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# Better Cotton Initiative Communications Rules

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## Orientation

The following document aims to clarify key rules relating to how members can publicly communicate about their membership of BCI, the support they provide to farmers, and their use of Better Cotton in their supply chain.

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## 1. Introduction

All members of the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) are expected to apply principles of participation, of which number 5 applies to Communications. That is:

*5.1 Members shall comply with BCI's Communication Rules covering how their participation in BCI may be described publicly.*

The following document aims to clarify key rules relating to how members can publicly communicate about their membership of BCI, the support they provide to farmers, and their use of Better Cotton in their supply chain.

All BCI members have a collective responsibility to ensure that all communication relating to their organisation's involvement with BCI is accurate, evidence based and in line with these Communications Rules.

The credibility and integrity of BCI and members' work is dependant on these being consistently and rigorously applied.

Organisations that are not a member of the BCI are not licensed to use the BCI logo or the Better Cotton word mark.

## 2. Scope and Application of Communications Rules

The BCI Communications Rules cover the following:

Member Activity	Communications Rules	Explanation
<b>1. BCI Member</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Criteria for referencing participation in BCI</li> <li>- Communicating participation in BCI and use of BCI logo</li> </ul>	- Rules relating to how members describe their participation in BCI and apply the BCI logo
<b>2. BCI Member who provides financial / indirect support for activities to assist farmers and farming communities</b>	- Criteria and guidelines for referencing Better Cotton and use of Better Cotton word mark	- Rules relating to how members describe their financial / indirect support for activities to assist farmers and farming communities, and apply the Better Cotton word mark.
<b>3. BCI Member who provides financial / indirect support for activities to assist farmers and farming communities and <u>procures</u> and uses Better Cotton in their supply chain</b>	- Additional criteria and guidelines for referencing Better Cotton and use of Better Cotton word mark in relation to procurement and use of Better Cotton	- Rules relating to how members, who procure and use Better Cotton in their supply chain, describe their support for Better Cotton, and apply the Better Cotton word mark – especially in relation to claims made at point of sale.
<b>All Members</b>	External disclosure and media management	Rules on external disclosure and media management
	Exchange and use of logos and web links	Rules associated with exchange of logos and web links
	Verification and sharing good practice	Rules relating to the verification of member communications materials

<b>Appendix</b>	Guidance on Terminology	Guidance on terminology to use and not use to describe BCI and key points of clarification
	Summary of suggested text to use	Suggested text for members to use when describing BCI membership and support for Better Cotton
	Advice on environmental claims in marketing and sales communication	- Useful sources of advice about making environmental claims in marketing and sales communication

Although it is possible for members to participate in the BCI in a range of different ways and at different stages through the Better Cotton System, the following rules are universally applicable to all members of BCI. It is recognised, given the diversity of BCI’s membership, that the application of and adherence to certain rules will be more relevant to some organisations than others.

The Communications Rules also apply to all BCI partners (implementing partners, public partners, or otherwise), who have signed an agreement with the BCI. They will constitute a key element of such Agreement.

Additional Communications Rules will need to be agreed and applied by members/partners in circumstances where BCI and an organisation are exploring the potential of redefining or extending the scope of their participation in the Better Cotton Initiative. For example, this would apply when an organisation wishes to start developing the Better Cotton System in a country outside the BCI current focus regions.

### 3. Core Communications Rules

#### Summary – Use of BCI logo and Better Cotton word mark

Areas of Participation	Tool Use	On-product level (Brand / Label / Label tie or Hang tag)	Point-of-Sale Literature (Customer literature / Display banners / Catalogue, Online)	Corporate Level (i.e. website, CSR report, company presentations, press release)
<b>Member</b>	BCI Logo	x	x	✓
	Better Cotton word mark	x	x	X
<b>Member +</b> <b>Financial / Indirect* support for farmers and farming communities</b>	BCI Logo	x**	✓	✓
	Better Cotton word mark	x**	✓***	✓
<b>Member +</b> <b>Financial / Indirect* support for farmers and farming communities + track &amp; trace</b>	BCI Logo	x**	✓	✓
	Better Cotton word mark	x**	✓****	✓

**Important exceptions to note:**

\* In the case of retailers, this must be a financial contribution as per membership obligations for retailers and brands

\*\* On product communication about support for BCI and Better Cotton, for example in support of a specific investment or campaign, will be considered on a case by case basis. All requests need to be submitted to the BCI Council for approval and decisions will be made taking in to consideration the scope and scale of the proposed communication activity and the level of investment made by the organisation in supporting BCI and farmers.

\*\*\* Note that where financial support is provided to farmers by an organisation, reference can be made to supporting farmers to grow Better Cotton in point of sale and other customer literature, providing the level of support is explained and qualified.

\*\*\*\* Note that in the case where Better Cotton is procured, used and track & traced in to a member's supply chain, reference can be made to the inclusion of Better Cotton in an identified product, or product range in point of sale and other customer literature.

## Key rules that must be applied:

Members must adhere to the following key guidelines when referencing BCI and Better Cotton, and applying the BCI logo and Better Cotton word mark:

1. The term Better Cotton and the Better Cotton word mark do not constitute and **should not** be presented as a certification scheme.
2. Better Cotton should not be used as a generic term to describe more sustainable cotton. The term “Better Cotton” **can only** be used to describe production of cotton where BCI’s Production Criteria have been applied and assessed in accordance with the BCI Farm Assessment mechanisms.
3. Any statements relating to the results/impact of farmer support activities **need to be** clearly evidenced and supported by verifiable data. A key requirement for BCI members is that they distinguish clearly between the programme activities they undertake and the outcomes and impacts that result. Members should not imply in communications that positive impact has been created as a result of their activities unless supported by verifiable evidence. The UK Advertising Standards Authority stresses that organisations must hold documentary evidence to prove all claims, whether direct or implied. Please refer to the Appendix for further information.
4. Communications **should not be** misleading and **must always be** in context.
5. Any statements relating to the procurement of Better Cotton **need to be** clearly accompanied by an explanation, qualification and evidence. When describing Better Cotton in relation to a product or product range in sales literature and customer communication, **at no time must it be** suggested that the whole product comprises Better Cotton.
6. Members should avoid using absolute statements (such as ‘Better Cotton improves farmer livelihoods’ or ‘Better Cotton improves our environment’) when describing BCI and the meaning of Better Cotton to ensure that the use of unrealistic and unsubstantiated claims are minimised. All statements relating to participation **need to be** carefully qualified.
7. Members **must not** compare their activities / contributions against the contributions of other members, but may disclose absolute figures relating to their financial commitments and numbers of farmers supported.
8. No reference **should be** made to the term ‘our farmers’ and no impression should be created that an organisation providing support to a specific group of farmers will procure the Better Cotton that is produced there.
9. The term Better Cotton **cannot** be used to suggest improved product quality, or to imply a guarantee of product quality.
10. Sourcing Better Cotton **does not** imply reduction of an organisation’s overall impact **beyond the farm gate**, and through the supply chain and their operations.
11. The words “Better Cotton” and the Better Cotton word mark **can only be** used in English. The term Better Cotton must never be used translated.
12. The Better Cotton word mark **must always be** accompanied by clear and accurate explanatory text.
13. *Use of BCI logo and design parameters:* If using the BCI logo, members must adhere to style and design guidelines to ensure the logo is consistently and effectively displayed. BCI style and design guidelines are provided.
14. Members using the Better Cotton word mark must use and apply approved design guidelines. BCI style and design guidelines are provided.

### 3.1 Referencing participation in BCI

**Key Criteria:** Reference to involvement in BCI, and use of the BCI logo can only be made by an organisation if it becomes a BCI member.

Upon payment of their fees, and sharing of their logo with the BCI Secretariat (where the member has agreed to do so in their application form), members will:

- get access to the BCI membership portal on the [bettercotton.org](http://bettercotton.org);
- be able to use BCI's name and/or logo to communicate about their membership in materials, including their website;
- be able to link their website to BCI's website.

**Describing BCI Membership:** It is important that BCI members communicate their involvement in the Better Cotton Initiative accurately and clearly, with statements related to involvement linked directly to specific areas of participation.

Please also refer to terminology guidelines in the Appendix of this document.

**Suggested text to describe membership in the BCI in communication:** The following text should be used to describe involvement in BCI and where possible should accompany the BCI logo and BCI website – [bettercotton.org](http://bettercotton.org):

*“As a member of the Better Cotton Initiative, (Organisation) has committed to [insert as per membership obligations e.g. providing support to farmers to grow Better Cotton] as part of a wider industry commitment 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.”*

*“Better Cotton is cotton that is grown in a way that aims to reduce stress on the local environment and improve the livelihoods and welfare of farming communities.”*

### 3.2 Referencing Better Cotton and applying the Better Cotton word mark

**Key Criteria:** Reference to Better Cotton and use of the associated Better Cotton word mark can only be made by an organisation if it does the following:

- A. Is a BCI member, has committed to BCI principles of participation and has paid the appropriate membership fee; **AND**
- B. Provides **financial / indirect support for activities to assist smallholder farming communities** to grow Better Cotton in line with their membership obligations.
- C. Where an organisation **also procures and uses Better Cotton**, and is able to demonstrate track and trace of Better Cotton through the supply chain, they may also reference Better Cotton and apply the word mark (see page 7 for more details).

The following provides more detailed guidelines for members who satisfy the above criteria.

### 3.2.1 Additional rules for members who provide financial / indirect support for activities to assist smallholder farming communities to grow Better Cotton

**Key Criteria:** To reference Better Cotton and apply the word mark, members must be providing financial / indirect support for activities to assist smallholder farming communities to grow Better Cotton in line with their membership obligations.

**Suggested text to describe support for farmers and farming communities in communication:**

The following text should be used to explain involvement in BCI, and support for farmers to grow Better Cotton, and where possible should accompany the BCI logo, BCI website – [bettercotton.org](http://bettercotton.org), and Better Cotton word mark, where permitted to do so.

*“As a member of the Better Cotton Initiative, (Organisation) provides support to farmers and farm communities [include evidence and explanation] to grow Better Cotton as part of a wider industry commitment 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.”*

*“Better Cotton is cotton that is grown in a way that reduces stress on the environment and improves the livelihoods and welfare of farming communities. For example, in the year 20xx-20xx, as a result of financial support provided by xx, farmers in xx region/country were able to cut pesticide use by xx%”.*

### 3.2.2 Additional rules for members who also procure and use Better Cotton in their supply chain

The following additional Communications Rules apply to companies who are procuring and using Better Cotton in their supply chain.

**Key criteria:** Members procuring Better Cotton into their supply chain, as assessed according to the BCI Farm Assessment mechanisms against the BCI Production Criteria, and who wish to reference their use of Better Cotton and apply the Better Cotton word mark, must have a credible track and traceability system in place that is auditable by a third party.

It is important to remember that BCI only provides traceability from farm to gin and it is the responsibility of the member organisation to put in place a traceability system from the gin through to end product. The track and trace system can be put in place by the organisation, or through a third party and is subject to verification by the BCI Secretariat in line with membership obligations.

**Key rules that must be applied:** In addition to applying all of the above criteria and guidelines, it is vital that members also apply the following key guidelines when making claims about Better Cotton and applying the word mark in relation to their procurement and use of Better Cotton:

- **No reference** to Better Cotton and use of the word mark and use of the BCI logo, can be attached to a specific product, or on a product label, or on a label tie / hang tag attached to a product. On product communication requests will be considered on a case by case basis, for example in support of a specific investment or campaign. All requests need to be submitted to the BCI Council for approval and decisions will be made taking in to consideration the scope and scale of the proposed communication activity and the level of investment made by the organisation in supporting BCI and farmers.
- The Better Cotton word mark **cannot be** incorporated in to a product brand.

- When describing Better Cotton in relation to a product or product range in sales literature and customer communication, **at no time must it be** suggested that the whole product comprises Better Cotton. When referencing inclusion of Better Cotton in a product or product range, retailers and brands must be able to demonstrate that the identified product includes Better Cotton, through a credible track and trace system.
- The BCI logo and Better Cotton word mark must **never be used without** clear and accurate explanatory text.
- Neither the term Better Cotton, nor the word mark can be used to suggest improved product quality, or to imply a guarantee of product quality.

### Suggested text to describe use of Better Cotton in communication:

The following text should be used to explain use of Better Cotton, and where possible should accompany the BCI logo, Better Cotton word mark, and BCI website – [bettercotton.org](http://bettercotton.org) Please do remember that when making these claims, documentary evidence must be held to support these claims:

*“As a member of the Better Cotton Initiative, (Organisation) provides support to farmers and farm communities [include evidence and explanation] to grow Better Cotton, and sourced [x % of its cotton as, x MT of] Better Cotton last year as part of a wider industry commitment 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.”*

*“As a member of the Better Cotton Initiative, we include Better Cotton in our products as part of our commitment to reduce our environmental impact and to benefit farming communities.” (Followed by explanation, qualification and evidence.)”*

*“Better Cotton is cotton that is grown in a way that reduces stress on the environment and improves the livelihoods and welfare of farming communities. For example, in the year 20xx-20xx, as a result of financial support provided by xx, farmers on xx farm were able to cut pesticide use by xx% and (include other examples, which describe positive changes achieved at the farm level, where supported by documented evidence).”*

### Examples of correct practice:

“x product includes Better Cotton, which is grown in a way that aims to reduce stress on the local environment and improve the livelihoods and welfare of farming communities.” (Followed by explanation, qualification and evidence.)

“x product includes Better Cotton, which is grown in a way that reduces stress on the environment [through reduced pesticide and water use] and improves the livelihoods and welfare of farming communities [through increasing farm profitability].”

“As a member of the Better Cotton Initiative, we include Better Cotton in our products as part of our commitment to reduce our environmental impact and to benefit farming communities.” (Followed by explanation, qualification and evidence.)

### Example of incorrect practice:

The following are examples of incorrect references to BCI and Better Cotton:

“Xxx (product) **is made from Better Cotton**, which **is sustainable cotton** grown to protect the environment and benefit farming communities.”

“Our products **use Better Cotton**, which **is sustainable cotton** grown to protect the environment and benefit farming communities.”

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## 4. External Disclosure and Media Management

Members must not share information externally unless it has been marked: "Final External". Members must not share any information that is discussed or recorded in Council meetings, conference calls and/or between individual members of the Council without prior approval by the referenced individual and BCI's Executive Director.

Members must keep in mind these Communications Rules when engaging with media about BCI. Members should inform the BCI Secretariat of significant media outreach activity in support of BCI participation to ensure the BCI Secretariat is prepared to manage follow up activity.

Members must refer journalists seeking information or comment on BCI related subjects which are not currently in the public domain (i.e. on the BCI website) to the BCI Secretariat to manage.

## 5. Exchange and Use of Logos and Web Links

By becoming a BCI member, an organisation, subject to permission being granted in their application form:

- allows BCI to use their organisation's name and/or logo on BCI website, presentations and printed materials;
- allows BCI to link its website to their organisation's website.

## 6. Verification and Sharing Good Practice

Members are NOT required to share communications materials with BCI Secretariat for validation and approval.

However, BCI would encourage members to keep the BCI Secretariat informed of communications plans and also to share communications materials to help the Secretariat to share examples of good practice in the application of BCI Communications Rules.

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## Appendix

### Guidance on Terminology

The following describes appropriate and inappropriate terminology to describe BCI and Better Cotton:

Do say BCI	Do not say BCI
Is a long-term commitment by the global cotton value chain, from producer to retailer, 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.	Is a labelling or a certification scheme
	Is a guarantee of product quality
Is voluntary, inclusive and multi-stakeholder.	Is an industry led initiative
Better Cotton emphasises continuous improvement over time.	Is about creating sustainable cotton
Is focused on addressing globally significant economic, environmental and social impacts to make conventional cotton production better for the people that produce it and the environment it grows in	Aims to create a better quality, higher priced premium product
Is about making mainstream cotton production better, not creating a premium product	Aims to reduce impacts beyond the farm gate and through the supply chain
Is focused on helping to transform cotton farming methods by equipping farmers with the means and know how to adopt and apply better farming practices	Is a magic solution ( it will require hard work over a number of years to create meaningful change)
Is about creating a market for Better Cotton, connecting supply with demand	Aims to create a fully segregated supply chain system
Is complementary to organic / Fairtrade initiatives	Promotes or Excludes GM cotton
Will be underpinned by robust data collection	

## Summary of suggested text to illustrate guidelines

Areas of Participation	Suggested text to describe BCI Membership	Suggested text to describe support for Better Cotton
<b>Member</b>	<p>“As a member of the Better Cotton Initiative, (Organisation) has committed to <i>[insert as per membership obligations e.g. providing support to farmers to grow Better Cotton]</i> as part of a wider industry commitment 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.”</p> <p>“Better Cotton is cotton grown in a way that aims to reduce stress on the local environment and improve the livelihoods and welfare of farming communities.”</p>	Not applicable
<b>Member + Financial / indirect* support for farmers and farming communities</b>	<p>“As a member of the Better Cotton Initiative, (Organisation) provides support to farmers and farm communities <i>[include evidence and explanation]</i> to grow Better Cotton as part of a wider industry commitment 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.”</p>	<p>“Better Cotton is cotton that is grown in a way that reduces stress on the environment and improves the livelihoods and welfare of farming communities. For example, in the year 20xx-20xx, as a result of financial support provided by xx, farmers in xx region/country were able to cut pesticide use by xx%”.</p>
<b>Member + Financial / indirect* support for farmers and farming communities + track &amp; trace</b>	<p>“As a member of the Better Cotton Initiative, (Organisation) provides support to farmers and farm communities <i>[include evidence and explanation]</i> to grow Better Cotton, and sourced <i>[x % of its cotton as, x MT of]</i> Better Cotton last year as part of a wider industry commitment 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.”</p>	<p>“As a member of the Better Cotton Initiative, we include Better Cotton in our products as part of our commitment to reduce our environmental impact and to benefit farming communities.” (Followed by explanation, qualification and evidence.)</p> <p>“Better Cotton is cotton that is grown in a way that reduces stress on the local environment and improves the livelihoods and welfare of farming communities. For example, in the year 20xx-20xx, as a result of financial support provided by xx, farmers on xx farm were able to cut pesticide use by xx% and <i>(include other examples, which describe positive changes achieved at the farm level, where supported by documented evidence)</i>.</p>

\* In the case of retailers, this must be a financial contribution as per membership obligations for retailers and brands

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**UK Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) Guidance on making environmental claims:**

3.1 Before distributing or submitting a marketing communication for publication, marketers must hold documentary evidence to prove all claims, whether direct or implied, that are capable of objective substantiation. Relevant evidence should be sent without delay if requested by the ASA or Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP). The adequacy of evidence will be judged on whether it supports both the detailed claims and the overall impression created by the marketing communication. The full name and geographical business address of marketers should be provided without delay if requested by the ASA or CAP.

3.2 If there is a significant disagreement amongst informed interested parties about any claims made in a marketing communication they should not be portrayed as generally agreed.

49.1 The basis of any claim should be explained clearly and should be qualified where necessary. Unqualified claims can mislead if they omit significant information.

**Other useful advice points for making environmental claims:**

Copy Advice (UK):

[www.copyadvice.org.uk/Ad-Advice/Advice-Online-Database/Environmental-claims-General.aspx](http://www.copyadvice.org.uk/Ad-Advice/Advice-Online-Database/Environmental-claims-General.aspx)

[www.copyadvice.org.uk/Ad-Advice/Advice-Online-Database/Environmental-claims-General-green-claims.aspx](http://www.copyadvice.org.uk/Ad-Advice/Advice-Online-Database/Environmental-claims-General-green-claims.aspx)

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