



Better
Cotton
Initiative



About BCI

www.bettercotton.org

The Better Cotton Initiative exists to make global cotton production better for the people who produce it, better for the environment it grows in and better for the sector's future.

Orientation

The following document explains the background context for BCI, BCI's objectives and goals, strategic approaches, and strategic plan to the end of 2012.

Contents

Context - Why BCI exists	2
Membership	2
Mission and Objectives	3
Strategic Approach	3
Strategic Plan to 2012	4
BCI in Summary	5



CONTEXT – WHY BCI EXISTS

Cotton is one of the most important and widely grown crops in the world. It is estimated that nearly 35 million hectares are under cotton cultivation, representing about 2.5% of the world's arable land. About 80 countries produce cotton on a commercial scale. Among the leading cotton producing countries are Brazil, China, India, Pakistan, US, Uzbekistan and the region of West & Central Africa. More than 90 % of cotton farmers live in developing countries on farms of less than 2 hectares. Nearly everywhere it is grown cotton represents an important cash crop for farmers and an economically valuable part of the total national economy. The International Cotton Advisory Committee estimates that there are about 300 million people who work in the wider cotton industry each year. For millions of people, in some of the world's poorest countries, cotton is a vital and unique link to the global economy.

There are various negative social and environmental impacts associated with cotton cultivation worldwide that undermine its sustainability. Attention is needed at the farm level where serious impacts on people and the environment can occur. Inefficient irrigation techniques, poor cultivation practices, improper use of pesticides and fertilizers threaten the availability of clean water, soil fertility, human health and biodiversity. As well as the health and safety impacts related to pesticide use, socio-economic impacts have been reported to include arduous working conditions (particularly for women workers), child labour and forms of forced or bonded labour, as well as indebtedness due to high input prices, crop failure, delayed payment and/or unaffordable rates of interest.

Achieving improvements in the social and environmental conditions of cotton production is essential for human and environmental health, the livelihood of millions of people world-wide, and the future of the commodity. The negative effects of using agricultural soils and water resources for cotton production need to be significantly reduced, and production methods need to respect the principles of long-term economic, environmental and social sustainability. From a social point of view, farmers and workers need to be able to earn their living from growing cotton, without having to take unacceptable risks.

Millennium Development Goals and Climate Change

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main development challenges. The BCI through its activities expects to contribute significantly to the MDG goals on poverty (MDG1), education (MDG2), gender equality (MDG 3), maternal health (MDG 5), environmental sustainability (MDG 7) and global partnership for development (MDG 8). For example, compliance with international core labour standards is a major element in poverty reduction (MDG 1), and viable economic development is inconceivable without eradicating forced and exploitative child labour (MDG 2).

Climate change is already affecting agriculture across the world as a result of changes in temperature, precipitation, and extreme events. These changes will affect those farmers that are least resilient the hardest. These farmers are likely to be the poorest, most marginalised farmers in water stressed regions. Better Cotton production has a twofold role to play: to help cotton farmers to improve their resilience to climate change, and to help mitigate greenhouse gas release through agronomic practices. Improving resilience means that farmers and communities are better placed to adapt to change while the promotion of conservation tillage and other practices that sequester carbon or prevent the release of greenhouse gases can lead to reduced greenhouse gas emissions.



BCI membership

The BCI operates as a not-for-profit membership association and is open to any organisation involved in, or with an interest in, the cotton supply chain, and that supports the BCI's mission. This includes producer organisations, suppliers and manufacturers, retailers and brands, and civil society. Participation from all sections of the supply chain in the BCI is essential to ensure that the Better Cotton produced by farmers is linked to the market and that growing demand for Better Cotton can be met.



BCI'S MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

'The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) exists to make global cotton production better for the people who produce it, better for the environment it grows in and better for the sector's future.'

The BCI has identified the following long-term objectives:

1. To demonstrate the inherent benefits of Better Cotton production, particularly the financial profitability for farmers
2. To reduce the impact of water and pesticide use on human and environmental health
3. To improve soil health and biodiversity
4. To promote Decent Work for farming communities and cotton farm workers
5. To facilitate global knowledge exchange on more sustainable cotton production
6. To increase the traceability along the cotton supply chain

Strategic Approach

The BCI's approach is to develop a market for a mainstream commodity - Better Cotton - which will focus on reducing globally significant environmental, social and economic impacts to bring long-term benefits for farmers, farm workers, cotton farming communities and the environment. This involves enabling farmers to grow and sell Better Cotton through minimising the harmful impact of crop protection practices, using water efficiently, caring for the health of the soil, conserving natural habitats, caring for and preserving the quality of the fibre, promoting Decent Work, and to participate more effectively in the supply chain to meet growing demand for Better Cotton. Adoption of better farm management practices to grow Better Cotton — supported by activities that build effective producer organisations, improve access to finance and provide training — should also lead to improved productivity and an improved financial situation for farmers and cotton farm workers.

In particular, the BCI has adopted the following strategies for its approach to developing a market for a mainstream commodity.

Global and mainstream: To ensure that the BCI has the greatest possible impact on a global scale, it focuses on ensuring that Better Cotton can be grown by as many farmers as possible, no matter where they are.

Inclusive and participatory: To generate widespread support and involvement in growing Better Cotton, the BCI welcomes collaboration with organisations with an interest in the cotton supply chain and who support the BCI's mission. Collaborating with complementary initiatives in a united effort to promote more sustainable cotton production is considered critical to bring about change on a global scale. Ensuring voluntary participation from civil society, producers, industry, and government helps to build and institutionalise an approach to growing Better Cotton that includes the perspective of these interested groups, and that is therefore more robust. The BCI respects diversity and difference in its approach.

Enabling farmers: To ensure that farmers receive the support that they need to grow Better Cotton, the BCI focuses on building the capacity of farmers and cotton farm workers. The BCI also concentrates on increasing farm profitability through improved productivity and fibre quality, rather than on paying a fixed premium.

Long-term development: The BCI recognises the long time scales required to engender widespread change amongst a large and diverse group of stakeholders. It therefore adopts an approach based on encouraging continuous improvement in the cotton supply chain.

Demonstrating real change: The BCI is committed to measuring and communicating the effects of growing Better Cotton on people and the environment, so that all interested parties can learn from the results.

Good governance: The BCI is committed to good practices and transparency in the management of natural, human, and financial resources, and respects national and applicable law.



STRATEGIC PLAN

Goals to 2012

Over the next 3 years, in the start up phase of implementing the Better Cotton System, the BCI will work towards realising the following ten goals by the end of 2012.

1. 15% of global cotton production is represented by the demand of BCI Brand/Retailer members
2. 1.3% of global cotton production (300,000 MT of cotton lint) is produced as Better Cotton in Brazil, India, Pakistan, and West & Central Africa
3. 50% of Better Cotton produced is used by BCI Brand/Retailer members
4. The Better Cotton System is developed in China and Central Asia
5. Publicly available information is accessible allowing any country to grow Better Cotton
6. Globally 100,000 farmers are producing Better Cotton
7. Enhanced financial profitability for farmers producing Better Cotton is demonstrated
8. The analysis of data from farm assessment shows positive results
9. BCI has a knowledge exchange platform on growing cotton more sustainably that is increasingly used over time
10. At least 60% of the association's operating costs are covered by membership fees

Programme activity

In order to meet these 2012 goals and long-term objectives, BCI coordinates and promotes the Better Cotton System. The core components of the Better Cotton System comprise:

- **Production Principles and Criteria** to provide a global definition of Better Cotton
- **Farmer Support** to promote enabling mechanisms at a local and global level, working with experienced implementing partners, and stimulating public-private partnership funds to implement these mechanisms

- **Farm Assessment** to encourage farmers to continuously improve, through measuring results and seasonal learning cycles
- **Supply Chain** connecting supply with demand through an identifiable bale of 100% Better Cotton lint
- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning** mechanisms to measure progress and change and to ensure the Better Cotton System has the intended impacts on its direct beneficiaries
- **Tools**, guidelines and learning forums to facilitate the exchange of best practices and knowledge to encourage the scaling up of collective action

Further information about the Better Cotton System can be found in [Overview of the Better Cotton System](#).

Geographical focus

During this start-up implementation phase, the BCI focus is on four regions: Brazil, India, Pakistan and West & Central Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Senegal, Togo).

These regions include a diversity of climatic conditions, farm sizes, agricultural practices and environmental and social impacts.

BCI will also provide access to materials, tools and guidelines that will enable any country to grow Better Cotton.

Building on robust farm level and supply chain data, and strong monitoring, evaluation and learning mechanisms, the entire Better Cotton System will be externally reviewed at the end of 2012 to evaluate whether it has delivered the desired results and impacts. The BCI wants to learn from 3 years of implementation to be able to make any necessary adjustments to improve both the Better Cotton System, and the way the initiative works.



Better Cotton Initiative - Summary

“The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) exists to make global cotton production better for the people who produce it, better for the environment it grows in and better for the sector’s future”.

Economic Impact

Environmental Impact

Social Impact

Long-term Objectives

Economic

- To demonstrate the inherent benefits of Better Cotton production, particularly the financial profitability for farmers

Environmental

- To reduce the impact of water and pesticide use on human and environmental health
- To improve soil health and biodiversity

Social

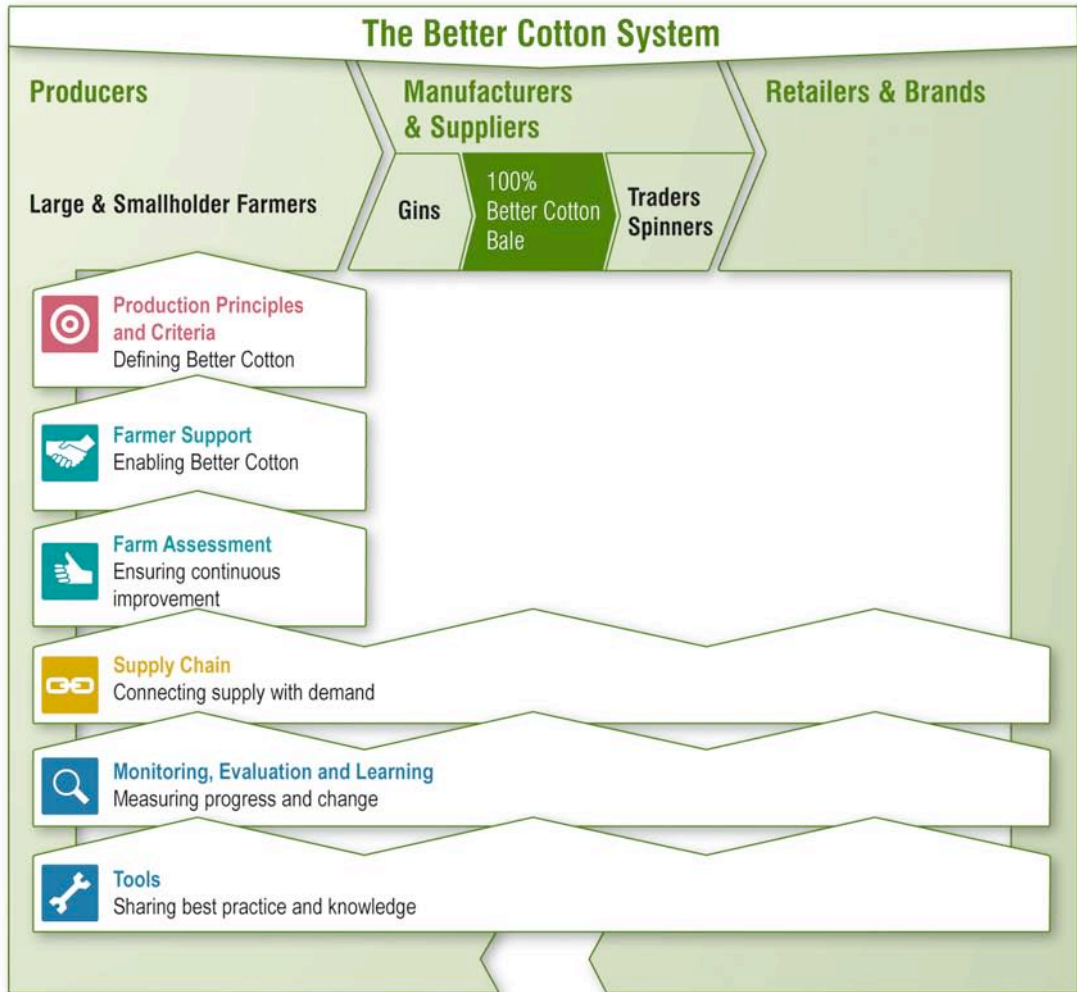
- To promote Decent Work for farming communities and cotton farm workers

- To facilitate global knowledge exchange on more sustainable cotton production

- To increase the traceability along the cotton supply chain

Goals 2012 - at a minimum

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| <p>1. 15% of global cotton production is represented by the demand of BCI Brand/Retailer members</p> | <p>3. 50% of Better Cotton produced is used by BCI Brand/Retailer members</p> | <p>5. Publicly available information is accessible allowing any country to grow Better Cotton</p> | <p>7. Enhanced financial profitability for farmers producing Better Cotton is demonstrated</p> | <p>9. BCI has a knowledge exchange platform on growing cotton more sustainably that is increasingly used over time</p> |
| <p>2. 1.3% of global cotton production (300,000 MT of cotton lint) is produced as Better Cotton in Brazil, India, Pakistan, and West & Central Africa</p> | <p>4. The Better Cotton System is developed in China and Central Asia</p> | <p>6. Globally 100,000 farmers are producing Better Cotton</p> | <p>8. The analysis of data from farm assessment shows positive results</p> | <p>10. At least 60% of the association's operating costs are covered by membership fees</p> |



Results Indicators

FARM-LEVEL INDICATORS		
Economic	Environmental	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total cotton production area (ha) Total cotton production (kg) Profitability of cotton production (net income/ha/yr) Quality of fibre incl. contamination (classification) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pesticide use and type (kg or litre/ha/yr per pesticide) Water use for irrigation (m3/season) Fertiliser use and type (kg/ha/yr per fertiliser type) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of health and safety precautions Working conditions Child labour Forced labour
OTHER RESULTS INDICATORS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total cotton usage of BCI brand/retailer members Total Better Cotton usage of BCI brand/retailer members Total global Better Cotton production (MT cotton lint) Countries of Better Cotton production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of publicly accessible information Number of BCI Farmers Number of users accessing knowledge exchange platform Total income from membership fees 	