive position and to maintain and expand domestic and foreign markets and uses for cotton.

At the farm level, the Cotton Research and Promotion Program is dedicated to agricultural research aimed at helping upland cotton producers increase yields and improve profitability. At the fiber level, the Cotton Research & Promotion Program is working to increase the demand for cotton and cotton products worldwide.

Within the past 20 years, cotton's domestic consumption has more than doubled, leading to increased opportunities for producers and importers in the cotton industry. This increase can be attributed in part to the Cotton Research & Promotion Program, and more importantly America's cotton producers and importers, that fund the Program.

WHO WE ARE

Based in Memphis, Tennessee, The Cotton Board is the oversight and administrative arm of the Cotton Research & Promotion Program, representing U.S. Upland cotton. The Cotton Board is responsible for providing the Program with strategic leadership and oversight of the economic resources devoted to the Program.

To fund the Program, The Cotton Board collects a per bale assessment on all Upland cotton harvested and ginned in the U.S., as well as an importer assessment on the cotton content of all Upland cotton products imported into the U.S. The Cotton Board contracts with Cotton Incorporated to carry out the actual research and promotion activities for U.S. producers and importers of cotton.

While Cotton Incorporated is consumer and trade focused, it is a charged function of The Cotton Board's mission to keep U.S. producers and importers of cotton informed on the innovative developments stemming from the Cotton Research & Promotion Program.

ABOUT COTTON INCORPORATED

Mission Statement: "To increase the demand for and profitability of cotton through research and promotion."

Cotton Incorporated is the research and marketing company for U.S. Upland cotton, as administered by the Cotton Board. Cotton Incorporated's World Headquarters and Research Center is located in Cary, North Carolina and its Consumer Marketing Headquarters is located in New York, New York. Supporting offices are located around the globe in Mexico City, Osaka, Shanghai and Hong Kong.