

A photograph of a man in a light-colored shirt, smiling broadly as he holds a large, fluffy ball of white cotton. He is standing in a field of green cotton plants. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the man and the cotton.

BCI FACTSHEET

2020

BCI FACT SHEET 2020

The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) is the largest cotton sustainability programme in the world. Last year, we and our partners provided training on more sustainable agricultural practices to 2.3 million farmers around the globe. We are truly a joint effort, encompassing organisations all the way from farms to fashion and textile brands, driving the cotton sector towards sustainability.

KEY FARM-LEVEL FIGURES FROM THE 2018-19 COTTON SEASON

- » Through our partners, BCI trained 2.3 million farmers of whom 2.1 million received licenses to sell their cotton as Better Cotton. These farmers came from 23 countries on five continents.
- » BCI Farmers produced 5.6 million metric tonnes of Better Cotton lint. This is enough cotton to make approximately 8 billion pairs of jeans. This volume equals 22% of global cotton production.
- » BCI Farmers produced Better Cotton on 5.7 million hectares, which is more than the land mass of Belgium.

MEMBERSHIP AND SOURCING FIGURES FROM 2020

- » BCI had 1,842 members by the end of 2020 (168 retailers and brands, 1,585 suppliers and manufacturers, 30 producer organisations, 42 civil society organisations, and 17 associates).
- » Retailer and Brand Members sourced 1.5 million metric tonnes of Better Cotton, which accounts for 6% of global production.
- » Spinner Members sourced 2 million metric tonnes of Better Cotton, ensuring ample supply was available on the global market.
- » BCI worked with 76 Strategic and Implementing Partners who come from the private and public sectors, and civil society.

2.1 million

licensed
BCI Farmers

5.7 million

hectares under Better
Cotton cultivation

5.6 million

metric tonnes of Better
Cotton lint produced

22%

of global
production

23

countries on

5

continents

10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE BETTER COTTON INITIATIVE

1 Farm-Level Focus

Supporting farmers is at the heart of our work and is the reason for BCI's existence. Cotton is a renewable resource, but its production is vulnerable to poor environmental management and working conditions. As stewards of the Better Cotton Standard System, our focus is on providing training and development opportunities for farmers to adopt more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable production practices.

2 Scope of Better Cotton Standard

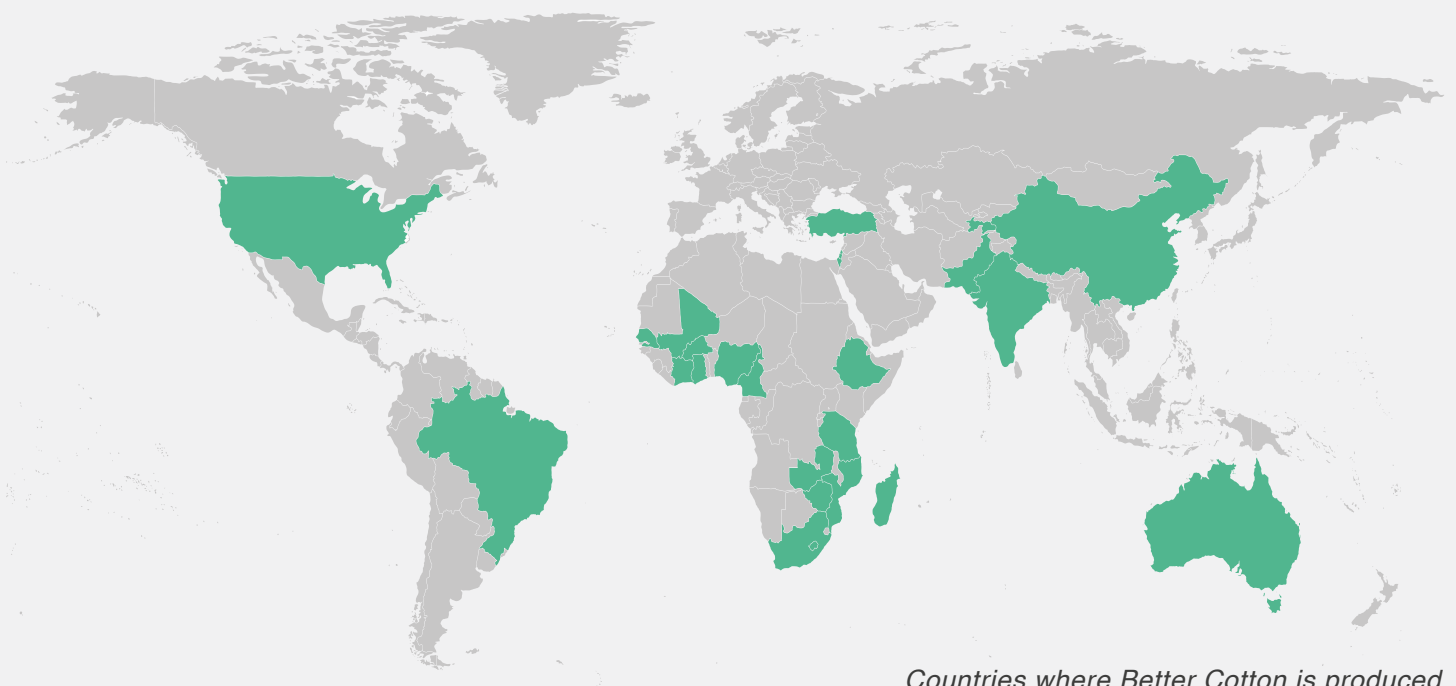
BCI manages the farm-level implementation of the Better Cotton Standard, a holistic approach to more sustainable cotton production. BCI licensed farmers produce cotton in a way that cares for the environment, minimising the negative effects of fertilisers and pesticides, and caring for water, soil health and natural habitats. BCI Farmers also commit to decent work principles—conditions that support workers' safety and wellbeing. The Better Cotton Standard is not applicable to the cotton supply chain. However, BCI Members gain access to sourcing Better Cotton from diverse global regions.

3 Use of Mass Balance

BCI uses a chain of custody model called Mass Balance, which encourages supply chain actors to buy and use more Better Cotton in a cost efficient manner, as it does not require complexities that result in costly physical segregation along the supply chain. Mass Balance functions much like renewable energy. If you purchase renewable energy credits, a power line is not run, from say, a wind farm directly to your house. Rather, the credits are proof that a certain amount of renewable energy has been added to the existing power grid. This energy might not be powering the lights in your house, but nonetheless, your purchase ensures that greener energy is added to and pulled from the power grid. In this way, by committing to sourcing Better Cotton, brand members can be assured that they are supporting more sustainable cotton production regardless of where that cotton ends up.

4 Organic Cotton and Other Cotton Sustainability Standards

In 2020, less than 25% of global cotton production was independently verified as grown using more sustainable practices. BCI, organic, Fairtrade, myBMP (Australia), ABR (Brazil), Aid by Trade Foundation, and others work towards the same goal: to ensure that all cotton is produced in a more sustainable manner. We have recognised three other standards as equivalent to ours, eliminating duplication and inefficiencies in the market. BCI supports farmers having the ability to choose which farming system is best for them.



Countries where Better Cotton is produced

5 Forced & Child Labour

Unfortunately, child labour remains a challenge in some countries, particularly when families are struggling to make ends meet. The welfare of children and workers is always of paramount importance, and forced and child labour on cotton farms is unacceptable to BCI. If either is discovered where Better Cotton is produced, it is considered an incidence of non-compliance with BCI's Standard and is dealt with immediately. We support farmers by helping them to understand and respect national legal requirements, as well as the fundamental, interrelated International Labour Organisation conventions on respecting the minimum age for young workers (C138) and avoiding the 'worst forms of child labour' (C182). BCI does not operate in countries where forced labour is orchestrated by the government.

6 Genetically Modified (GM) Cotton

BCI has adopted a position of being 'technology neutral' with respect to GM cotton, and will neither encourage farmers to grow it, nor seek to restrict their access to it. We aim to be a mainstream initiative and target improvements across a range of important issues associated with cotton farming on a large scale. Today, a proportion of the world's cotton is grown with GM seeds. Therefore, if it is legally available in the country of use and there is an overall support package in place for farmers, which includes training and access to a range of farming options, BCI allows the use of GM cotton. It would be difficult to achieve our objective of making Better Cotton a mainstream sustainable commodity if millions of farmers were automatically excluded from our training and support.

7 Marketing Claims

Any marketing claims that BCI Members make about Better Cotton must be in accordance with the Better Cotton Claims Framework, which stipulates how members can communicate. Any custom claims and all on-product communications must be reviewed by the BCI Communications Team and approved before they can be released publicly. We strive to ensure that all claims are credible, accurate and do not mislead consumers. BCI does not allow any claims about the physical content of an end product.

8 Ensuring Best Practice

BCI is a member of ISEAL Alliance, the global membership association for sustainability standards. Only independently assessed, credible and robust standards are granted membership. BCI and its fellow ISEAL members embrace the ISEAL Credibility Principles and comply with ISEAL's internationally recognised Codes of Good Practice.

9 Funding

BCI receives funding from three sources: earned income for services delivered; grants and donations from private and public funders; and volume-based fees and funding from brands. BCI Retailer and Brand Members pay a fee based on the amount of Better Cotton they source. These fees are channelled to the Better Cotton Growth and Innovation Fund (BCI's farm support programme) and matched by public and private donations. These funds directly support training and skill development for farmers around the world.

10 Continuous Improvement

A core tenet of the Better Cotton Standard is continuous improvement. BCI Farmers must commit to participating in a continuous cycle of learning and improvement.

For questions or further resources, please contact comms@bettercotton.org