



BCI

Better
Cotton
Initiative



Section 2/F Tools

www.bettercotton.org

Orientation

This section provides information on how the BCI will facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practices amongst a range of audiences including members of the BCI Association, implementing partners or the general public.

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Introduction

In order for BCI to deliver on the majority of its goals, the Better Cotton System needs to be supported by the sharing of knowledge and best practices across the supply chain and across countries. Existing and new knowledge about how to work with cotton farmers, the cotton supply chain, and the Better Cotton System needs to be accessible and understandable to encourage involvement in the BCI and uptake of Better Cotton. To facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practices, the BCI will provide members, Implementing Partners and the general public with a number of tools at both the national and global level. Additional tools and information will be provided to members and Implementing Partners.

National Level

National Stakeholder Council

To help stimulate discussion on more sustainable cotton production and the sharing of knowledge at a national level, the BCI establishes a National Stakeholder Council (NSC) in each country wishing to grow Better Cotton. The NSC is the national level BCI forum that brings together people with an interest in the cotton supply chain who support the BCI's mission (ranging from producer organisations, researchers, NGOs, government officials, and international institutions, to ginners). In this form people can learn, exchange information and views, review the results from growing Better Cotton and disseminate best practices. The NSC has a supportive, monitoring and advisory role to play on each component of the Better Cotton System. In particular, they focus on the exchange of best practices and knowledge to encourage the scaling up of collective action. In the start-up implementation phase (2010-2012), the BCI Regional Coordinator facilitates and coordinates the NSC. Meetings will initially be held on an annual basis, with the need for more frequent meetings, or subgroup workshops, to be determined.

National Guidance Material

The purpose of the development of National Guidance Material (NGM) is to give advice, information and clarity on how to best achieve the Production Principles and Criteria in national contexts, i.e. what are the practical options available to farmers to meet the BCI criteria, and what strategies are used to enable farmers to take up these practical options. The NGM should therefore include information such as:

- Management practices available to farmers (validated through field testing)
- Training modules, manuals (for trainers and/or farmers) on different BCI criteria developed by implementing partners and other actors.
- Strategies for working with and supporting cotton farmers (BCI Enabling Mechanisms). These include the best and cost-effective methodologies for training farmers, guidelines on how to support farmer organisation, how to improve access to finance, etc.

The inclusion of this information in National Guidance Material is critical for BCI as the initiative has developed a globally applicable definition of Better Cotton that takes into account local conditions and circumstances. The level of local specificity and details necessary on how farmers can address the BCI Productions Principles and Criteria is high. This level of detail must be developed by BCI Implementing Partners who are working with farmers. Implementing Partners are better placed (with regard to location, culture, language, experience) than BCI to do this. BCI's role is to provide advice and support to Implementing Partners as requested or needed in the development of NGM, and to facilitate the development of appropriate cross national information.

While extensive materials already exist (developed by various organisations on better management practices / good agricultural practices) for cotton in different countries, such information is not always readily available and all too often 'lost on shelves' once the project ends. This means that subsequent projects re-invent and re-develop information. To help ensure that



such information is not lost during the implementation of the Better Cotton System, one of the requirements for BCI Implementing Partners is to share the information developed or obtained in the field. BCI then acts as the collector and sharer of this information with other Implementing Partners.

Dissemination workshops on lessons learnt and NGM development will be organised by the BCI Secretariat as appropriate in the different focus regions. Providing access to tested management practices and tools for working with cotton farmers will be crucial, both to avoid duplication of efforts and to maximise opportunities for collaboration with other organisations to encourage the uptake of Better Cotton at national level.

Global Level

Step by step Guide for Implementation

At global level, the BCI Secretariat provides Implementing Partners with a Step-by- Step Guide for the implementation of the Better Cotton System. This guide includes many tools, specific guidelines and editable templates to orient and support Implementing Partners to work with farmers and local partners to grow, assess and market Better Cotton. The Step-by-Step Guide includes information in the following areas:

- Defining role and responsibilities
 - Before Implementation – what to do?
 - How to develop National Guidance Material (NGM)
 - How to establish the farmer to ginner purchasing relationship to enable the production of segregated Better Cotton bales
 - How to do farm assessment for both individual large farms and groups of smallholders providing Self Assessment Forms and instructions, and BCI Benchmarks.
 - How to manage data, including how to collect farm level results indicators, reporting formats and timelines for data flow.
- BCI activity and progress reports
 - National Guidance material developed by Implementing Partners
 - Experience and lessons learned from the field
 - Advocacy tool kit for external communication
 - Discussion forums
 - BCI Business cases to communicate to stakeholders
 - Regular progress updates
 - Success stories and farm level results
 - Overview of farm level support activity

The BCI will provide workshops for Implementing Partners before implementation to help them get a sense of the Step-by-Step Guide and prepare them before they start. Further learning focussed workshops will also be organised.

Knowledge exchange Platform

The BCI has a 2012 goal to establish a knowledge exchange platform on growing cotton more sustainably that is increasingly used over time. The BCI has an opportunity to add value to the cotton sector by gathering the existing information on more sustainable cotton production and making it available to a large audience through its website or another appropriate platform. Therefore, where resources permit, the BCI will maintain a publicly accessible on-line library about growing cotton more sustainably and provide structured information to support the implementation of more sustainable cotton farming practices. This library will be structured according to both the BCI Production Principles and Criteria and to different regions. It will include general documents to download (such as publicly available academic articles, reports, publications, tools, etc.) as well as links to relevant websites and organisations.

In parallel to this publicly accessible on-line library, BCI has an on-line membership portal to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practices between members, and Implementing Partners. This portal includes the following:



Collaborating with other initiatives

Collaborating with existing and complementary initiatives such as Cotton Made in Africa, Organic Exchange and the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation is essential to support mutual learning. These organisations, while taking different approaches, are working towards the common goal to shift an increasing share of conventionally produced cotton to an environmentally and socially more sustainable production.

Global partnerships

Beyond the specific tools, BCI will develop global partnerships to support the workings of Better Cotton System worldwide. This support will directly benefit members and Implementing Partners. BCI seeks to secure global funding partnerships for farmer support; partnerships with financial institutions to incentivise supply chain actors to get involved in Better Cotton; partnerships between producer organisations across continents; and partnerships with public sector organisations to institutionalise Better Cotton.

The global nature of BCI's membership and remit, with the involvement of actors across the supply chain and beyond, offers good potential for broad partnerships and collective efforts.

Doing research

In 2008, BCI commissioned research to help identify existing best practices at a global level that could address the BCI Production Principles and Enabling Mechanisms. As a result, three global reports are available on the BCI website:

- A report on Better Management Practices in cotton production in Brazil, India, Pakistan, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali Senegal & Togo (April 2009)
- A review of global activities to promote Decent Work in agriculture (April 2009)
- A review of global activities to promote access to finance in smallholder agriculture (April 2009)

In addition, a number of desk-based studies were conducted in each of the BCI focus regions (available to members and partners):

- 4 x Promotion Practices Review on Decent Work for India, Pakistan, Brazil and West and Central Africa. These reports outline stakeholders and activities to promote Decent Work in cotton cultivation and other agriculture sectors
- 4 x Promotion Practices Review on Access to Finance for India, Pakistan, Brazil and West and Central Africa. These reports outline government, private sector and development assistance interventions to promote access to responsible finance for smallholder cotton farmers

The BCI intends to identify and fill any further gaps in research (as resources permit) in relation to the BCI Production Principles and Criteria, and BCI Enabling Mechanisms, and share this research with its members and partners.