BCI Better Cotton Initiative™

BetterCotton.org

Better Cotton

Policy on Communicating Data

V3 2021

Introduction

BCI is committed to ensuring that reliable data about BCI activities and licensed production, as well as demonstrated progress and results are regularly communicated to BCI members, partners, producers, funders, and the public. The reputation of BCI rests in large part with the credibility of its data. Data is therefore provided at strategic moments throughout the cotton production cycle to allow the Better Cotton network and its stakeholders to effectively use and learn from it.

This policy is aimed at BCI staff, members, partners, and funders. It refers to the periodic communication of data by BCI and specifically addresses the following:

> **Types of data communicated**

> **Rationale for limitations on data use**

> **When and how data is made available by BCI**

BCI will provide data to interested parties according to this policy. Complementary data sharing agreements are developed to meet the needs of specific partnerships, research or funding partner agreements while ensuring that farmers', partners', and members' sensitive information is protected.

Photo Credit (cover): BCI/Khaula Jamil
Location: Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, Pakistan. 2019.
Description: Farm-worker Shahida Parveen holding cotton.

Photo Credit (this page): BCI/Khaula Jamil
Location: Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, Pakistan. 2019.
Description: Cotton

Glossary of Seasonal Terms

The below seasonal terms are used for BCI's reach indicators: quantity of Better Cotton, number of BCI Farmers, and area covered by Better Cotton.

> **Early Season Estimates:** Expected figures estimated by participating producers four weeks after sowing the cotton crop.

> **Late Season Estimates:** Revised estimates reported during the Self-Assessment process. If Producer Units and Large Farms earn a Better Cotton licence, these estimates are used for licensing.

> **Final Post-Harvest:** Actual figures calculated post-harvest.

The table below depicts the 2020-21 cotton season for countries producing Better Cotton or operating BCI-recognised equivalent standards. The Better Cotton calendar runs from August to July and aligns with the international cotton season defined by the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC). The start of the season corresponds to the beginning of the harvest in the Northern Hemisphere (excluding the sowing months) and ends in the following calendar year with the harvests in the Southern Hemisphere. Due to climatic conditions, the start and end of cotton seasons in specific countries may vary each year.

Cotton Calendar
Season 2020-21

Country	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21
Israel		H	H	H				P	P			
USA		H	H	H	H			P	P	P		
China			H	H					P	P	P	
Pakistan	H	H	H	H	H				P	P	P	P
Tajikistan			H	H				P	P			
Kazakhstan		H	H	H					P			
Turkey			H	H	H					P	P	
India			H	H	H	H				P	P	P
Mali	P			H	H						P	P
Madagascar	H	H		P	P	P	P		H	H	H	H
Mozambique	H	H			P	P	P	P				
South Africa				P	P	P	P					
Australia					P	P	P		H	H	H	H
Brazil	H	H	H	H	P	P	P	P			H	H
Egypt			H	H	H				P			

● Planting   ● Harvest

Data Communication Overview

A. Field

Data	Level of Data Aggregation	Shared with Whom	Communication Method	Frequency
Reach Indicators				
1. Number of farmers participating in Better Cotton projects	Country	BCI Staff and Council	BCI Data Snapshot	Quarterly
2. Number of licensed BCI Farmers 3. Percentage of participating farmers earning Better Cotton licence	Country (Better Cotton production only)	Members	Better Cotton Production & Uptake Report	Quarterly
4. Harvested area under Better Cotton	Country	Public	Annual Report	Annually in June – Final figures
5. Better Cotton production	Country	Public	Conferences, meetings, or specific requests (i.e. media)	Ad-hoc, with clear communication of whether data is an estimate and subject to change, or final
Results Indicators				
1. Pesticide use 2. Fertiliser use	Country	Public	Farmer Results Reporting	Annually in October
3. Water used for irrigation 4. Yield 5. Profitability 6. Leveraged partnerships with local specialist organisations on child labour 7. Level of understanding and awareness among farmers about hazardous child labour 8. Inclusion of women	Project and Producer Unit State/Province/District	Implementing and Strategic Partners	Learning Dashboards in Tableau	Annually, when data analysis is finalised
Assurance Outcome Data				

1. Total participating Producers
2. Producers due for licensing
3. Number of licences awarded
4. Number of licences cancelled/denied
5. Total number of external assessments:
  a. Number of BCI licensing assessment visits
  b. Number of 3rd-party verifier licensing assessment visits
  c. Number of Implementing Partner assessments (prior to season 2020-21)
6. Indicators where frequent non-conformities were found by Producer type
7. Average number of non-conformities per assessment per country
	Producer and Country, depending on data point	Public	BCI Website	Annually

B. Membership

Data	Level of Data Aggregation	Shared with Whom	Communication Method	Frequency
Membership Indicators				
1. Names and types of BCI Members	Member Type	Public	BCI Website	Quarterly
2. Leaderboard results a) Top Retailer and Brand Members (sourcing; sourced over set thresholds; most improved) b) Top merchants (volume) c) Top mills (volume) d) Top mills (country)	Member	Public	Leaderboard	Annually [publication is at the discretion of BCI]
3. Results of Annual Membership Self-Assessment Survey	Member Type	BCI Members	Anonymised Summary Report	Annually – Q1

C. Supply Chain

Data	Level of Data Aggregation	Shared with Whom	Communication Method	Frequency
Uptake Data				
1. Ginner Uptake 2. Large Farm Sales 3. Spinner Uptake 4. Fabric Mill Uptake 5. Retailer & Brand Member Uptake 6. Inventory Snapshot	Country Member Type	BCI Members	Better cotton Production & Uptake Report	Quarterly

Photo Credit: BCI/Florian Lang
Location: Surendranagar, Gujarat, India. 2018.
Description: An farm-worker is preparing a field with the help of a manual plough, which is drawn by bulls for cotton cultivation.

Levels of Data Aggregation

With regards to farm-level data, BCI collects data from large numbers of farmers and other stakeholders and our reporting is done using aggregated figures. This means that no data from any one individual farmer is ever communicated. Instead, the data is pooled together with other farmers from the same region or the same country.

> The **global** level indicates information from all Better Cotton producing countries aggregated and presented together (e.g. quantity of licensed Better Cotton produced globally).

> The **country** level means that totals are given for indicators like the volume of Better Cotton produced nationally (e.g. quantity of Better Cotton produced in one country).

> Average farm-level results at **state/province/district** level are shared with BCI's Implementing and Strategic Partners in learning dashboards.

> BCI does not publicly communicate statistics at the **project**[1] or **Producer** level. Implementing Partners, only, may share project level information within the Better Cotton network for learning purposes or with their funding partners for project monitoring.

> BCI never publicly communicates individual **farm** level data. This data is stored confidentially and only used to produce anonymised statistics.
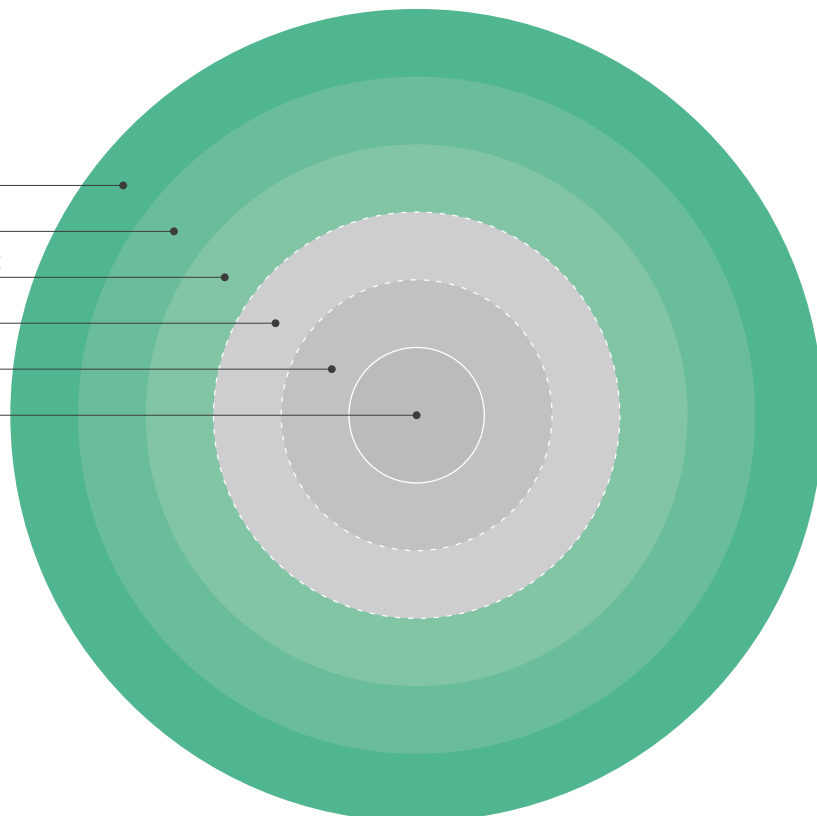
Levels of Data Aggregation

Global

Country

State / Province / District

Project

Producer

Farm

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1   In the case of BCI countries that have only one project, BCI will seek permission from the Implementing Partner to publish data.

A. Field

The Reach Indicators provide an overview of the scope of engagement with farmers around the world, the area of harvested land covered, and the availability of licensed Better Cotton. Final, confirmed figures for the Reach Indicators in all countries are available in BCI's Annual Report in June each year.

BCI produces an internal quarterly report, called the Data Snapshot, that provides the latest estimates and final figures, depending on the point in the season, for four reach indicators (this report does not include the percentage of farmers earning the licence).

Quarterly, BCI publishes a report for members called the Better Cotton Production & Uptake Report that provides the latest production estimates. Due to the seasonal nature of the cotton crop, countries are in different points in the season at any one moment of the year.

With prior written approval from BCI's Sr. Manager for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, projected figures can be shared at conferences and meetings (at which attendance extends beyond BCI members and staff) or upon specific request from the media. Any figures about BCI's reach must be shared with clear communication of whether data is an estimate and subject to change, or final.

RESULTS INDICATORS

	Small-holders	Medium Farms	Large Farms
1. Pesticide use	✓	✓	✓
2. Fertiliser use	✓	✓	✓
3. Water used for irrigation	✓	✓	✓
4. Yield	✓	✓	✓
5. Profitability	✓	✓	
6. Leveraged partnerships with local specialist organisations on child labour	✓	✓	
7. Level of understanding and awareness among farmers about hazardous child labour	✓	✓	
8. Inclusion of women in project activities	✓	✓	

The Results Indicators use farmers' self-reported data to demonstrate the situation of BCI Farmers compared to that of non-BCI comparison farmers in the same geographic area and during the same season. More information about the methodology used to collect the data and how the Results Indicators are measured is available in the document, Better Cotton Assurance Program: Working with Results Indicators.

The Results Indicators are communicated annually per country in an online BCI Farmer Results report. Results are communicated only when data is validated, and analysis is complete.

For learning purposes, BCI also shares Results Indicators in Learning Dashboards, aggregated at the project and Producer Unit levels, with its Implementing and Strategic Partners who are responsible for managing the projects.

BCI recommends Implementing Partners to limit the sharing of their own results at project or Producer Unit level to the funders of those projects or other partners for donor reporting and learning purposes. Producing Better Cotton is a collective effort and individual actors (partners and funders) can communicate about their contribution (e.g. the number of farmers they worked with or the farming area their projects covered) and combine it with the broader picture (i.e. official Results Indicator national averages compared to non-BCI farmers). By doing so, together we strengthen the coherent message of Better Cotton by connecting the local with the national.

> **Recommended language** *(fictional example)*: The project reached 10,000 Indian farmers with training and support in the 2018-19 season. Of those, 80% (8,000) earned a Better Cotton licence. These BCI Farmers contributed to achieving a 10% higher yield, on average in India, than comparison farmers growing cotton that season.

A note on impact: While Results Indicators show a comparison in the short term, longer term change attributed to BCI is demonstrated through rigorous impact assessment. Impact is defined by ISEAL as the "*…positive and negative long-term effects resulting from the implementation of a standards system, either directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.*" BCI is committed to assessing impact and studies are underway. BCI shares findings and learning on its website as they become available.

Results vs. Impact: Recommended Language When Communicating Results Indicators

This data illustrates the relative situation of BCI Farmers and comparison farmers in the _____ harvest season. The results are self-reported from BCI Farmers and comparison farmers. BCI and its partners engage with rigorous complementary studies that include in-depth contextual analyses.

For guidance for Retailer and Brand Members on making claims about their contribution to field-level results, please consult the Better Cotton Claims Framework.

Photo Credit: BCI/Demarcus Bowser

Photo Credit: BCI/Seun Adatsi.
Location: Kolondieba, Mali. 2019.
Description: Tata Djire, Agronomist. Tata stands in a cotton field, holding cotton harvest.

ASSURANCE OUTCOMES DATA

1. **Total participating Producers**
2. **Producers due for licensing**
3. **Number of licences awarded**
4. **Number of licences cancelled/denied**
5. **Total number of external assessments:**

    a. Number of BCI licensing assessment visits

    b. Number of 3rd-party verifier licensing assessment visits

    c. Number of Implementing Partner assessments (prior to season 2020-21)[2]

6. **Indicators where frequent non-conformities were found by Producer type**
7. **Average number of non-conformities per assessment per country**

BCI conducts its Assurance Programme with Producers – either large farms or groups of medium or smallholder farmers called Producer Units (PUs). One PU can have on average 100 medium farms or around 3,500 smallholder farms. The unit of licensing at BCI is at the Producer level – licences are awarded either to an individual large farm or a PU, where all farmers within the PU become licensed Better Cotton Producers. Please see BCI Assurance Manual for detailed definitions of key terms, including how BCI categorises smallholder, medium, and large farms.

Once per year, BCI publishes a summary of external assessments[3] that provides a high-level analysis of the seasonal assurance outcome data. The data is aggregated at country and global level without any identifying information.

The report analyses the number of Producers due for licensing as a part of the total number of Producers participating in BCI programmes; the number of external assessments carried out that season and their breakdown by verifier category (BCI assessor or third party verifier); the number of licences awarded, denied, or cancelled. The report also looks at the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria indicators against which frequent non-conformities were identified, disaggregated by Producer type.

In line with the ISEAL Assurance Code of Good Practice requirement (Clause 6.3.1) to publicly report assurance system information, BCI discloses the current list of licensed Producers, their licence duration, and scope of assurance.

Any publicly available information on assurance outcomes can be viewed and downloaded by stakeholders using the BCI website.

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2   Prior to Season 2020-21, BCI Assurance Model included external assessment checks by Implementing Partners (IP). Therefore, the assurance outcome data for preceding seasons also includes the numbers of IP-led 2nd-party credibility checks (IP 2PCC). In the updated BCI Assurance Manual (v 4.0 onwards), IPs do not conduct licensing assessments, and therefore information on IP 2PCC is no longer included in the assurance outcomes summary.

3   This report can be accessed on the BCI Assurance Programme webpage

B. Membership

A list of members with location and category of membership, along with a full list of non-member suppliers who use the Better Cotton Platform, is available to the public on the BCI website. An update to the members' list is made bi-weekly on the *Find Members* page of the BCI website.

All BCI Members are contributing to the sustainable future of cotton. The annual leaderboard provides an opportunity to highlight some of the leaders in sourcing Better Cotton – both retailer and brands as well as cotton merchants and mills. The Leaderboard is published annually. BCI may, for strategic reasons, decide not to release the leaderboard in a given year.

BCI runs an annual survey with its members in which they self-assess their performance against BCI's Membership Code of Practice as outlined in the BCI Monitoring Protocol. The anonymised, aggregated results are shared back with members in the first quarter each year. The intention of the Monitoring Protocol and communicating transparently about member performance is to protect the credibility of the Better Cotton Initiative as a whole and to encourage members to continue to improve their own performance and to support the development of the initiative. Collaboration, sharing experiences, and continuous improvement are key themes BCI would like to promote amongst members.

Photo Credit: BCI/Khaula Jamil
Location: Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, Pakistan. 2019.
Description: Farm-worker Shahida Parveen holding cotton.

C. Supply Chain

UPTAKE INDICATORS

1. **Ginner uptake**
2. **Large farm sales**
3. **Spinner uptake**
4. **Fabric mill uptake**
5. **Retailer & brand uptake**
6. **Inventory snapshot**

BCI monitors the uptake of Better Cotton throughout the supply chain, measured from January to December. The quarterly Better Cotton Production & Uptake Report is published to provide BCI Members with an overview of the amount of Better Cotton expected to be available on the market as well as the latest information on Better Cotton uptake in the global supply chain. We also share the below data in direct member communications, both by e-mail and during presentations at events. By publishing this information, BCI intends to support its members in sourcing Better Cotton by improving the linkages between supply and demand.

1. **Ginner uptake:** Ginner uptake allows us to see how much Better Cotton has been purchased from licensed farmers during the mentioned season in a selection of countries. In these countries we refer to smallholder farmers who sell seed cotton to ginners. Ginners process the lint cotton and own the resulting lint bales which they later sell to spinners and traders.

2. **Large farm sales:** Unlike smallholder countries, where ginners buy seed cotton from farmers, then gin and market bales, in Large Farm (LF) countries like Australia, Brazil and USA, ginners provide a ginning service to the farmer, who retains ownership of the final bale and typically sells it to a trader.

3. **Spinner uptake:** Spinner uptake gives our traders and growers an indication of which markets to target with their bales, while providing our new retailers and brands guidance on which markets have the highest levels of spinners sourcing cotton as Better Cotton.

4. **Fabric mill uptake:** Fabric mill uptake gives retailers and brands an indication about Better Cotton sourcing levels in final production stages.

5. **Retailer and Brand Member (RB) uptake** indicates the cumulative amount of Better Cotton (Better Cotton Claim Units - BCCUs) sourced by Retailer and Brand Members at a given point in time. RB uptake is important because it demonstrates Better Cotton demand at the end of the supply chain. RB uptake is critical because it translates into funding for farmer training activities.

6. **Inventory snapshot:** Inventory snapshots show BCCUs availability at each supplier category level and in various geographies at a specific point in time. Snapshots can support companies with their Better Cotton sourcing strategies and improve linkages between supply and demand.

Photo Credit: BCI/Yuyang Liu
Location: Weixian, Hebei, China. 2019.
Description: Fields of Hechagu Village, Weixian, where Wang Meishuang (BCI Farmer and Field Facilitator) lives.

ATTRIBUTION
OF DATA

When BCI Members and Implementing Partners wish to communicate data externally and attribute it to BCI, they may only reference data that is validated and shared by BCI.

Implementing Partners can share and communicate their own data related to BCI project activities, but the data cannot be attributed to BCI and the BCI logo cannot be used unless written agreement is acquired. Implementing Partners may communicate, for example, to their funders about the Reach Indicators they collect and that pertain to their specific projects (i.e. information aggregated at the level of the Implementing Partner or project). They may also communicate data at the global and country level that is provided by BCI in official communications.

Partners, members, and other BCI stakeholders are required to conform to this policy. BCI will not validate any information that violates the policy.

Photo Credit: BCI/Seun Adatsi.
Location: Kolondieba, Mali. 2019.
Description: Farm-worker Djeneba Kone.