

2020 Annual Report

BCI Better Cotton Initiative™
BetterCotton.org



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A Message from the CEO

In 2020, with our partners and stakeholders we rallied together to keep farmers, BCI employees and partners safe, while transforming the way we work to build cotton farmers' capacity to grow cotton sustainably amid the Covid-19 pandemic. As many of you know, the cotton sector has seen a real impact from the global slowdown in apparel production. At the same time, smallholder farmers in particular, who are already on the frontline of climate change and resource scarcity, faced significant health and safety challenges, with cotton farmers in India continuing to suffer considerably.

While continuous improvement and working towards our goals was still important, we understood that in such unexpected times, it was crucial to remember the impact of the pandemic on the people delivering on our work.

As the pandemic unfolded, we took steps to ensure that funding uncertainties caused by the pandemic did not adversely affect the ability of BCI or our Implementing Partners to support staff or run programmes. Retaining staff at Implementing Partners was prioritised, as was retaining farmers with active licenses. All BCI staff were assured of continued full pay despite any challenges resulting from the pandemic. We rapidly transitioned to delivering online training for Implementing Partners, enabling our teams to provide the best possible support and exploring new ways to keep our on-the-

ground partners informed of the latest best practice. This included an online learning system for Field Facilitators in India.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we remained dedicated to our mission, working with nearly 70 partners to deliver training and support to 2.7 million farmers in 23 countries. 2.4 million licensed BCI Farmers produced more than 6 million tonnes of Better Cotton in the 2019-20 season, reaching nearly a quarter (23%) of global cotton production. This is an extraordinary collective achievement that we can all celebrate.

Our membership base continued to grow in 2020, with more than 400 new members joining us across five membership categories. By the end of the year, we had exceeded 2,100 members, a 14% increase on 2019 across 60 countries.

BCI has come a long way since we first launched over ten years ago. Today, we are the largest cotton sustainability programme in the world. We have exceeded our aim of nine countries adopting the Better Cotton Standard System at a national level, and our secretariat is entirely self-sufficient, enabling us to invest all our donor funds into supporting

capacity building and innovation in the field. When we established our 2020 targets back in 2012, we were consciously ambitious so as to encourage continuous improvement and avoid complacency. For a variety of reasons, including the Covid-19 pandemic, we have not met all the targets but have still made huge strides towards them.

Collaboration remains central to our work, and I am pleased that BCI is playing a leading role in the Delta Project, an ISEAL-funded project designed to help develop a common standard for reporting on sustainability progress for agricultural commodities, starting with cotton and coffee. We have also worked with many distinguished partners to build our own capacity to address decent work and forced labour issues in global cotton production.

However, we know there is still more to do. Our 2030 strategy is testament to our determination to help cotton farming communities build climate resilience, conserve natural resources and promote decent work, strengthening our sector while supporting the global push to achieve the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. We want to deliver real impact for cotton farming communities. That's why the work we have undertaken with our stakeholders in

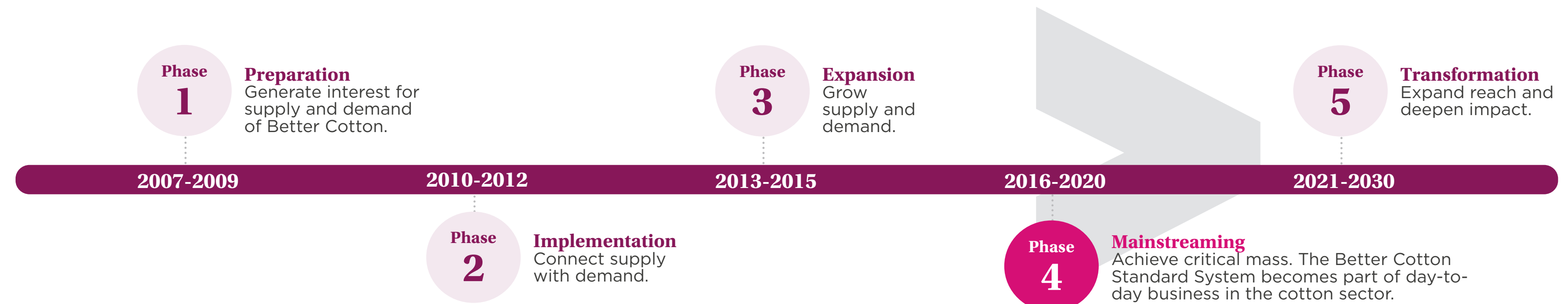
2020 to refine our strategic approach and align our climate efforts with science-based targets is so important. I am confident that our strategy will serve as a solid foundation from which to reach the next stage of our evolution, and we will be communicating more about it later in 2021.

Finally, I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to the farming communities with whom we work as well as to you: our members, donors, partners and the wider BCI community for your cooperation and understanding during the unprecedented time. Together, we'll deliver our ambitions, improve lives and livelihoods in rural communities, and transform the cotton sector - for good.



Image: Jay Louvion

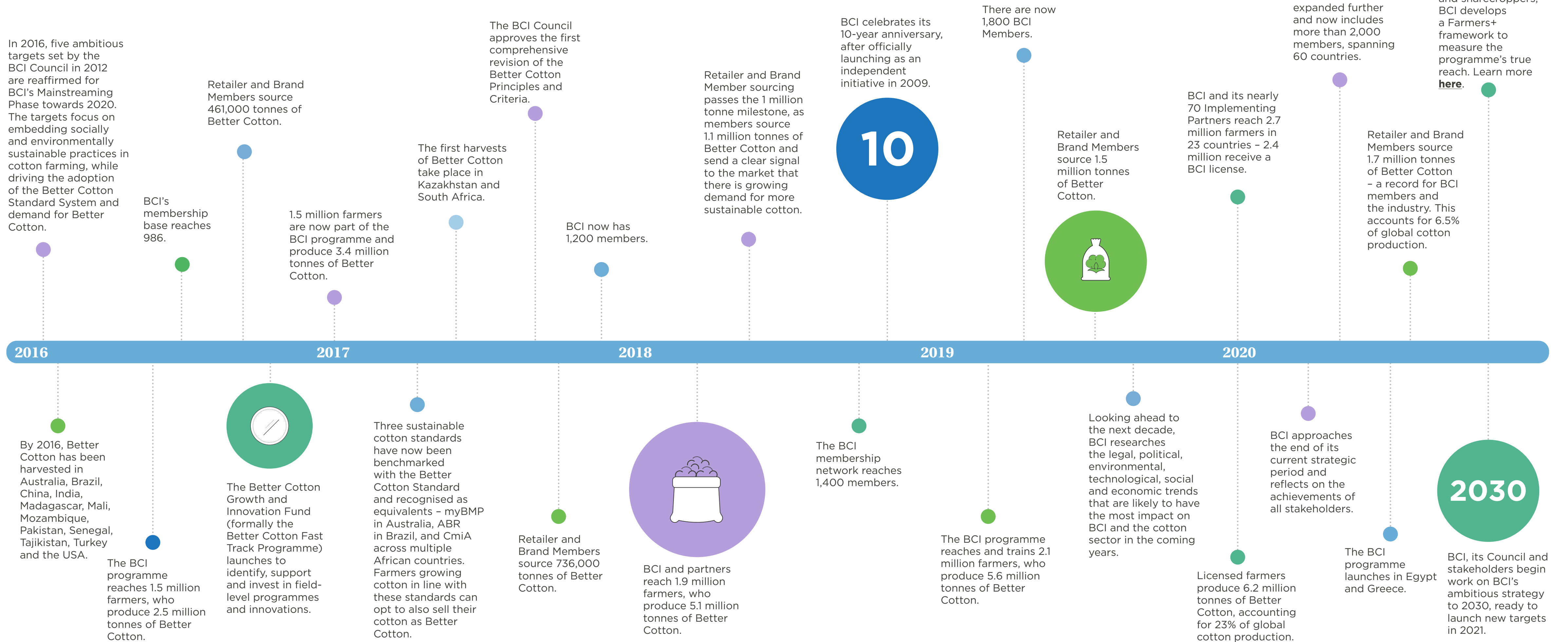
We want to deliver real impact for cotton farming communities.



The BCI Journey | Mainstreaming Better Cotton

In 2016, BCI began its journey towards Better Cotton being recognised as a mainstream sustainable commodity by 2020. We call this our Mainstreaming Phase. We envisaged that the Better Cotton Standard System would become part of day-to-day business in the cotton sector, with supply and demand driven by the momentum of the market.

Follow our journey.



2020 Year in Review

Supporting Smallholder Farmers Amid the Covid-19 Pandemic

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More than 250 million people worldwide depend on cotton farming for their livelihoods, and the majority of cotton is cultivated by smallholder farmers in lower income countries. Farmers sit at the heart of our work, and BCI has remained committed to improving livelihoods and supporting cotton farming communities throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

The past year has brought serious health and safety risks for cotton farmers and workers, together with fluctuating prices due to store closures, home working and the associated global slowdown in apparel production. Rural communities in India in particular, one of our largest cotton producing countries, continue to suffer significantly.

To help keep farmers safe while also protecting and supporting our employees and partners, we transformed the way we work, so our on-the-ground partners could continue to implement the Better Cotton Standard System and build farmers' capacity to adopt sustainable practices without risking their own or the farming communities' health and safety in the process. In particular, we considered how best to leverage our tools, resources and partnerships to promote resilience within farming communities. This was part of a broader effort to support all our key stakeholders at this difficult time, including through various relief mechanisms where relevant.

Equipping our partners with tools and resources

We continued to support our Implementing Partners (IPs) in developing and reinforcing the skills and expertise they need to help BCI Farmers, prioritising online learning over in-person training. For example,

we developed two online learning systems for Field Facilitators in India and Pakistan. With the support of a €20,000 grant from the Laudes Foundation, we launched the system in India in September 2020, with all Field Facilitators there now able to access videos in six languages on topics including soil health, pest management and the cotton growth cycle. We're exploring how the system could be scaled up to reach more on-the-ground partners.

To help our own teams to deliver online training, they themselves received guidance on how to deliver effective webinars and online training sessions. A new online Capacity Building Resource Library was also developed to support them with their training, which we aim to make available to IPs too.

Continuing assurance and licensing activities

Keeping our assurance activities going is vital to understanding whether farmers have grown their cotton in line with the **Better Cotton Principles and Criteria** and, ultimately, whether their cotton can be sold as Better Cotton. We therefore sought to uphold our assurance processes – shifting to remote monitoring in light of travel restrictions and, in some cases, postponing activities that could potentially compromise people's health and wellbeing. We successfully piloted remote assurance processes in Mozambique and South Africa in early 2020, integrating the lessons learnt into our guidance for BCI Teams and third-party verifiers in other countries, including Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and the USA.

Raising funds to help keep communities safe

We would like to thank the Laudes Foundation for its Covid-19 emergency grant. In particular, we distributed these funds to IPs in India, Pakistan, Mozambique and Mali. The majority of the funding was used to provide information on preventing the virus and distributing face masks, soap and hand sanitisers to farmers, Field Facilitators and local communities. The masks were often made locally, including by women participating in groups designed to help them gain greater economic independence. We would also like to recognise the efforts made by our IPs, as many of them have invested both time and money in support of the rural communities in which they operate. We are happy to know that staff employed through funding from us have been able to contribute to helping communities stay safe.

Looking ahead

We will continue to expand access to high quality remote training for our partners and maintain robust assurance processes to provide farmers the opportunity to achieve or retain BCI licenses. This means monitoring the situation in production countries, reviewing our guidelines and even considering how remote monitoring could provide inspiration for future assurance processes. Finally, to keep improving our efforts to support farming communities, we have created a working group to share experiences and best practices, and identify opportunities to strengthen our activities on the ground, both during the ongoing pandemic and beyond.

BCI has remained committed to improving livelihoods and supporting cotton farming communities.



Farm worker Shahida Parveen picking cotton in her family's cotton field. Punjab, Pakistan

Image: BCI/Khula Jamil

2019-20 Field and Market Results



Farm worker Shahida Parveen picking cotton in her family's cotton field. Punjab, Pakistan

Image: BCI/Khula Jamil

The field-level data presented in this section of the report is accurate as of the 2019-20 cotton season (July 2019-August 2020).

The BCI membership and cotton uptake data is accurate as of the end of 2020.

Updates from the Field

THE THREE COUNTRIES THAT PRODUCED THE MOST BETTER COTTON IN THE 2019-20 SEASON WERE BRAZIL, INDIA AND PAKISTAN

7

“In the 2019-20 cotton season, we strengthened our capacity building approach, dedicating more resources to helping farmers adopt sustainable practices and finding new ways of building lasting relationships with our partners as well as developing new partnerships with technical experts. This provided a robust foundation from which to respond rapidly to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.”

Jyoti Narain Kapoor, India Country Director,
Better Cotton Initiative

In the 2019-20 cotton season, some **2.7 million farmers in 23 countries** participated in the Better Cotton programme. Despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic throughout 2020, BCI's nearly 70 Implementing Partners (IPs) remained dedicated to providing farmer support and training, rapidly **adapting their practices** to the evolving circumstances. In particular, they innovated to create digital materials and resources to deliver training remotely and took on critical new roles in distributing personal protective equipment, Covid-19 updates and safety advice to remote cotton farming communities.

Thanks to their efforts, more than **2.4 million farmers received a BCI license**, producing

6.2 million tonnes of Better Cotton – that is a **10% increase** on the 2018-19 season and equates to approximately **23% of global cotton production**.

Note: In March 2020, BCI suspended its assurance programme in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China, and later in October, ceased all field-level activities including capacity building, as well as data monitoring and reporting.

INDIA HAS THE
GREATEST NUMBER
OF BCI FARMERS

BRAZIL PRODUCED THE
LARGEST VOLUME OF
BETTER COTTON



Field Facilitator Abdul Ghafoor (left), BCI Farmer Noor Muhammad (middle) and BCI Lead Farmer Muhammad Sajad (right), Punjab, Pakistan
Image: BCI/Khula Jamil

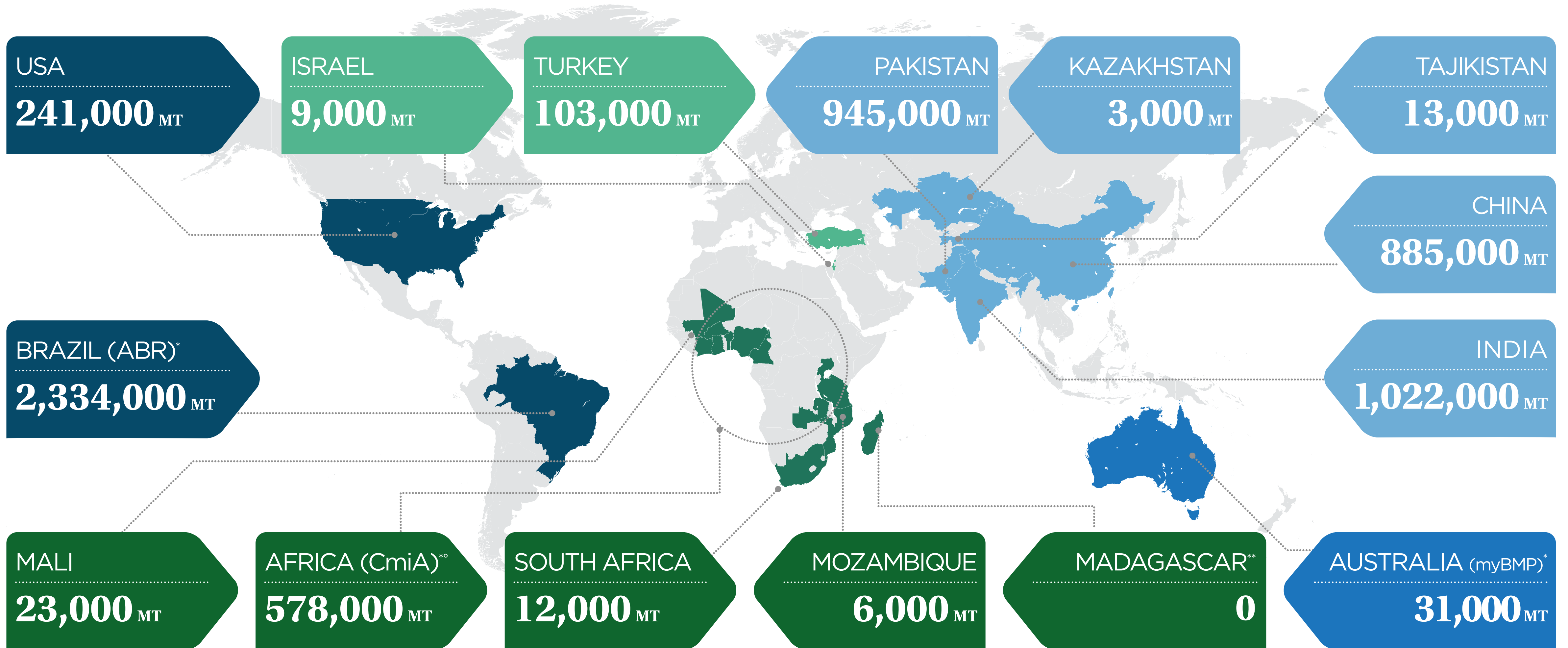
2019-20 Season Data

TOTAL BETTER COTTON PRODUCED

6.2 MILLION METRIC TONNES

8

Volumes of Better Cotton Grown (metric tonnes)



*BCI recognised equivalent standards.

**Madagascar's only Producer Unit did not earn a BCI license in the 2019-20 season, hence the figure for production is zero.

°The CmiA countries in the 2019-20 season include: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Mozambique (farmers in Mozambique which are both CmiA and BCI licensed are only counted once.), Nigeria, Tanzania, Chad, Uganda, Zambia.

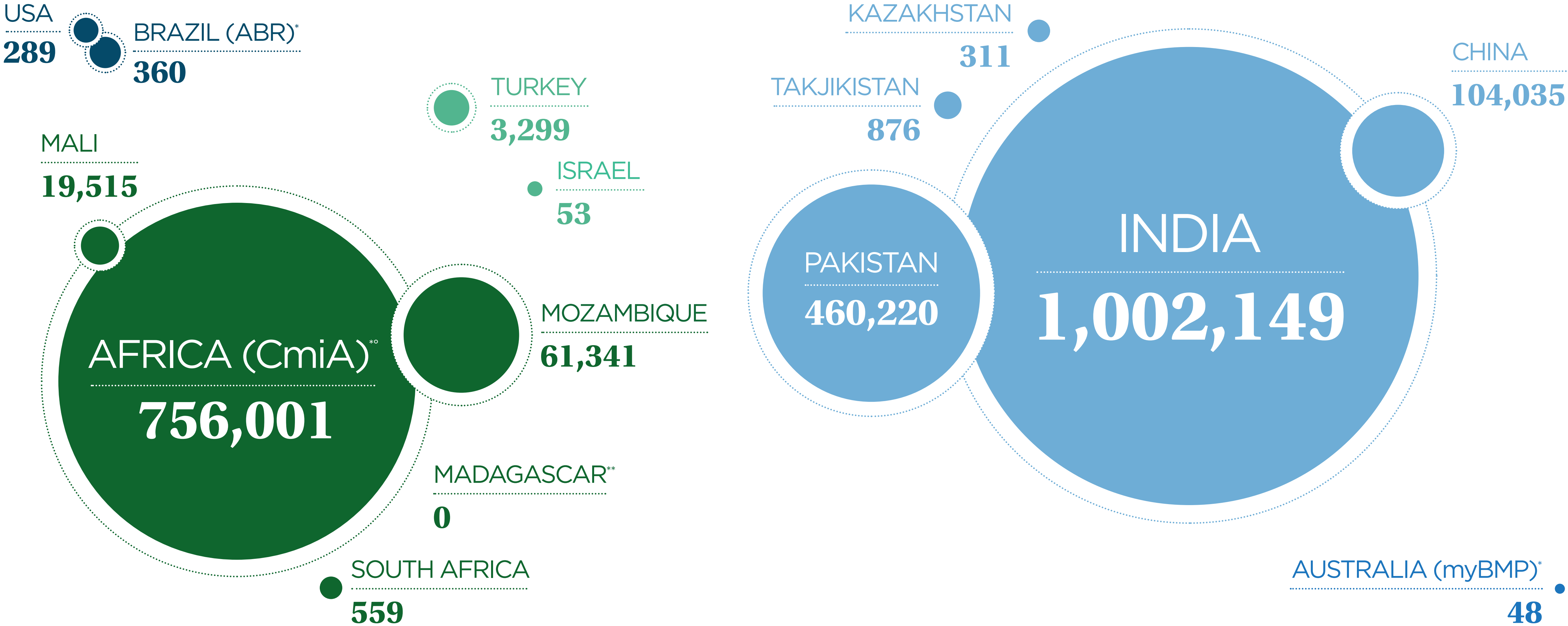
Note: The BCI programme launched in Egypt and Greece in 2020 - licensing and production figures will be available from the 2020-21 cotton season.

2019-20 Season Data

BCI Licensed Farmers Around the World

TOTAL FARMERS LICENSED

2.4 MILLION



*BCI recognised equivalent standards.

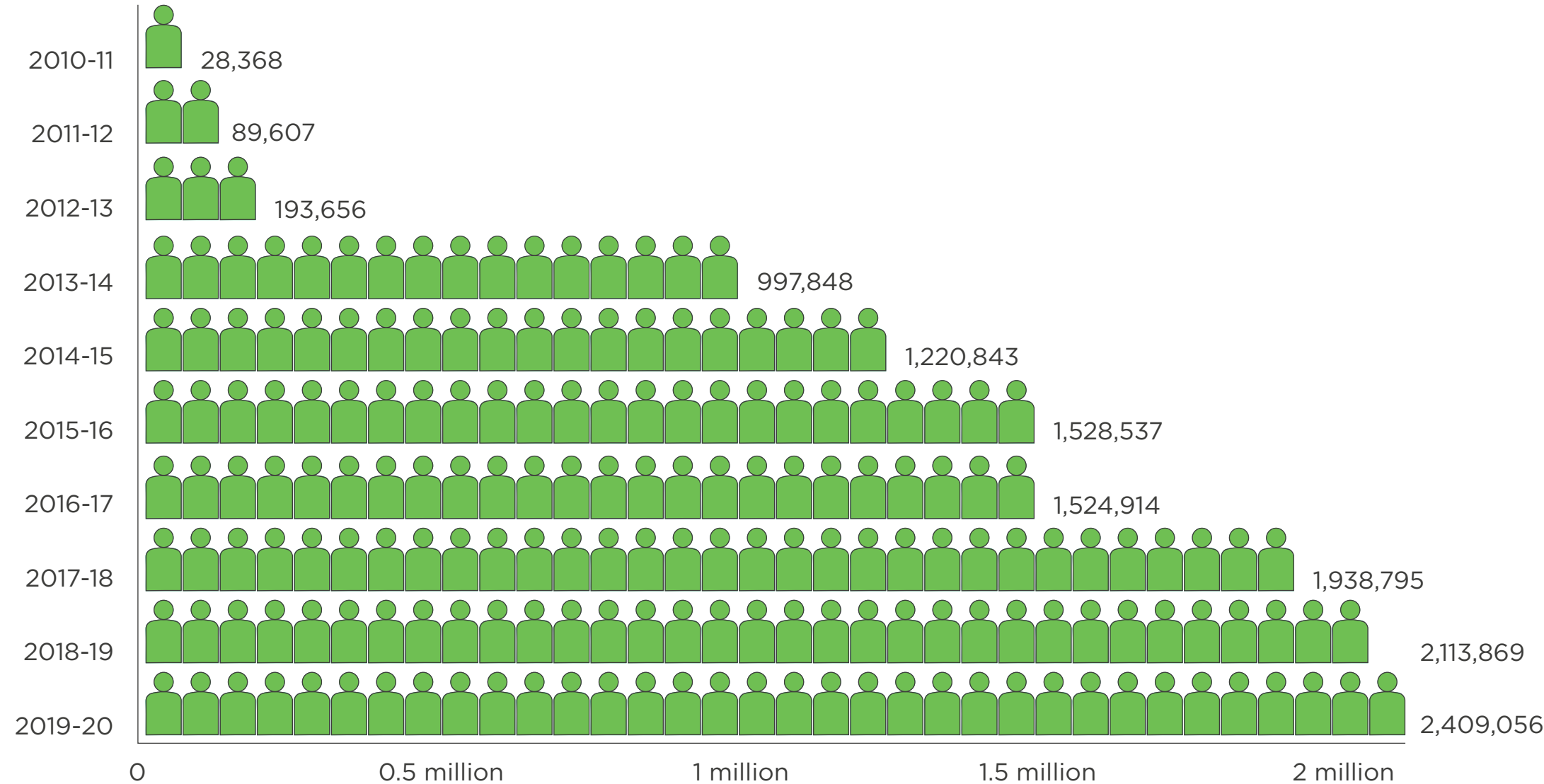
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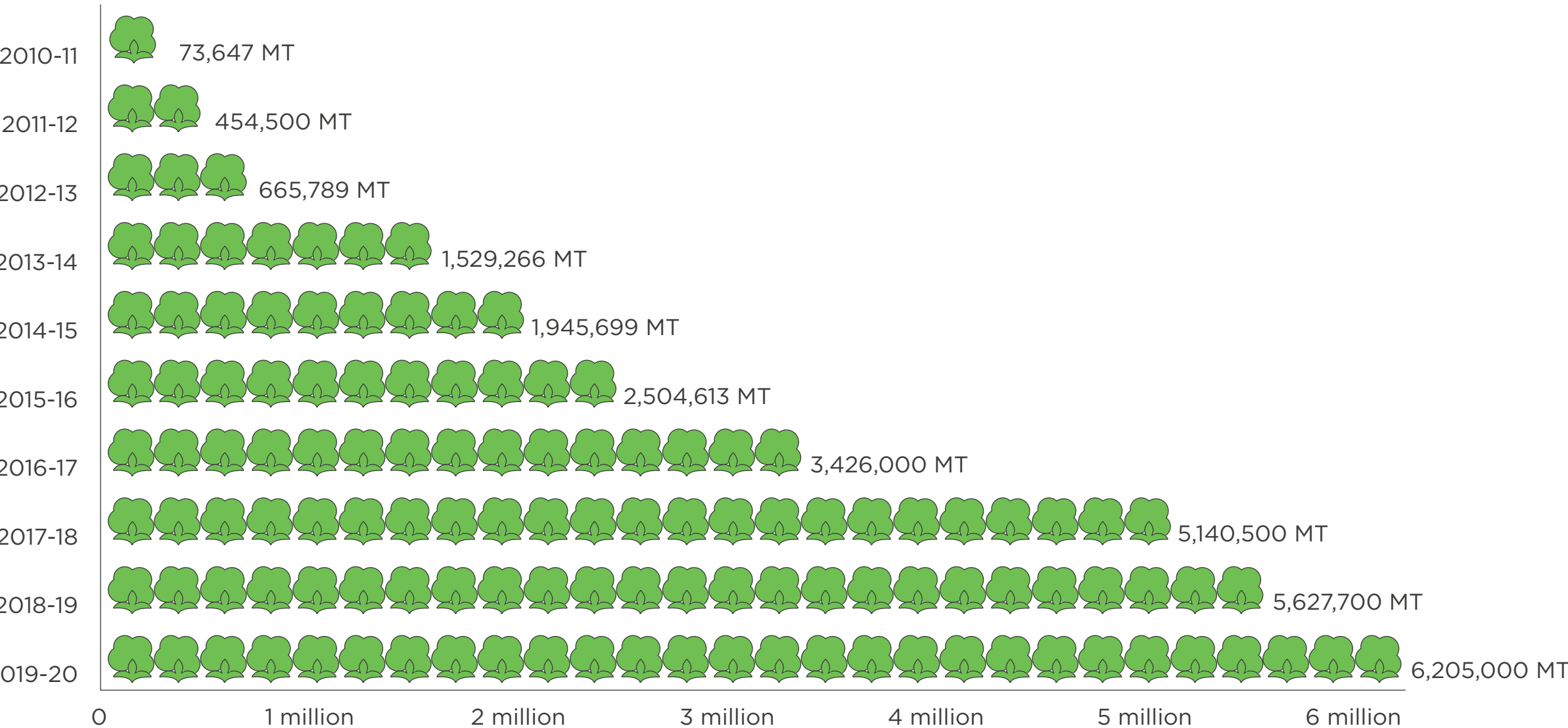
Note: The BCI programme launched in Egypt and Greece in 2020 - licensing and production figures will be available from the 2020-21 cotton season.

2010-2020 Annual Data

2010-11 to 2019-20 Licensed BCI Farmers



2010-11 to 2019-20 Volumes of Better Cotton Grown



Farm workers on BCI Farmer Mustafa Bülbül's cotton farm moving the irrigation system. Sanliurfa, Turkey.
image: BCI/Morgan Ferrar.



Programme Highlights 2020



Farmers celebrate their hard work during the cotton harvest. Kafr ElSheikh, Egypt.

Image: Maged Makram/UNIDO Egypt

Greece

BCI welcomed Greece as a new programme country after completing a comprehensive process to establish that the Greek AGRO-2 Integrated Management Standards could be considered as equivalent to the Better Cotton Standard System. This means farmers certified under the AGRO-2 standards will now be eligible to sell their cotton as Better Cotton from the 2020-21 cotton season. We estimate that 5,000 farmers will be implementing more sustainable practices and growing AGRO-2 licensed cotton by 2022. [Find out more.](#)

Egypt

Following a successful **pilot project** and the completion of BCI's new country start-up process, Egypt also became a new BCI programme country in 2020 as part of a renewed national drive to increase sustainability and improve conditions for Egyptian

cotton farmers. The programme is funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation as part of the Egyptian Cotton Project. Some 2,000 smallholder cotton farmers will benefit from training and support on how to grow Egyptian cotton more sustainably while also improving their livelihoods.

[Learn more.](#)

Innovation Challenge

The Better Cotton Innovation Challenge – a challenge launched to uncover fresh ideas to scale more sustainable cotton production – received more than 100 submissions in 2020. Solutions focused on two key challenges: 1) new ways to deliver tailored and customised training on more sustainable farming practices to hundreds of thousands of cotton farmers and 2) reducing the time and cost of data collection to help make BCI licensing more efficient. [Meet the challenge winners.](#)

“We remained strong in an unprecedented year, helping farming communities to navigate the challenges brought by the pandemic while continuing to encourage adoption of sustainable practices. BCI’s success in expanding our field-level programmes is testament to our teams’ and partners’ commitment, and more farmers recognising the benefits of adapting their practices in the face of climate change”.

Dr Shafiq Ahmad, Regional Director, Pakistan and Central Asia, Better Cotton Initiative

Updates from the Supply Chain and Market

Supplier and Manufacturer Members play a critical role in connecting demand and supply of Better Cotton and are committed to sourcing increased volumes year on year. In 2020, **spinners sourced 2.7 million tonnes of Better Cotton**, ensuring there was an ample supply available on the global market.

Despite the significant impacts felt by the textile and apparel markets due to the pandemic, **204 BCI Retailer and Brand Members sourced 1.7 million tonnes of cotton as Better Cotton** in 2020 - a record for BCI and the industry. That's enough cotton to make more 131 billion face masks.

This achievement represents a 13% increase on 2019 sourcing volumes and **accounts for 6.5% of global cotton production.**

In 2020, BCI welcomed more than 400 new members across five membership categories. By the end of the year, **our membership base had exceeded 2,100 members** (a 14% increase on 2019) spanning 60 countries.

WHAT IS THE BETTER COTTON PLATFORM?

The Better Cotton Platform (BCP) is an online system owned by the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI). The platform is used by more than 10,000 ginners, traders, spinners, fabric mills, garment and end product manufacturers, sourcing agents and retailers to electronically document volumes of cotton sourced as 'Better Cotton' as they pass through the supply chain.

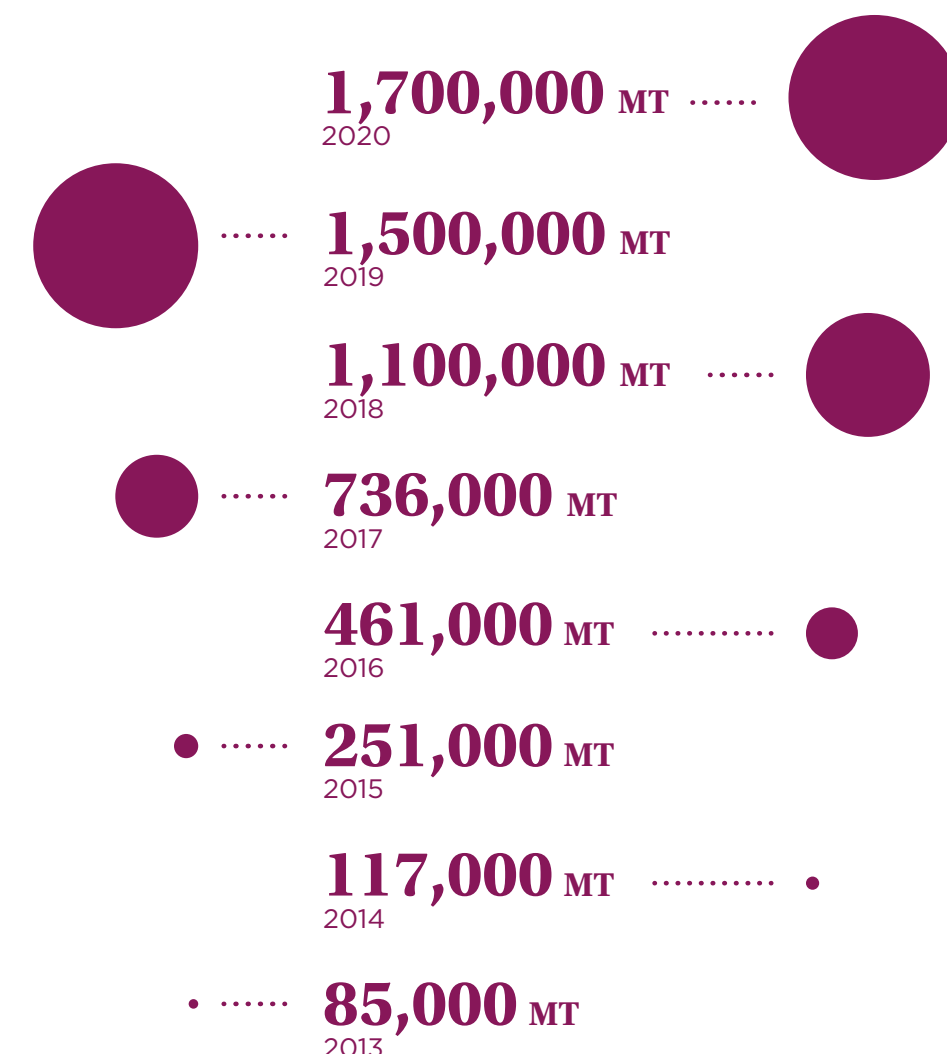
Access to the BCP allows organisations to participate electronically in the Better Cotton Chain of Custody by recording information about cotton-containing orders sourced as Better Cotton, managing the required documentation and recording information about cotton-containing sales to customers.

Better Cotton Uptake 2020

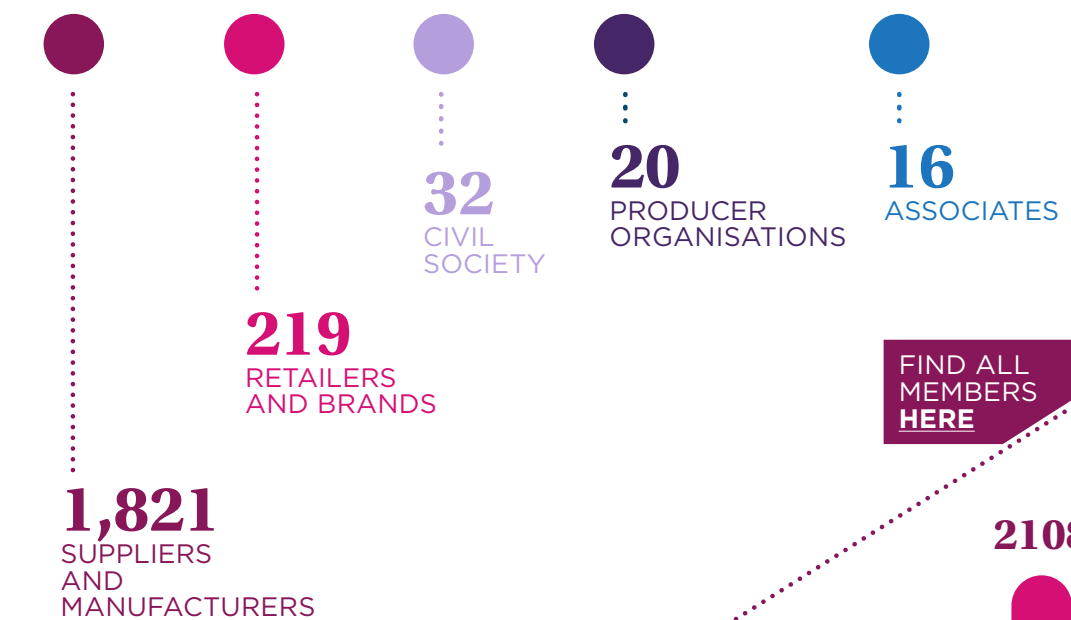


Better Cotton Uptake 2013-2020

Uptake by Retailer and Brand Members



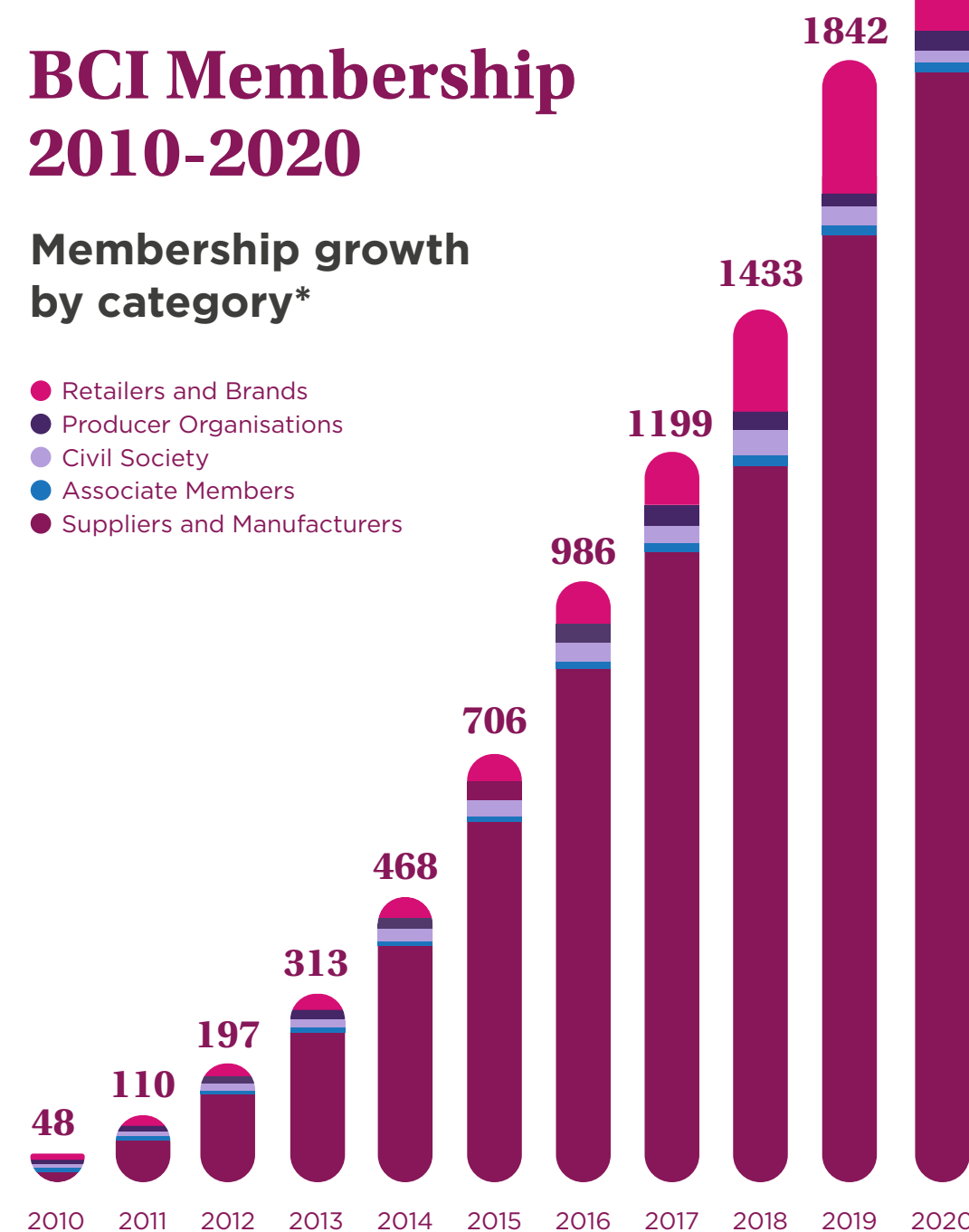
BCI Membership 2020



BCI Membership 2010-2020

Membership growth by category*

- Retailers and Brands
- Producer Organisations
- Civil Society
- Associate Members
- Suppliers and Manufacturers



*This graph shows the net amount of members at the end of the calendar year.

Additionally, the number of people using the Better Cotton Platform increased by 30% in 2020. Approximately 10,000 ginners, traders, spinners, fabric mills, garment and end product manufacturers, sourcing agents and retailers are now using BCI's digital platform to document volumes of cotton sourced as 'Better Cotton' electronically as they pass through the supply chain.

“BCI Members remained focused on their sustainability commitments throughout this challenging year. From civil society members supporting farmers on protective measures for Covid-19 to commercial members continuing to source Better Cotton, BCI Members were more active and engaged than ever, continuing to invest in cotton farming communities. Now we look ahead to 2021 and supporting even more ambitious sourcing plans from our growing membership.”
Paula Lum Young-Bautil, Deputy Director, Membership and Supply Chain, Better Cotton Initiative.

2020 Year in Review

Strengthening Our Capacity to Promote Decent Work and Prevent Forced Labour

Cotton farmers around the world face many decent work challenges, ranging from protecting workers from pesticide exposure to preventing or identifying child labour. Decent work challenges typically stem from low wages, the informal nature of working relations in agriculture and often weak enforcement of laws and regulations. Sometimes solutions also require mindset shifts, whether that means raising awareness among communities that it's best for children to attend school rather than work in the fields or working to transform long-held social status or gender norms.

BCI's commitment to promoting decent work for all is restated in our 2030 strategy. In particular, we have revisited our approach to addressing decent work challenges with the help of the **Task Force on Forced Labour and Decent Work**, convened in 2020 to review the current Better Cotton Standard System. The aim of the Task Force was to highlight gaps and develop recommendations to improve the effectiveness of this system in identifying, preventing, mitigating and remediating forced labour risks as an urgent step to addressing wider decent work concerns. The group comprised 12 experts drawn from civil society, retailers and brands, and responsible sourcing consultancies. In parallel, BCI ran extensive consultations with a wider group of retailers and brands, field-level Implementing Partners and worker-focused organisations, among others.

To drive systemic, positive change, BCI will prioritise collaboration with key stakeholders on the ground, internationally and across supply chains.

This work culminated in a **comprehensive report**, published in October 2020 and available in full on the BCI website. The report outlines key findings and includes nine main recommendations to help BCI strengthen our systems to identify and prevent forced labour risks. The BCI Council has since approved the phased implementation plan to address the Task Force recommendations. Additionally, we have developed a Decent Work Strategy, which takes a risk-based approach and will unfold across multiple years, linking into the BCI 2030 strategy.

The foundation of the recommended approach is understanding the root causes of poor labour practices as a necessary first step to address the circumstances that perpetuate exploitation and abuse. The role of freedom of association and collective bargaining was especially emphasised. At the same time, the Task Force findings recognised the tremendous potential that BCI has – as a truly global network of partners – to help improve the

working conditions for millions of cotton farmers and workers. Therefore, to drive systemic, positive change, BCI will prioritise collaboration with key stakeholders on the ground, internationally and across supply chains.

We will implement our Decent Work Strategy at a global level and within individual countries. In the short and medium term, we'll focus on building our country teams' expertise in this area, developing context-specific risk assessment, adapted assurance and capacity building approaches as well as carrying out extensive stakeholder engagement. Globally, we'll raise awareness among all our teams and partners, revise our assurance protocol, improve our partner management processes and update the organisational-level grievance mechanism. We're currently piloting our Decent Work Strategy in India and Pakistan as our largest programme countries. Looking ahead, we will focus on raising funds to expand activities to all BCI countries. We will also continue to support collective action and share knowledge and best practice on promoting decent work in agriculture.

Please see our website for the **detailed implementation plan**.



BCI Farmer Sharipov Habibullo leads a farmer training session. Khujand, Tajikistan .
Image: BCI/Emma Upton

WHAT IS 'DECENT WORK'?

Decent work is understood by BCI as the concept developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the UN specialised agency on work and employment, to describe work that provides opportunities for women and men to work productively in conditions of freedom,

equity, security and human dignity. For the ILO and BCI, decent work encompasses four pillars: fundamental principles and rights at work, and international labour standards; employment and income opportunities; social protection and social security; and social dialogue.

2020 Strategy in Numbers

Summary of the Results from Our 5-year Strategic Phase Ending in 2020

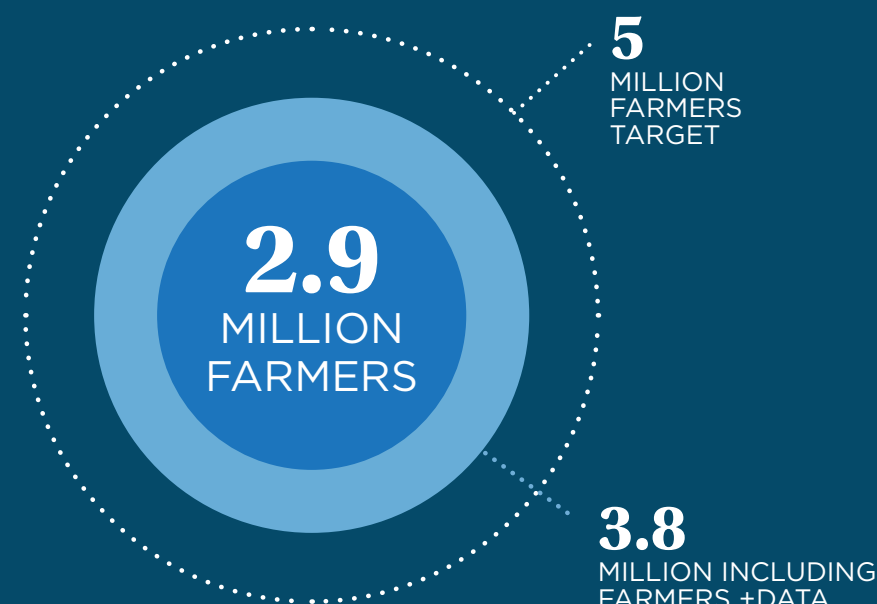
Total Production of Better Cotton



- We are proud that, in less than a decade, the collective effort of our stakeholders has led to Better Cotton reaching nearly a quarter of global cotton production.
- Covid-19 and the suspension of the BCI assurance programme in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China had an impact on the volume reached, but we have confidence that with the addition of new BCI programme countries, enhanced focus and support in existing countries, and increased demand for more sustainably produced raw materials, production of Better Cotton will continue to increase in the coming years.

The data used to calculate Better Cotton production is taken from the 2020-21 cotton season estimates and therefore may be liable to change (the season concludes in July 2021).

Farmers Reached by the BCI Programme



- When BCI set the target to reach 5 million farmers, we knew it was ambitious and would stretch us and our partners. While we did not quite reach our target, we would like to thank our Implementing Partners for their continued dedication and support for farming communities, particularly during this past year. They demonstrated considerable flexibility and passion for our mission amid a constantly evolving set of circumstances and challenges.
- Beyond farmers, we reached an additional one million individuals who participate in farm-level decision-making and share a financial stake in their cotton farms. These are co-farmers, sharecroppers and certain types of farm workers, and they also receive support and training delivered by BCI's Implementing Partners. **You can learn more about Farmers+ and how BCI will calculate the reach of its programmes in the future here.** The Farmers+ figure above is a cumulative estimate of additional people reached through BCI's programmes since the 2010-11 cotton season.

The data used to calculate BCI's programme reach is taken from 2020-21 cotton season estimates and therefore may be liable to change (the season concludes in July 2021).

Uptake of Better Cotton by Retailer and Brand Members



- Retailer and Brand Members were on track to source 8% of global cotton production as Better Cotton in 2020, which would have brought us close to our 2020 target. However, we fell slightly short of this target, largely due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the suspension of the BCI assurance programme in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China.
- Despite this and given the increasing demand for Better Cotton over the past eight years, we are confident that demand for more sustainable materials will continue to grow in the coming years.

This figure was calculated at the end of the 2020 calendar year.

National Embedding of the Better Cotton Standard System (or benchmarked equivalents)



- National embedding' is achieved when an organisation or institution within a country has established a formal, nation-wide responsibility to fund and uphold the Better Cotton Standard or has a benchmarked equivalent standard in place.
- Ten countries demonstrated various levels of national embedding by the end of 2020: Australia (myBMP), Brazil (ABR), Egypt, Greece (AGRO-2), Israel (ICPSS), Mozambique, Pakistan, Turkey, China and South Africa.

This figure was calculated at the end of the 2020 calendar year.

BCI Secretariat Financially Self-Sufficient



- BCI achieved this target in 2017.
- 100% of core operational costs (running the organisation, providing membership services and support, and maintaining the Better Cotton Standard System) are covered by earned income, and all donor funding goes to field-level activities and innovation.

This figure was calculated as of the end of the 2020 calendar year.

THE 2020 TARGETS IN FULL

- Better Cotton will represent 30% of global cotton production.
- BCI and partners will support five million cotton farmers to improve their livelihoods by adopting sustainable agricultural practices.
- 10% of all cotton produced globally will be sourced by retailers and brands as Better Cotton.
- Nine countries to take direct responsibility for funding and implementing the Better Cotton Standard (or its benchmarked equivalent standards).
- 100% of BCI's core operational costs are to be covered by earned income, and 100% of donor funds go to farm-level innovation or capacity building projects

Taking Better Cotton Mainstream | Reflecting on Our Performance to 2020



BCI Farmer Vinodbhai Patel, harvesting Neem leaves that he will use to prepare bio-pesticides, Gujarat, India.

Image: BCI/Florian Lang

Just over a decade ago, the first bale of Better Cotton was produced in Pakistan. Now, nearly a quarter of the world's cotton is produced as Better Cotton. This rapid growth has enabled the Better Cotton Initiative to reach scale, with nearly 4 million farmers, workers, sharecroppers and others benefitting from support and resources in 23 countries. Collaboration has been central to this achievement, and a relentless focus on making the Better Cotton Standard System accessible to all farmers, from smallholders to large, mechanised farms. And as farmers adopt more sustainable practices, we're also helping to improve lives and livelihoods in rural communities.

This is great progress, but there is still some way to go. In particular, while we know that we have fallen short of the field-level goals we set ourselves for 2020, we are encouraged by the progress made. These were bold, ambitious targets, and we have learnt a lot along the way. We are committed to applying the lessons we have learnt from our first decade as we embark on our strategic phase towards 2030.

We were successful in engaging with production countries to encourage ownership of implementing the Better Cotton Standard System, exceeding our goal of nine countries, with ten countries demonstrating various levels of national embedding. And in 2017, we achieved our goal of our secretariat becoming financially self-sufficient, enabling us to direct all our donor funding to supporting innovation or new development projects.

Now, we want to celebrate what we, collectively, have achieved, recognising the remarkable commitment of our partners and farmers worldwide, while acting decisively to address the pressing challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, resource scarcity and social inequality. There is no time for complacency.

Cotton communities are more in need of support than ever in the face of worsening impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. So, as we look ahead, we remain committed to taking Better Cotton mainstream, and will renew our efforts to transform the sector, guided by our 2030 strategy.

In conclusion, we have travelled a significant distance from designing the Better Cotton Standard System to making Better Cotton a reality on the ground, to engaging the world's largest textile and apparel companies to drive demand for Better Cotton, and scaling up production to meet this growing demand. Now, we are ready and fully determined to leverage our scale, reach and partnerships to deliver even more real and lasting impact - for farming communities and the entire cotton sector.

Cotton communities are more in need of support than ever in the face of worsening impacts of climate change and environmental degradation.

UNDERSTANDING BCI'S REPORTING PERIODS

	2019-2020 Cotton Season Results Calculated using the finalised 2019-20 season harvest data	2020 Strategic Period Results Calculated using the estimated 2020-21 season harvest data (figures likely to change)
Farmers reached by the BCI programme	2.7 million farmers	- 2.9 million farmers - 3.8 million individuals using Farmers+ data
Licensed Farmers	2.4 million farmers	2.6 million farmers
Volume of Better Cotton produced	6.2 million metric tonnes	5.4 million metric tonnes
Better Cotton as a % of global cotton production	23%	22%

2020 Year in Review

Mainstreaming Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Across BCI

Gender inequality remains a pressing challenge in the cotton sector as in many other sectors. While women contribute significantly to cotton production around the world — often taking on essential and demanding roles like sowing, weeding, fertiliser application and picking — they are held back by many forms of discrimination and underrepresentation in decision-making.

BCI's 2019-21 Gender Strategy outlines the importance of creating a transformed cotton industry where all participants have equal opportunities to thrive, regardless of their gender identity. In line with this strategy, we conducted several initiatives in 2020 to improve gender equality and women's empowerment in cotton production and to address the specific needs and challenges of women taking part in our programmes.

Measuring and piloting women's empowerment projects

Together with CARE International UK, we developed a women's empowerment indicator for the Delta Framework [see page 19 for more information]. One of 15 indicators that make up the framework, the women's empowerment indicator represents a step forward in terms of how BCI and other sustainability standards seek to measure real change for women on the ground. While quantifying women's empowerment is not a simple task, this indicator moves away from a focus on measuring training outputs or simple participation metrics alone and instead aims to capture women's active participation in three domains: leadership, decision-making and control of economic assets. The indicator was piloted in South Africa with our partner Cotton South Africa, who

conducted interviews with 84 smallholder farmers (35% women) and 12 large farmers (one of whom was a woman) as well as with their respective spouses. This pilot helped us confirm that the indicator is fit-for-purpose for smallholder contexts but needs to be adjusted for large farm contexts. Since the commercial farms are often not family-run, the gender dynamics are very different, and we will continue working with CARE to adapt the indicator in 2021.

Introduced in 2019, BCI's expanded **Farmers+** definition enables us to be more intentional about targeting those we're reaching through Better Cotton training, including women co-farmers, who equally share decision-making responsibilities. Partnering with IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative, Sattva and the Lupin Foundation, we launched a one-year pilot project, funded by IDH and the Better Cotton GIF, to increase the inclusion of women co-farmers and engage male farmers to become allies for gender equality in India. The 2020 pilot was designed following work undertaken by IDH that began in **2018 to understand the business case for gender mainstreaming** in cotton in Maharashtra. Through the pilot, 2,000 women co-farmers in Dhule, Maharashtra participated in a new holistic training programme, spanning topics from seasonal agronomic practices such as intercropping and integrated pest management through to financial literacy, negotiation skills and gaining access to government programmes. Eleven demonstration plots were also established to demonstrate innovative farming practices, and more than 2,200 male co-farmers received gender sensitisation training, recognising that achieving gender equality requires engagement from the entire cotton community. The pilot was successful

in increasing the skills and knowledge of women co-farmers as well as engaging male co-farmers on how and why gender dynamics and gender equality are relevant to them and their farms.

Advancing gender equality within our organisation and the cotton community

At an organisational level, we set up a BCI Gender Working Group in July 2020 made up of 11 staff members representing each department to create shared accountability for delivering our Gender Strategy. The group meets bimonthly to accelerate action and focus our efforts for greater impact. We also continued working with CARE International UK to deliver gender equality and diversity workshops to BCI staff. The workshops focus on different dimensions of gender and diversity to help further mainstream gender considerations across the BCI team and build a common language for how we understand and tackle inequality and injustice.

At the community level, we continued to be active participants of the **Women in Cotton Working Group**, developed by the International Cotton Association (ICA). The group's mission is to increase engagement and the impact of women within the industry by giving them a stronger voice, sharing and learning from each other's experiences and helping networking amongst women in the global cotton community.

Looking ahead

In 2021, the first phase of our Gender Strategy will come to a close. We are inspired to capture our learnings and develop new actions and commitments for our next phase, aligned with our 2030 Strategy.

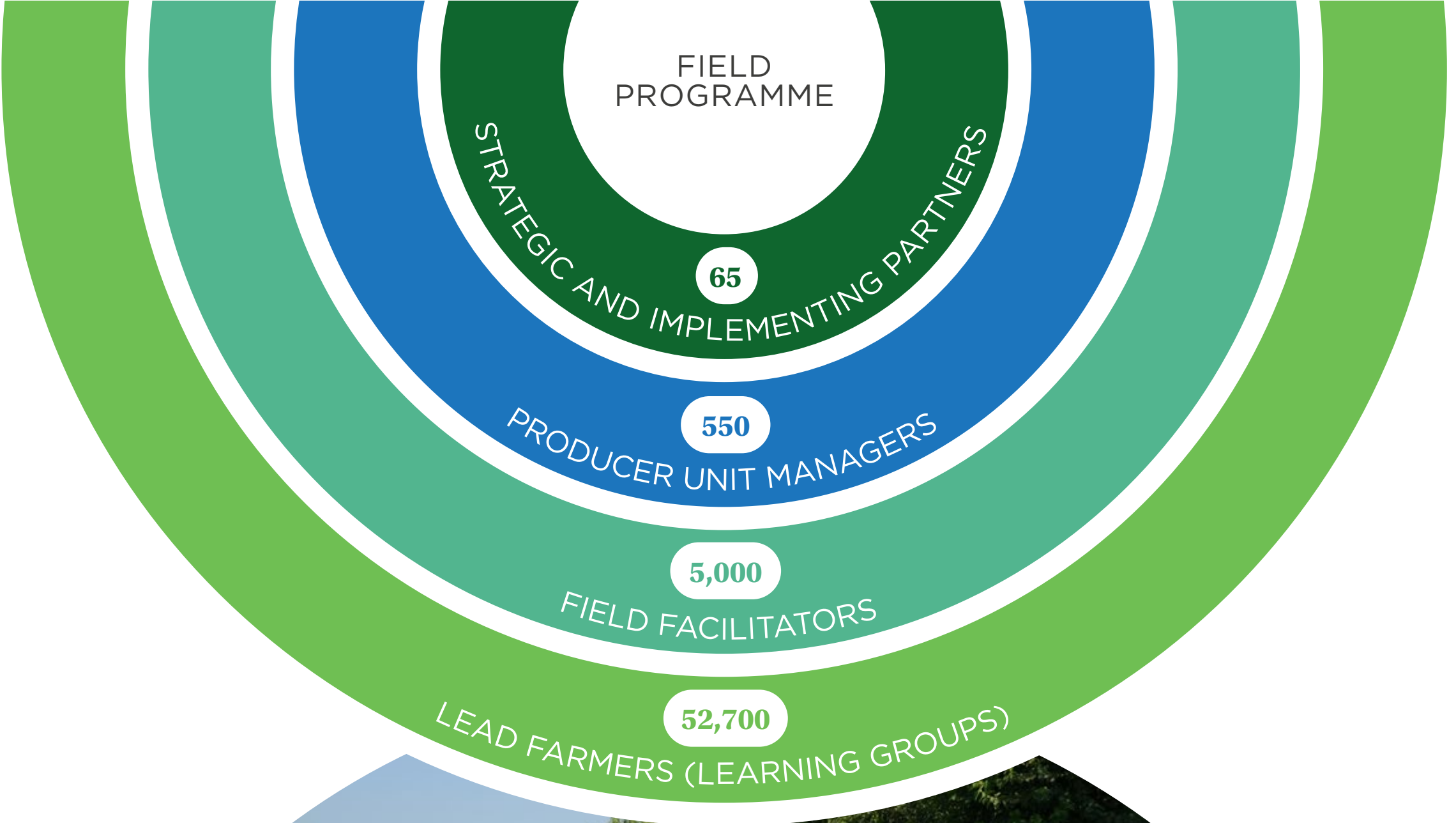
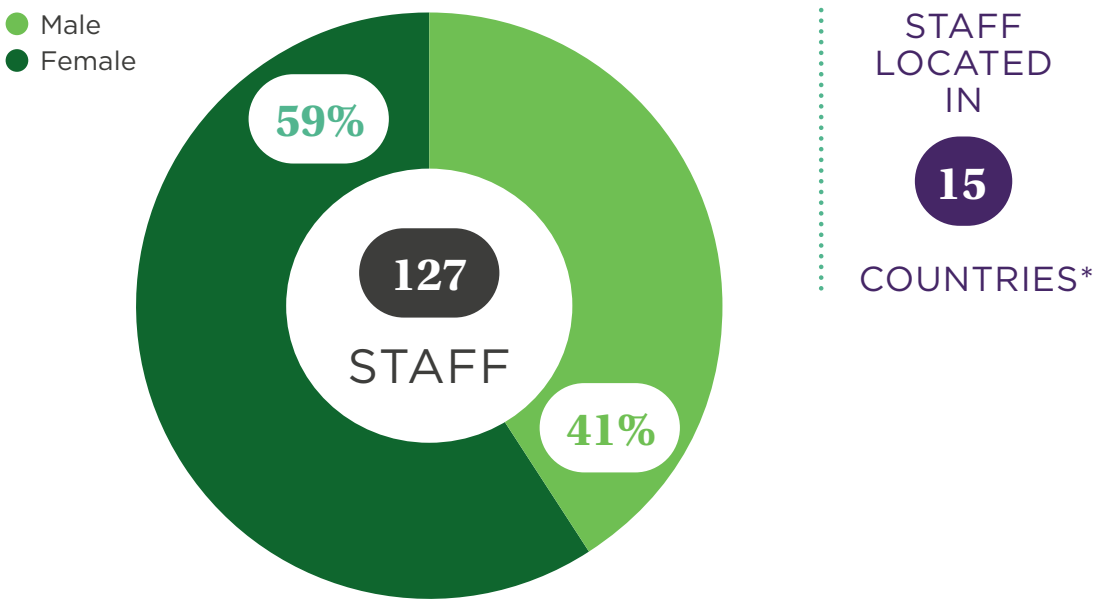
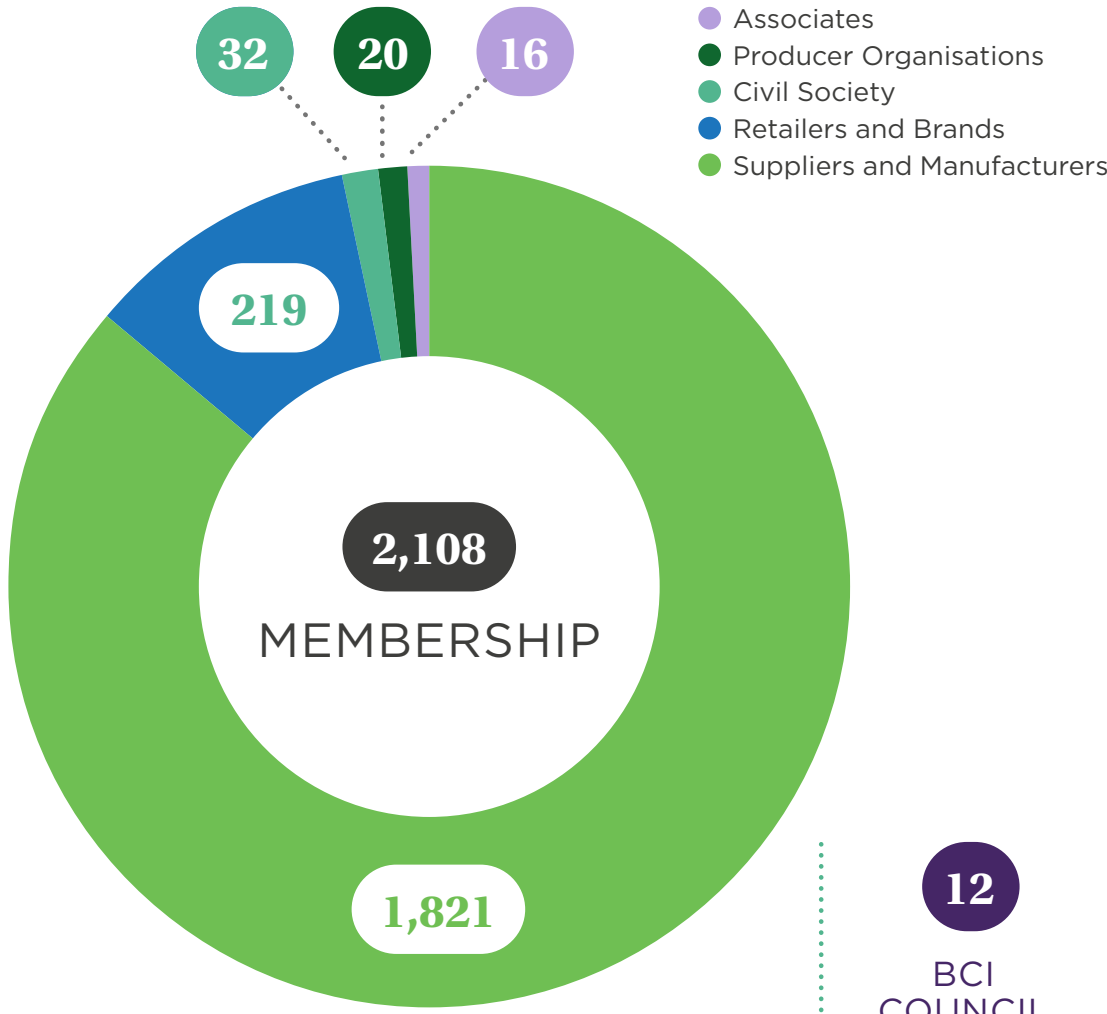
We remain committed to championing and supporting women and people of all gender identities on our journey to create an equitable cotton future.



Farm-worker Ruksana Bibi with her husband BCI Farmer Muhammad Azher Hussain Cheema in their cotton field. Punjab, Pakistan. Image: BCI/Khaua Jamil

BCI's Gender Strategy outlines the importance of creating a transformed cotton industry where all participants have equal opportunity to thrive, regardless of their gender identity.

A Global Network | BCI's Stakeholders



BCI FARMERS | **2.4** MILLION

ORGANISATIONS ON THE BETTER COTTON PLATFORM | **10,000**

From humble beginnings, BCI has grown rapidly to become the world's largest cotton sustainability programme, and we're expanding our network and reach all the time. BCI's global network now comprises of stakeholders from diverse cultures, countries and backgrounds, spanning the entire cotton supply chain - from cotton farmers and producer organisations through to retailers and brands, and civil society organisations.

BCI's core Secretariat staff work across 15 countries, working closely with the broader BCI community, which includes expert partners, donors and funders, thousands of field staff, members from more than 60 countries, and millions of cotton farmers and farming communities.

We're passionate about what we do and dedicated to achieving BCI's mission: 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.

BCI works with a diverse network of partners around the world to implement the Better Cotton Standard System at field level.

Cotton in Tajikistan. Image: BCI/Emma Upton

*Brazil, Burkina Faso, China, India, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Pakistan, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan
 *All data accurate as of end 2020.
 - Figures for: Producer Unit Managers, Field Facilitators and Lead Farmers are estimates.

Stakeholder Insights

Bilal Israel Khan, BCI Farmer and Outgoing BCI Council Member

Listening to all our stakeholders and forging collective solutions that respond to everyone's needs sits at the heart of our work and is central to achieving our mission.

Bilal Israel Khan has participated in BCI since its inception and been a longstanding member of the BCI Council, having served as a representative for 10 years until stepping down in 2021. He grows crops including cotton, sugarcane and mangoes on his ancestral farm in southern Punjab, Pakistan. Here, he shares his views on 21st century cotton farming from a farmer's perspective.

How does BCI benefit farmers?

BCI offers a compelling prospect to farmers. We all want to see improved productivity and lower input costs, and every responsible producer feels duty-bound to help protect the environment. Today, delivering Better Cotton is vital to meeting market demand, so retailers and brands can achieve their sustainable cotton sourcing goals and farmers can continue farming healthy cotton crops

in the future. No farmer can continue successful farming operations in the face of poor soil health or pesticide resistance, for example. That's where BCI's best practices and strategy of continuous improvement really create dividends, and I've been delighted to help more farmers discover the way forward. In this way, we can share the benefit of our knowledge with smaller, remote farms that wouldn't normally have access to this kind of support.

Could you describe some of the highlights of your time as a BCI Council Member?

Participating in the BCI Council has enabled me to bring BCI's vision to life in the cotton field – to help bridge the gap between theory and reality on the ground. When I've taken the floor to describe an issue like pest pressure, you could have heard a pin drop. In addition to feeling genuinely heard and understood, I've made lifelong friendships and developed strong professional networks. This has both grown my technical knowledge and taught me a keen sense of humility. I have been in awe of members' commitments, their

grasp of issues, their razor-sharp analysis, the sheer scale of their operations and, above all, their down-to-earth approach.

What are the key challenges faced by cotton farmers in Pakistan?

Cotton farming in Pakistan has been very tough these past decades, though we're fortunate not to have seen the troubles experienced by farmers in neighbouring India amid the pandemic. We have seen a significant fall in production due to pesticide resistance – white fly and pink bollworm in particular are a real problem – extreme temperatures (particularly at night) and water scarcity. It's vital that we renew our efforts to address these challenges, so the country's cotton industry continues to support the lives of farmers and workers, including many women, their families and their communities.

How could BCI and other key stakeholders help to address these challenges?

We urgently need research - into heat tolerant cotton varieties, into sustainable pest management

- with more emphasis on introducing pheromones or natural predators, for example. And we need to make these solutions as accessible as possible to the farmer, in order to accelerate uptake and adoption. This would help enable farmers to reduce their costs and move away from government subsidies for conventional chemicals.

In every country where BCI operates, we need to continue focusing on farmers' on-the-ground challenges, while lobbying for change at an international level. Measuring impact is also fundamental. I welcome BCI's focus on understanding the real impacts of farmers' improvements for people and the environment.

Do you feel hopeful for the future?

The circumstances are challenging, but I remain hopeful. The proof of my optimism is that I am still planting significant quantities of cotton and continue to encourage more farmers to adopt sustainable practices.

Bilal Israel Khan (left) in an Australian cotton field on the farm of fellow Council member Simon Corish. This educational trip was sponsored by BCI and Cotton Australia.



Image: Bilal Israel Khan



According to Bilal, pictured are "some of the invaluable sustainable agricultural practices learned from BCI. Common plants found around the land are used for preparing bio-pesticides resulting not only in huge financial savings but also in fighting pest resistance problems and preserving friendly (predatory) insects."

Image: Bilal Israel Khan

2020 Year in Review

Delta Project: Standardised Reporting for Sustainability Progress

Transforming agriculture and building resilience in supply chains is integral to ensuring the ongoing, sustainable supply of key commodities such as cotton and coffee. Through the Delta Project, we are supporting the creation of a shared approach to measuring and communicating sustainability progress – the Delta Framework. This is essential to promoting both a common understanding and uptake of responsible agricultural practices. Ultimately, it will strengthen the efforts of multiple sustainability initiatives, including BCI, to address the social and environmental challenges of agriculture, protect workers' rights and improve farmers' livelihoods. It will also enable clear, transparent reporting towards the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

So how has BCI helped to lead the way in advancing the Delta Project's objectives?

We contributed to developing and refining the Framework's 15 environmental, social and economic indicators, together with the tools and methodologies needed for data collection and analysis. We also led pilot testing of the indicators with farmers and local partners in South Africa and India.

DELTA PROJECT PARTNERS

- Better Cotton Initiative
- Global Coffee Platform (GCP)
- International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC)
- International Coffee Association (ICO)
- Funding: ISEAL Innovation Fund, supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs

Other sustainable cotton standards are testing the indicators in India, and our Delta Project partner Global Coffee Platform (GCP) is conducting testing in Vietnam. The lessons we learn will help us to ensure the whole approach is fit for purpose. Ultimately, we want to be able to integrate these indicators into the overall way we monitor progress against our respective sustainability standards.

In parallel, we have been working on digitisation guidance to complete the Delta Framework. This will help enable organisations interested in adopting the Framework to define the appropriate data monitoring and collection systems to track the 15 indicators.

Beyond this, we are also exploring how the Delta Framework data can be used by multiple stakeholders, including farmers, the public sector, sourcing companies, brands and retailers etc. In particular, we are developing reporting tools allowing farmers to gain meaningful insights from their sustainability performance results to guide improvement efforts. Similarly, we are aiming to create guidance and tools to support countries and public sector entities in consolidating producers' information to help report sustainability performance of individual commodities.

Learn more about the Delta Project [here](#).

A shared approach to measuring and communicating sustainability progress.

BCI Farmer Tahirou Sangare stands in the cotton field. Kolondieba, Mali. Image: BCI/Seun Adatsi



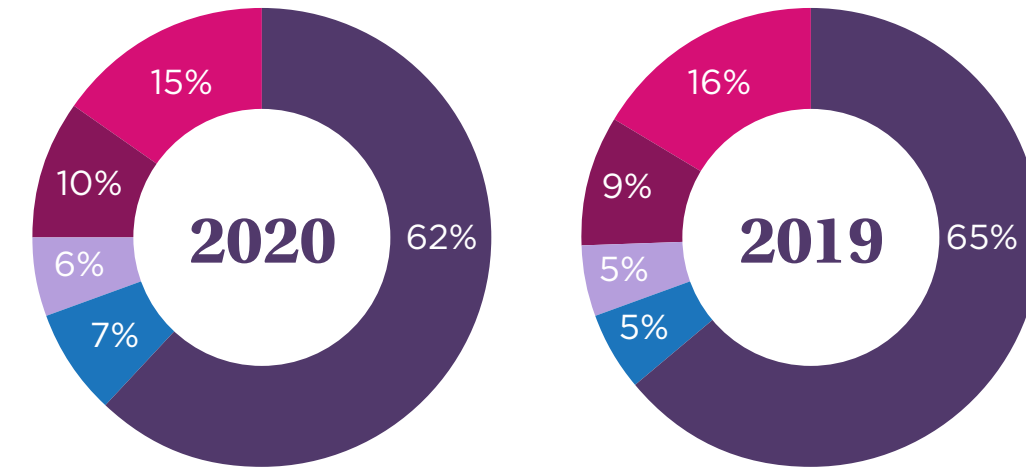
Financials

This summarised financial information is drawn from the full statutory financial statements for 2020.

2020 was a year of uncertainty with the Covid-19 pandemic arising unexpectedly. Concerned that the global lockdown would have severe implications for our income streams, we reduced our expenditure plans along with the BCI donation to the Better Cotton Growth and Innovation Fund, which is derived from Volume-Based Fees and used for field-level activities and innovation. We were fortunate that by year end all the contingency planning had served its purpose and there was no adverse impact on the organisation's financial stability.

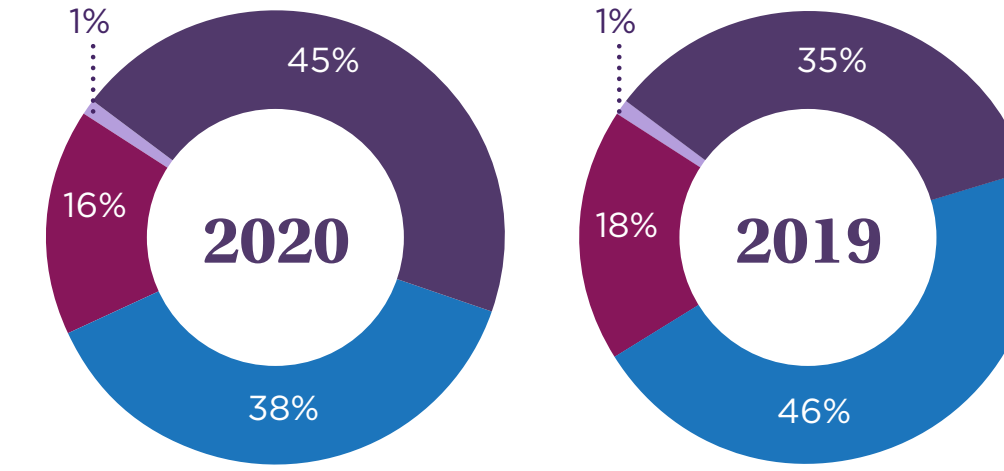
The continued growth of our membership as well as that of users of the Better Cotton Platform contributed to an increase in earned income. Further, despite the challenges experienced by many stakeholders due to the pandemic, the Volume-Based Fee result, paid by Retailer and Brand Members, surpassed expectations.

Expenditure



- Field-Level
- Assurance
- Stewardship of the Better Cotton Standard System
- Driving Better Cotton Sourcing
- Governance, Admin, Fundraising and Communications

Income



- Membership Fees and Better Cotton Platform Fees
- Volume-Based Fee (paid by BCI Retailer and Brand Members)
- Conferences and Workshops
- Grants

Expenditure	2020	2019
Field-Level	12,623	14,238
Assurance	1,483	1,209
Stewardship of the Better Cotton Standard System	1,140	1,111
Driving Better Cotton Sourcing	1,994	2,075
Governance, Admin, Fundraising and Communications	3,058	3,582
Total	20,297	22,215

Income	2020	2019
Membership Fees and Better Cotton Platform Fees	9,690	7,276
Volume-Based Fee (paid by BCI Retailer and Brand Members)	8,180	9,646
Conferences and Workshops	138	263
Grants	3,626	3,751
Total	21,496	20,935

(in thousands of euros)

Please note that the summarised financial information above combines both income and expenditure for both BCI and the Better Cotton Growth and Innovation Fund (GIF). These figures are for illustrative purposes and are not a detailed representation of the full, consolidated financial activities of BCI and the Better Cotton GIF, which are two separate legal entities. Financial statements for BCI and the GIF are available by contacting membership@bettercotton.org.



BCI Governance at a Glance

The General Assembly, consisting of all BCI Members, is the ultimate authority of BCI and elects a Council to represent it. The Council is the organisation's highest decision-making body, with a direct influence on making global cotton production more sustainable.

Meet the Council

Civil Society

Solidaridad: Isabelle Roger - Secretary
PAN UK: Keith Tyrell (elected in 2021)
Vacant: co-optation of an additional member is in progress

Producer Organisations

Cotton Australia: Hamish McIntyre
Supima: Marc Lewkowitz - Chair (re-elected in 2021)
Vacant: co-optation of an additional member is in progress

Retailers and Brands

Hennes & Mauritz: Harsha Vardhan
Levi Strauss & Co: Jeffrey Hogue
Adidas: Ebru Gencoglu (elected in 2021)

Suppliers and Manufacturers

Basil Commodities Pvt. Ltd: Pathik Patel
Anandi: R S Baalagurunathan (elected in 2021)
Louis Dreyfus Company: Pierre Chehab (nominated in 2021)

Independent Members

Joost Oorthuizen
Amit Shah - Treasurer

2020 Updates

In 2020, the Council election and co-optation process began as four seats came up for election, one in each of the following membership categories: Producer Organisations, Suppliers and Manufacturers, Retailers and Brands, and Civil Society.

The BCI General Assembly met virtually for the first time on 9 June 2020 following the cancellation of the scheduled in-person meeting due to global travel restrictions. The General Assembly subsequently postponed the Council elections by a period of six months due to Covid-19 disruption.

New Council Members adidas (Ebru Gencoglu), Anandi (R S Baalagurunathan) and PAN UK (Keith Tyrell) were later elected to the Council in 2021. Supima (Marc Lewkowitz) was re-elected. In addition to the elected members, Louis Dreyfus Company (Pierre Chehab) was co-opted to the Council. The co-optation of an additional Civil Society and Producer Organisation member is ongoing. **Find out more about the elections.**

Key Council Decisions 2020

The Council approved BCI's 2030 strategic direction.

Council members provided input to and confirmed decisions on several BCI workstreams, including the Task Force on Decent Work and Forced Labour, BCI programmes in existing and new countries, and communications guidelines for members, as recommended by the BCI management team.

- The Council decided to invest in BCI's media response capacity, given the increased public visibility of the organisation as well as its growing membership.
- At a field level, the Council took the decision not to extend the Monocrotophos (a highly hazardous pesticide) exception in India.
- As prescribed by the statutes, the Council approved the financial statements and Annual Operating Plan report for 2019, and the Annual Operating Plan and Budget for BCI in 2020.

In 2021, the BCI Council will decide on the economic, social and environmental targets and milestones for the organisation in the upcoming decade.

COMPOSITION OF THE BCI COUNCIL

The BCI Council is composed of three representatives, each from the four voting member categories: Producer Organisations; Suppliers and Manufacturers; Civil Society; and Retailers and Brands.

Two of the three seats in each category are elected by the members, and one seat is co-opted by the sitting Council to balance representation and appropriate expertise to deliver the work of the Council.



2020 Year in Review | 2030 Strategy Development

The Next Chapter of Our Sustainable Cotton Journey

When BCI launched just over a decade ago, we could hardly dare to dream that it would become the largest cotton sustainability programme in the world. Today, nearly a quarter of the world's cotton is produced under the Better Cotton Standard. By participating in BCI training, nearly 4 million individuals (using the **Farmers+ approach**) have adopted more sustainable farming practices and 2.4 million farmers are licensed to grow Better Cotton. And many of the world's leading apparel and textile brands support BCI as members and investors, directly advancing the transition to more sustainable cotton in 23 countries.

Together with our partners, we have made significant progress these past years, but there is much more still to do. In this decade of change towards 2030, our work is even more vital. The global challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, resource scarcity and social inequality are more pressing than ever. Meanwhile, the Covid-19 pandemic has heightened uncertainty and fragility in the global cotton supply chain, further reinforcing the need to build resilience and promote sustainable agriculture.

We remain determined to achieve our mission to transform the cotton sector - deepening our impact on cotton farming and communities while catalysing systemic change.

To address these challenges, strengthen the sector and contribute to fulfilling the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, we have, with our stakeholders, developed an ambitious strategy towards 2030. Building on our existing work, we will renew our efforts to ensure our capacity building is accessible to farmers and centred on their needs. Collaboration will remain central to our work. Importantly, we will seek to create measurable positive impacts, as we strive to improve lives and livelihoods in cotton farming communities, alleviating rural poverty while protecting the environment and conserving nature.

How we developed the strategy in 2020

Firstly, we conducted multiple workshops with more than 100 Implementing Partners, Retailers and Brand Members and field staff, and engaged with external experts and trusted partners (including ISEAL, IDH, WWF and Pesticide Action Network UK). Our Strategy Steering Group and Council provided support and feedback throughout, as we prepared an initial draft. Once approved, we launched the strategy to our own teams in early 2021, with a view to finalising targets and developing action plans in due course.

Next steps

In 2021, we will review and finalise our provisional global targets and indicators for the next ten years. We will also work with our national teams, partners and farmers' organisations and Producer Units to agree appropriate national or local indicators and milestones. Later in 2021, we will begin sharing the strategy with the wider world.

Above all, we remain determined to achieve our mission to transform the cotton sector - deepening our impact on cotton farming and communities while catalysing systemic change. We hope you'll join us in making this transformation a reality.



Outlook to 2021

Starting the Journey Towards Our 2030 Goals



We begin our journey towards our 2030 goals with a new look and a renewed focus on collaboration and learning. Our new brand identity, designed to be compelling and relevant to our stakeholders as we move into our second decade, is set to launch with a new website in the coming months. Meanwhile, building on a virtual Implementing Partner Meeting in January 2021, we will host a Large Farm Symposium in August. This will enable BCI partners from around the world to share best practices, collaborate and develop their networks, ensuring that knowledge exchange remains at the heart of continuous improvement.

Physical traceability is a growing area of interest for our Retailer and Brand Members, as they seek to demonstrate responsibility and compliance within their supply chains and build a deeper knowledge of social and environmental challenges at each stage. To deliver the level of insight required, we are looking beyond our mass balance chain of custody model to explore traceability options for Better Cotton. Recognising the scale of this challenge, we are taking a phased approach in 2021, engaging our stakeholders at every step of the way. Learn more [here](#).

Finally, to truly deliver our ambitions, we must create and measure meaningful impact. This is an explicit goal for the 2030 strategy and will be an increasing focus of our work, as we seek to amplify our reach and help improve lives and livelihoods in cotton farming communities. In particular, we will take a strategic approach to measuring and equipping farmers to act on their greenhouse gas emissions, including through our collaboration with [Gold Standard](#).

To truly deliver our ambitions, we must create and measure meaningful impact.

2020 Donors and Partners

We would like to thank the following donors and partners who, by supporting BCI, are driving positive change in the cotton sector:

2020 Donors

Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA)
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative
ISEAL Alliance Innovations Fund
Laudes Foundation

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BuZa)/ Netherlands Sustainable Economic Development Department (DDE)
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
Switzerland State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)
United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Development Innovation Ventures (DIV)

2020 Partners

Associação Brasileira dos Produtores de Algodão (ABRAPA)	Brazil
Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF)	Africa (Various)
Ambuja Cement Foundation (ABF)	India
Action for Food Production (AFPRO)	India
Aga Khan Rural Support Programme-India (AKRSPI)	India
Allenberg-ProCot	United States
Association des Producteurs de Coton Africains (AProCA)	Mali
Arvind	India
Basil Commodities Pvt. Ltd	India
Bharat Cotton	India
Binzhou Nongxi Cooperative	China
CABI	Pakistan
CANBEL Tarım Ürünleri Danışmanlık Egitim Pazarlama Sanayi Ticaret Ltd.	Turkey
Changzhou Keteng Textile Co., Ltd	China
Compagnie Malienne pour le Développement du Textile (CMDT)	Mali
Coastal Salinity Prevention Cell	India
Cotton Australia	Australia
Cotton Connect	India
Cotton Connect	Pakistan
Cotton Connect China	China
Cotton SA	South Africa
Deshpande Foundation	India
Development Support Centre (DSC)	India
ECOM	United States
FESAP-IP	Mozambique

Govt. Agriculture Extension Department, Rahim Yar Khan	Pakistan
Guoxin Rural Technical Service Association	China
The Cotton Institute of Mozambique (IAM)	Mozambique
Indigo	United States
Iyi Pamuk Uygulamaları Dernegi (IPUD)	Turkey
Israel Cotton Production & Marketing Board (ICB)	Israel
Jess Smith & Sons	United States
K.K. FIBRES (MP)	India
Lok Sanjh Foundation	Pakistan
Louis Dreyfus Company Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan
Lupin Human Welfare And Research Foundation	India
Mahima	India
MYRADA Kaveri Pradeshika Samsthe (MYKAPS)	India
OLAM-IP	Mozambique
OLAM-IP	United States
PCCA	United States
Pratibha Syntex Ltd.	India
Participatory Rural Development Initiatives Society (PRDIS)	India
Puneet Enterprises	India
Quarterway	United States
REEDS	Pakistan
SAN/JFS-IP	Mozambique
SANAM-IP	Mozambique

Sangtani Women Rural Development Organization	Pakistan
Sarob	Tajikistan
Shandong Huitong Textile Co. Ltd.	China
Spectrum International	India
Solidaridad China	China
Songzi Agriculture Technology Promotion Center	China
STAC INDIA	India
StapICotn	United States
TianliAgri	Madagascar
Trident Ltd.	India
Udyansh Gramin Samaj Sewa Samiti (UGSSS MP)	India
VARDHMAN	India
Welspun Foundation for Health and Knowledge (WFHK)	India
WWF	India
WWF-Pakistan	Pakistan
WWF-Turkey	Turkey



Farm worker Djeneba Kone. Kolondieba, Mali.
Image: BCI/Seun Adatsi



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