

# BCI Principles & Criteria: 2015-17 Revision

## Introducing the new Standard's Key Changes

### Overview

The six principles and associated criteria were first published in 2010. In line with codes of good practices for voluntary standards, BCI periodically reviews its standard in order to keep up with innovative agricultural practices and latest scientific and technological research. Revisions of the standard also take into account lessons learned from implementation and evaluation of the earlier versions of the standard.

In 2015, BCI engaged in such a formal standard revision process. After two rounds of global public consultations (in February 2016 and January 2017), numerous outreach activities, and several reviews by the BCI Standard Review Committee, a draft was submitted to the Council in May 2017.

During 6 months, the Council reviewed the document and finally agreed on a revised version of the BCI standard in November 2017 with the aim of officially launching it on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018. As the result of these 2,5 years of review, some substantive changes have been brought to the standard.

This document offers an overview of the key changes made in BCI's Principles and Criteria (version 2.0).

### Timeline

- **2015**  
Beginning of the formal standard revision process.
  
- **May – November 2017**  
A first draft was presented to the BCI Council in May 2017. After meeting on four consecutive times, the Council approved a final draft in November 2017. The BCI Secretariat, as per the initial plan, proposed to launch the revised Principles & Criteria v2.0 on 1 March 2018.
  
- **November 2017 – March 2018**  
Standard rollout preparation phase.

➤ **From 1 March 2018**

The full revised Standard will become effective for all Producers (existing and new) from 1 March 2018; the majority of core indicators and all improvement indicators will be effective from this date. This effectively means 2018-19 season for the both hemispheres.

➤ **From 1 March 2018 to 1 March 2019: Transition period**

Some selected core indicators (hereby referred to as “transition indicators”) are expected to require longer implementation timeframes, and will have an effective date of 1 March 2019 (2019-20 season).

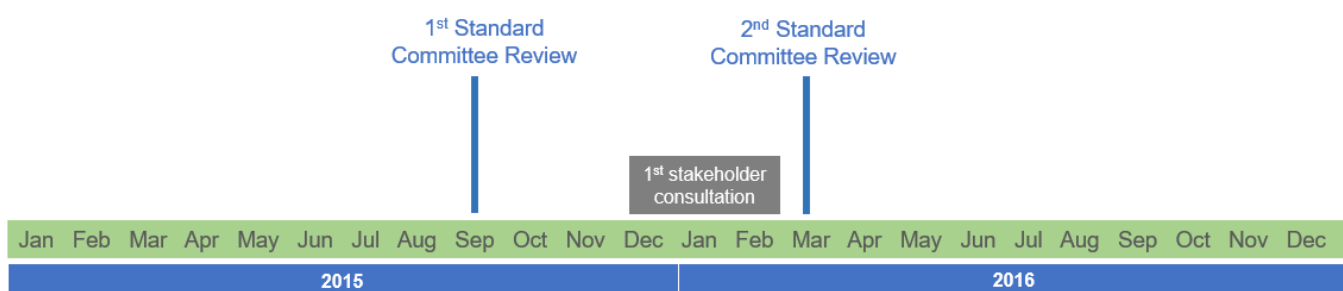
These indicators relate to:

- Issues posing technical or competency challenges for farmers to implement;
- Issues requiring longer timeframe to plan their implementation, with respect to the timing of seasonal activities;
- Issues requiring longer timeframe for partners’ capacity to be built, with appropriate guidance and training material developed by BCI.

This means that all Producers will be assessed against the full new P&C in the 2018/19 season; however for “transition indicators”, only observations (not non-conformities) can be raised during the 2018-19 season if Producer does not conform.

➤ **From 1 March 2019**

All producers will be assessed against all core and improvement indicators.



## Introducing BCI's revised Principles and Criteria key changes

### **MANAGEMENT PLANNING APPROACH**

A new management planning approach has been developed for three environmental principles: water, soil and biodiversity. BCI aims to prescribe each component of the plans which need to be addressed, and requires Producers to define the content of these plans, associated timelines and monitoring measures. Furthermore, BCI will guide Producers on how to best relate or integrate each individual management plan into a consolidated Continuous Improvement Plan (covered under the new Principle 7: Farm Management).

### **EMPHASISING THE IMPORTANCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

Climate Change is tackled more explicitly as a crosscutting issue in each relevant criteria. Furthermore, an annex to the Principles & Criteria has been developed to detail how BCI addresses climate change mitigation and adaptation.

### **PESTICIDE RESTRICTION – ROTTERDAM (PIC) CONVENTION**

In line with BCI's aim to reinforce its approach towards the elimination of Highly Hazardous Pesticides, it was agreed to ban the use of pesticides listed in the Rotterdam Convention (PICs), but only from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019, after adequate guidance on alternatives has been made available.

It was also agreed to ban chemicals listed under the Montreal Protocol as a matter of principle in order to bring BCI in line with other like-minded standards, even though this will have no real effect since no Montreal Protocol chemicals are currently used by any cotton farmers.

This change implies the ban of critical Highly Hazardous Pesticides such as Monocrotophos, Paramion or Phosphamidon. BCI plans to conduct research and develop a guidance document and training module on alternatives to these active ingredients to support farmers being compliant in 2019.

### **PESTICIDE RESTRICTION – PHASING OUT EXTREMELY AND HIGHLY HAZARDOUS ACTIVE INGREDIENTS**

New phasing-out deadlines were adopted for extremely or highly hazardous active ingredients for mammal acute toxicity (2021 and 2024 respectively). The BCI Secretariat will conduct research and develop training modules on alternatives to WHO 1a/1b pesticides.

## **PESTICIDE RESTRICTION – PHASING OUT OF CARCINOGEN, MUTAGEN AND REPRODUCTIVE TOXICANT PESTICIDES**

A criteria related to the phase-out of active ingredients that are known or presumed to be human carcinogen, mutagen and reproductive toxicant (with reference to relevant categories of GHS, and WHO) has been added. However, no fixed timeline has been set for phasing out these ingredients.

## **PESTICIDE RESTRICTION – NATURAL SUBSTANCE USE**

With the goal of strengthening control over home-made pesticides, all natural substances used for the purpose of controlling pest will have to be registered under a local/national BCI natural substance registry.

This approach will enable BCI reinforce its general approach towards pest control, while ensuring that requirements are flexible and adapted to the local context.

## **PESTICIDE RESTRICTION – FULL & MINIMUM PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**

PPE already being an improvement requirement, BCI sought to introduce the concept of minimum PPE in order to at least have some core requirement related to PPE.

The concept of “*Minimum PPE*” has thus been introduced as a core indicator for Smallholders. Full PPE as per the product label will be required as a core indicator for Medium and Large Farms, and included as an improvement for Smallholders. Implementing Partners are expected to work towards putting measures in place towards achieving conformity with the improvement.

The definition of minimum PPE proposed for consultation was based on prescribed garments/accessories. However, it was considered too prescriptive to require specific equipment (not affordable, appropriate or available). A broadly applicable definition for Minimum PPE, that focuses on the body parts to be covered during spraying, has thus been adopted. It is up to PU managers to support farmers in defining the most appropriate specific equipment to be used. The transition period will last 18 months starting from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

## **WATER STEWARDSHIP PLAN – COLLECTIVE ACTION IN WATER STEWARDSHIP**

With the aim to improve BCI's approach to water management by shifting from the current water efficiency focus towards a more holistic approach to managing water as a critical natural resource, and towards the concept of water stewardship; the development of a Water Stewardship Plan is now required.

The Water Stewardship Plan includes 5 components:

- I. Mapping and understanding of water resources
- II. Soil moisture management
- III. Efficient irrigation practices to optimise water productivity (applicable to irrigated farms only)
- IV. Water quality management
- V. Collaboration and collective action towards local sustainable use of water

The collective action component aims at promoting the fair use and allocation of water resources amongst users beyond the farm, and up to the watershed level. The identification of opportunities for collaboration and collective action and the implementation of concrete collective action beyond the farm both are a core indicator for the 3 farmer categories. The applicability date is explicitly set within three to five years, to allow for the dissemination of lessons learned through water pilots.

## **SOIL MANAGEMENT PLAN – SOIL TYPE IDENTIFICATION**

The Soil Management Plan includes 4 components:

- I. Soil type identification and analysis
- II. Maintenance and enhancement of soil structure
- III. Maintenance and enhancement of soil fertility
- IV. Continuous improvement of nutrient cycling.

Soil type identification is now proposed as the first component, with the objective of defining soil type and structure. As part of this component, soil testing has been integrated under one indicator to define content in soil macro nutrients through NPK – Nitrogen (N), Phosphorous (P) and Potassium (K) – analysis as well as pH level as a minimum indicator. These analyses can be done through basic soil test kits that are affordable and easy to use. Both soil type identification and soil testing are required for all three farmer categories as a core indicator.

Regarding Smallholders and Medium Farms, BCI suggests partnership could be established at PU or Project level with a competent bodies that can provide guidance and financial/technical capacity on soil testing.

## **BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT AND LAND USE & THE BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Better Cotton farmers have the potential to, and should strive to enhance biodiversity, as opposed to just conserving biodiversity. Thus, the name of Principle 4 was changed from “*Conserve natural habitat*” to “*Biodiversity Enhancement and Land Use*”.

The Biodiversity Management Plan has been designed as a practical tool for conserving and enhancing biodiversity on and surrounding the farm. The criteria is associated with a list of core and improvement indicators applicable to relevant farmer categories with various levels of prescriptions.

The Biodiversity Management Plan includes 5 components:

- I. Identification and mapping of biodiversity resources;
- II. Identification and restoration of degraded areas;
- III. Enhancing populations of beneficial insects as per the IPM plan;
- IV. Ensuring crop rotation;
- V. Protection of riparian areas.

## **LAND USE CHANGE: A RISK-BASED SIMPLIFIED APPROACH TO HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE (HCV) ASSESSMENT**

BCI farmers must implement a BCI risk-based HCV assessment in case of any proposed conversion from non-agricultural land to agricultural land.

In this regard, BCI and the High Conservation Value Resource Network have developed a ground breaking simplified procedure that allows producers to assess the level of risk that any land-conversion poses to HCVs, and leads to the implementation of simplified mitigation measures in cases where elevated risks are identified.

## **FIBRE QUALITY – FOREIGN CONTAMINATION PREVENTION**

With the aim of improving fibre quality and helping to reduce the level of foreign contamination, the use of polypropylene, polyethylene or any synthetic bags should not be used during hand harvesting of cotton. This extends to storage and transportation as an improvement requirement.

This measure however does not apply to BCI countries where harvesting is mechanised.

## **GENDER EQUALITY & EQUAL PAYMENT**

BCI will continue with the current approach, integrating gender equality issues into existing relevant criteria rather than creating a new criterion.

With this in mind, *“equal payment, irrespective of gender”*, which is part of the three criteria referring to Gender Equality – along with discrimination and record of employment obligation – will have its status changed from improvement to core indicator.