

BETTER
COTTON

GROWTH & INNOVATION FUND



the sustainable
trade initiative



ANNUAL REPORT

2020-21



Picture Credit: Lupin Foundation



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Introduction

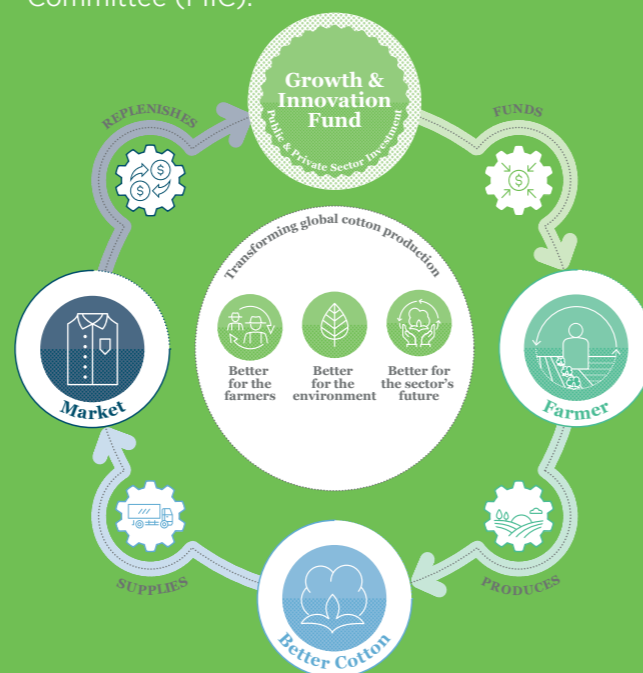
The Better Cotton Growth and Innovation Fund (Better Cotton GIF or the Fund) is a global programme designed to support the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) in achieving its goals and reaching cotton farming communities who need the most support.

The focus of the Fund is field-level – investment in more sustainable farming practices, better training and capacity building, more efficient data collection, and research to benefit farmers and the environment.

By the end of the 2020-21 cotton season, BCI aims to reach five million farmers and account for 30% of global cotton production. It aspires to establish Better Cotton as a mainstream sustainable commodity, becoming part of the day-to-day business in the cotton sector. The Better Cotton GIF is the main investment mechanism that will help catapult BCI towards these targets.

The BCI Growth and Innovation Fund (GIF) was established by Charter in Geneva in 2015 as a

Swiss Foundation. Its three board members are the BCI CEO, COO and one Director. GIF's investments are guided by two advisory committees: The Buyer and Investor Committee (BIC) and the Field Investment and Innovation Committee (FIIC).



Who is involved in the Fund

The Better Cotton GIF is overseen by the BCI Council in partnership with BCI retailers and Brands and civil society members. IDH is both the official Fund Manager as well as an important funder. Representatives from IDH and BCI form the Better Cotton GIF Secretariat, who propose and implement the Better Cotton GIF strategy, manage and process applications, and promote knowledge sharing. BCI Members who meet the representation criteria and rules are invited to join the Better Cotton GIF committees and participate in the development of its investment strategy. Two multi-stakeholder committees support the Fund's annual investment programme:

- **The Buyer and Investor Committee (BIC)** is charged with linking supply and demand and proposing new strategic initiatives. BIC members in the 2020-21 season were: adidas, BESTSELLER, C&A, Decathlon, GAP Inc., GIZ, H&M, IKEA, Laudes Foundation, Levi Strauss & Co., M&S, Nike Inc., Tommy Hilfiger, VF Corporation, BCI and IDH
- **The Field Innovation and Impact Committee (FIIC)** oversees the annual GIF application process and approves Fund investment allocation for capacity-building projects and programmes delivered by BCI Implementing Partners (IPs) and for innovation and learning projects. FIIC members included representatives from the following organisations in the 2020-21 season: Adidas, BCI, C&A, GIZ, IDH, Laudes Foundation and Pesticide Action Network.

How does the Fund work?

BCI Retailers and Brand Members contribute to the Fund through a fee based on the volume of Better Cotton they procure and declare (volume-based fee or VBF). This fee enables brands to directly and efficiently support field-level programmes. Additionally, the Better Cotton GIF invites global institutional donors and government agencies to match the fees contributed by the private sector. The Better Cotton GIF requests and encourages IPs to increasingly contribute to the projects they are running.

How is funding allocated?

The Better Cotton GIF makes investments on an annual basis to fund capacity-building projects aiming to help farmers adopt practices consistent with the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria. BCI IPs operating in GIF-strategic focus countries who have proven ability to deliver Better Cotton projects according to the Better Cotton GIF strategy are invited to submit project proposals to the Fund annually.

Following a rigorous review process, funding is allocated to projects aligning with the Fund's annual priorities, long-term strategy and assessment criteria. Shortlisted proposals are presented in January to the Field Innovation and Impact Committee (FIIC), who vote on each proposal; only those approved will receive funding.

In 2020, the cotton-production sector felt the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, there was reduced demand for cotton as a direct result of COVID-19. The apparel sector had been severely impacted due to store and factory closures, cancellation of orders placed with suppliers and worker redundancies – this reduced demand for new products sparked a domino effect on the supply for raw materials such as Better Cotton. The threat of a significantly lower financial contribution by private-sector partners had the potential to compromise the level of investment in smallholder capacity-building activities. Due to global demand recovery towards the end of 2020 and the onboarding of new BCI Retailer and Brand Members (and therefore additional funding), the total GIF contribution increased to €11.3 million, which included contributions from the private sector, donors and the IPs as well as a financial contribution of €1 million by IDH directly into the Fund.

Throughout the pandemic, IDH and GIF worked together with IPs in Mozambique, India, Pakistan, Turkey and China to deliver training to smallholder cotton farmers to improve their agronomic and Decent Work practices.

IDH has supported the BCI by convening leading BCI Retailer and Brand Members and illustrating the potential negative impact of reduced financial contributions at field level and

on smallholder farmers. IDH has demonstrated the value of maintaining investments in capacity building through the pandemic with a view to improving smallholder profitability, thereby supporting vulnerable populations already facing challenging circumstances. As a result, in 2020, the Better Cotton GIF had reached 1.8 million farmers across 3.2 million ha, producing 2.2 MT cotton lint .

In addition to standard capacity-building projects for farmers, the Better Cotton GIF has invested in and rolled out an online training platform for capacity building of Field Facilitators (FFs) in India, who are responsible for the last-mile delivery of the Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS) to farmers. The platform has been used by 2,100 FFs across seven states and has

translated into six languages with content on Soil Health, BCI Record Keeping, Safe Usage of Pesticides, Pest Management and the Cotton Growth Cycle. Better Cotton GIF activities and interventions in 2020 resulted in maintaining the investment in capacity building and introduction of modified and innovative training methods to deal with the impact of the pandemic.

In 2020, BC GIF had concluded the first Better Cotton Innovation Challenge by declaring innovators Agritask and CropIn winners of a total of €135,000 in prize money. In the upcoming cotton season, we look forward to piloting the winning innovation in the field and applying the lessons learned to BCI's portfolio of projects.



Project Investments and Activities

In the 2020-21 cotton season, the Fund has worked with 1.8 million cotton farmers in India, Pakistan, China, Mozambique and Turkey. The farmers have received training and support from the Fund through IPs. Better Cotton GIF has directly invested €8.4 million of volume-based fee from BCI Retailer and Brand Members, donors (DFAT, Laudes Foundation and IDH) and GIF has mobilised an additional €2.9 million as co-funding from IPs to create a total portfolio value of €11.3 million.

India

The cotton sector in India is considered to be the second most developed sector in the textile industry (after man-made fibres) and India is now the second largest producer of cotton in the world (after China), producing around 18% of the world's cotton. It also has the largest area under cotton cultivation in the world, representing about 25% of the world area under cotton cultivation.

India has the largest number of farmers participating in the BCI Programme and growing Better Cotton.

In 2020-21, the Fund has worked with 13 IPs on 24 projects.

Programme Results 2020-21

GIF Fund Investment	€4,894,674
Participating Farmers	1,041,574
Area Covered	1,587,796 ha
Better Cotton Production	1,104,661 MT

Implementing Partners

Ambuja Cement Foundation | AFPRO | AKRSP(I) | Arvind Ltd. | Basil Commodities | CottonConnect | Deshpande Foundation | K.K. Fibers | Lupin Foundation | Spectrum International | STAC | Udyansh | WWF India

Narratives

Implementing Partner: Lupin Foundation

Lupin Foundation has been working with BCI since April 2017 with 15,000 cotton growers. In 2019, the project was scaled to 75,000 BCI Farmers across 15 Producer Units, covering 462 villages in Dhule and Nandurbar districts in Maharashtra.

These districts have faced several climate-related challenges such as uneven rainfall, high temperature and lack of groundwater availability, which results in poor soil health and crop health. Additionally, cotton growers in these regions are accustomed to traditional methods of farming and adopting practices such as intercropping and single-seed sowing have been challenging.

During 2020-21, Lupin Foundation worked with the farmers to train them on innovative farming practices. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the Foundation developed training materials in animated video format and started educating farmers on the online platform as well as sharing training content over WhatsApp groups. During the pandemic, a total of 17,150 farmers were trained on BCI practices on digital platform via 2-D animated videos on a YouTube channel.

In addition, Lupin Foundation has worked towards improving their internal management system and partnership development and also implemented a pilot project which aimed to strengthen the participation of women co-farmers in the BCI project.



Story from the field

Picture Credit: Lupin Foundation

Bapu Rama Marathe, BCI farmer, Dahyane village, Dhule, Maharashtra

Bapu Rama Marathe has been a BCI Farmer since 2018. He owns five acres of land, two of which are cotton cultivated.

Over fertilisation and indiscriminate sprays of pesticides have been traditionally used by farmers in his region to boost their yields in cotton, which had a negative impact on the crop and added to farming expenses. In addition, the region suffers from the impacts of climate changes including uneven rainfall pattern, high temperatures and lack of ground water availability, which has an impact on soil and crop health.

Attending BCI trainings has helped Bapu to apply innovative farming methods to overcome these challenges. He learnt how to make bio-preparations and actively applied it on his field over the season. He now prepares different natural pesticides like Jivamrut, Amrutpani, Panchgavya and homemade amino acid and humic acid to apply in his fields. This season, Bapu did not use any chemical spray on his field and he performs soil testing on his farms to ensure correct treatment for his crop.

“Before joining BCI, I didn’t take soil testing seriously. After interacting with the Field Facilitator from BCI, I learnt about soil testing and its practical benefits for a smallholder farmer like me. Now, I apply fertiliser doses according to the soil requirement of my farm. This practice increases my production, improves soil fertility, enhances availability of nutrients in soil and decreases my cost of cultivation.”

He further says, “Using BCI practices has not only benefitted my cotton production but also in other crops. Before joining the BCI project, my cotton productivity was approximately three to five quintals per acre but now (upon adopting Better Cotton farming practices) it has reached around 5.20 quintal per acre in this season.”

Pakistan

Pakistan is the fourth largest producer of cotton in the world and importantly also holds the third largest spinning capacity in Asia (after China and India) with thousands of ginning and spinning units producing textile products from cotton. Approximately 1.5 million smallholder farmers rely on cotton for a living.

Cotton is the country's most widely cultivated crop and an important raw material for its growing textiles industry, representing 8.5% of GDP.

In 2020-21, the Fund has worked with seven IPs on 11 projects.

Programme Results 2020-21

GIF Fund Investment	€3,156,489
Participating Farmers	535,477
Area Covered	1,441,419 ha
Better Cotton Production	901,863 MT

Implementing Partners

CABI | CottonConnect | Lok Sanjh | REEDS | Smart Agriculture | SWRDO | WWF Pakistan

Narratives

Implementing Partner: CABI

CABI is an international not-for-profit organisation, which has been a BCI Implementing Partner since 2012. It has grown from working with 3,000 smallholder farmers in its first year to over 31,463 farmers and 69,010 workers in 2020-21 across Mirpur Khas and Sanghar districts in Pakistan.

Regional farmers face challenges with the harsh environments, including droughts, torrential rains and pest attacks. CABI's major challenges have been changing people's mindsets regarding using pesticides, irrigation and fertiliser and following integrated pest management (IPM) practices. To improve this situation, CABI has trained farmers, workers and field staff to increase their knowledge on sustainable cotton-farming practices.

CABI targets training staff and farmers on diverse topics including: IPM; using registered pesticides; irrigation-resources mapping; improving soil through soil identification; soil analysis; biodiversity management through conserving biodiversity resources; improving fibre quality through proper picking; storage and transport practices; child labour and improving the situation of marginalised groups.



Story from the field

Picture Credit: CABI

Javed Dall, Mirpur Khas, Sindh - Pakistan

Javed lives in Jameel Dall village in Mirpur Khas district in Pakistan and has been one of the most active BCI Farmers in the project since 2012. He has 200 acres of land where he cultivates cotton, wheat, mango, mustard, jojoba and diverse vegetables.

Javed has been growing cotton since 2002. He shares the initial challenges he has faced as a cotton farmer: "Earlier, I was getting a good cotton yield after applying one bag of nitrogen and a half bag of phosphorus per acre. However, over years the fertiliser requirement on my farm kept increasing, impacting my savings."

He had shared this issue with CABI's Field Facilitator, who explained soil-nutrient management and recommended soil analysis. Javed says, "After participation in CABI's training session on soil-management practices, I collected some soil samples of land where my cotton production was declining for analysis. After the test, I realised that I was using wrong fertilisers on my land. Following information from the soil report and through training, I started using farmyard manure. My cotton production improved by around 5% and I was also able to save PKR 7,000 to 5,000 per acre as input costs."

In addition, Javed has started using homemade yellow sticky traps to manage sucking pests in his cotton crops, on which he and other farmers in the project were trained. He reports this has reduced his input costs by PKR 50,000.

Turkey

Cotton is an important crop in Turkey, where there is a large domestic textile industry that relies on cotton production. Cotton is mainly grown in the Aegean region, Çukurova and south-eastern Anatolia.

İyi Pamuk Uygulamaları Derneği - IPUD is BCI's strategic partner in Turkey and in that role, represents BCI and promotes Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS) in Turkey.

In 2020-21, the Fund has worked with three IPs on three projects.

Programme Results 2020-21

GIF Fund Investment **€146,276**

Participating Farmers **2,126**

Area Covered **42,278 ha**

Better Cotton Production **77,463 MT**

Implementing Partners

Canbel | GAP RDA | WWF Turkey

Narratives

Implementing Partner: Canbel

Canbel is a consulting company that implements sustainable agricultural standards and provides technical advice to farmers in the Aegean Region of Turkey. In 2018, to disseminate the Better Cotton Standard in the Aegean Region, Canbel became a BCI IP working closely with IPUD, the strategic partner of BCI in Turkey. Canbel had reached 500 farmers in seven districts as an IP in their first year. In 2020, the number of farmers has increased to 2,051 in 113 districts.

The IP focuses on improving technical skills of the field-extension service providers and soil health; disseminating integrated pest-management techniques; developing a robust data-collection system and empowering female workers. As farmers were engaged in field work during the season, Canbel had faced an issue of a small farmer turnout for trainings. As a solution, the IP now delivers farmer trainings during one-on-one field visits.

Farmers are encouraged by Canbel to analyse soil and create fertilisation plans accordingly as well as to use IPM techniques to reduce the use of chemical pesticides.

Canbel plans to start using an online data-collection system in 2021. Additionally, it has converted the Farmers' Registry into a common online document which has increased the data collection and storage capacity of the FFs to obtain cleaner and more accurate data in the Result Indicator Report.

The farmers have responded favourably to these interventions and are incorporating their learnings into practice. This year, Canbel aims to increase farmers' participation in obtaining soil analysis for their fields for better agrochemical management and to improve the use of organic fertilisers. Going forward, the IP plans to continue training activities and wants to work with the Municipality of İzmir on a support system to empower female workers in 2021.



Picture Credit: Canbel

Memduh Övünç Yılmaz

Memduh Övünç Yılmaz lives and practices farming in Pamukyazı village, Torbalı district in İzmir. He has been farming for seven years, grows cotton on 30 hectares of land and joined the BCI programme in 2019.

By attending training organised by Canbel, Memduh is now able to implement the learnings. Through the IPM training and support from the FFs, he recognises harmful and beneficial insects in his field. He sprays pesticides after noticing the integrated damage thresholds and understands resistance management by not using the same active-ingredient pesticide group consecutively. Thus, pesticide resistance has been reduced in his field. Due to these interventions, his input costs have decreased.

Memduh began to spot beneficial insects, such as ladybugs, at his farm. While ladybugs were not encountered in the field in 2019, a ladybug population was discovered in his field in 2020. Memduh is happy with eliminating the negative financial burden and preventing environmental pollution. The resurgence of beneficial and reduction of harmful insect populations, which is the balance of nature, have stepped back into order.



Picture Credit: Better Cotton Initiatives

Mozambique

Cotton is the most important agricultural export crop in Mozambique and one of the major sources of income for rural households in central and northern Mozambique. Most farmers cultivate less than one hectare of cotton.

In Mozambique, 86% of the country's cotton farmers produce Better Cotton. From this, smallholder BCI farmers manage 90% of the land under cotton cultivation. BCI Farmers grow rain-fed cotton, largely by hand.

In 2020-21, the Fund has worked with two IPs on two projects.

Programme Results 2020-21*

GIF Fund Investment	€41,006
Participating Farmers	85,000
Area Covered	69,050 ha
Better Cotton Production	26,316 MT

Implementing Partners

Sanam | SAN-JFS

*Mozambique is exception due to Southern Hemisphere. Figures are Contracted figures.

Implementing Partner: Sanam

Sanam has been a private company in the business of cotton cultivation and production for the last 15 years and is a member of BCI. The company has improved with respect to producing quality cotton, acquiring additional international customers and farming cotton on a larger scale.

Sanam encountered obstacles by way of encouraging farmers to attend training on Better Cotton Principles and Criteria, cotton cultivation strategies and crop protection from insects and weeds via chemicals applied properly and timely.

With regular farmer interactions, the IP has overcome these challenges. Now, trainings for farmers are organised regularly and farmers receive support with inputs such as seeds, agrochemicals, monetary assistance and the connection to technical advisory experts.

As a continuous improvement model, Sanam discusses the seasonal challenges with farmers and reports them to BCI. BCI's suggestions are implemented in the next season to avoid similar issues in the forthcoming seasons. Furthermore, farmer feedback is collected, becoming the base for preparing the next season's work plan.



Picture Credit: Better Cotton Initiatives

China

As both the world's largest cotton producer and a major consumer of cotton, China is a key country for Better Cotton. Sustainable cotton production is a major challenge here, with 24 million farmers depending on cotton cultivation to earn a living and the environmental footprint this represents.

In 2020-21, the Fund has worked with four IPs on four projects.

Programme Results 2020-21

GIF Fund Investment	€288,772
Participating Farmers	106,425
Area Covered	63,213 ha
Better Cotton Production	93,864 MT

Implementing Partners

CottonConnect | Huangmei Cooperative | Nongxi Cooperative | Songzi Agricultural Extension Center



Driving Learning & Innovation

In addition to providing farmer support and training, in 2020-2021 the Fund has invested in six learning and innovation projects which aim to support farmer training and support programmes with newly-created learning materials and methods, university research, gender projects and field innovations.



Picture Credit: AFPRO

1. Learning Management System (LMS) for Field Facilitators in India

Project partner: Abara

IDH and BCI have launched an online skill-development tool for all Field Facilitators (FFs) engaged with the Better Cotton GIF programmes in India.

FFs are responsible for the last-mile delivery of the Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS) to the farmer. BCI and its IPs identified a significant variation in the knowledge and capability of the FFs, both in terms of agronomic knowledge and soft skills required for training and project management. To address this, standardised training modules were developed to ensure FFs have a uniform skillset and the understanding required to support cotton farmers with the implementation of the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria.

In 2019, as phase one of implementation, a pilot was rolled out to 634 FFs from the IPs in Maharashtra and Gujarat to test the standardised modules.

After a successful pilot, an online learning tool with the standard training modules had been

rolled out to approximately 2,100 FFs to provide them with an LMS to facilitate personalised and self-directed learning. The final platform is facilitated by Abara, by which the LMS platform tool presents a cost-effective and scalable solution to support skill development among the field staff. All FFs, Producer Unit Managers and IP coordinators are registered on the LMS.

The training modules are currently available in six languages: English, Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Telugu and Punjabi. The modules developed in the pilot phase of the project have been translated by Media 4 Agri, a company specialising in media for the agricultural sector.

PHASE 1

Piloted with 634 FFs in India in two languages (Gujarati and Marathi)

PHASE 2

Identified an alternative learning platform
Rolled out to **2,100 FFs** in India
Translations to additional languages
Provided a cost-effective and scalable solution

2. LMS – Pakistan

Project partner: ArtX Pro

In the 2020-21 season, with support from DFAT, the Fund has been working with local service provider, ArtX Pro, in Pakistan to develop micro-learning videos on the BCI Principles and Criteria as supplementary training material for FFs in the Urdu language. Once all video materials have been produced and based on the success seen in India, the Fund will develop an LMS platform for FFs to undertake personalised and self-directed learning with a view to ensure a consistent skillset across the IPs. The Fund expects to launch its first pilot in Pakistan starting in the second quarter of 2021.

3. Better Cotton Innovation Challenge

To scale the BCI programme further and in a financially viable manner, IDH and BCI have initiated a global innovation platform, The Better Cotton Innovation Challenge “the Challenge”, to identify solutions to transform the way cotton is produced today. Funded by the Better Cotton GIF and developed in partnership with Dalberg, the Challenge involved a global pool of front runners to develop innovations with the potential to drive breakthrough performance at field level and enable BCI to achieve scale in a more efficient way – with higher learning and adoption outcomes.

This first round of the Challenge was launched in November 2019 and focused on two opportunity areas shortlisted after thorough exploration and consultation with BCI on ongoing challenges and gaps in implementation:

- 1) Customised learning for farmers. Farmers are currently treated as one homogeneous group and similar content is provided to them every year.
- 2) Efficiency of Data Collection and Documentation. FFs want to spend more time training farmers but 50-70% of their total time is spent on manual data collection and entry.

Two winners were announced in November 2020; both having presented a solution in the ‘*Efficiency of Data Collection and Documentation*’ area.

First place: Agritask



Agritask offers a platform to manage the entire cotton verification process, including digital data collection, field inspection planning, remote sensing and other technologies. Its mobile application “app” enables farmers to keep records digitally and FFs to document inspections digitally. Agritask provides agronomic advice to farmers and enables remote monitoring via satellite and virtual weather stations.

Award €100,000

Second place: CropIn Technology Solutions



CropIn Technology Solutions is an intelligent data-powered, full-stack agtech platform providing digital solutions for the key stakeholders of the agri value chain with transaction and insight, centring on the farmers’ interests by maximising per-acre value.

Award €35,000

At the time of publishing this report, subsequent steps in the process are being formalised. Striving towards a roll-out pilot for ‘Efficiency of Data Collection and Documentation’, the envisioned benefits of the transition from paper to digital data entry and collection to be tested in the roll-out pilot include:

- Time savings in aggregating and data processing at the PU and IP levels
- Enhanced data quality
- Real-time data used by IPs on agronomic management
- Real-time data insight for BCI
- Exploit potential of online monitoring of capacity-building activities

Simultaneously, we will ascertain the field challenges at hand, such as:

- Smartphone penetration of FFs, which varies heavily among IPs and regions
- Assurance of compliance with privacy regulations and local data-protection policies

The envisioned outcome of the roll-out pilot will be a working data collection and documentation online tool for the use of and data entry by the FFs, in which the learnings and main feedback of all users has been incorporated. Future next steps will comprise of an analysis into the scalability to other IPs, regions and countries, a roll-out plan and solid business case.

4. Research on cotton production with cover cropping and tillage

Implementor: University of Arkansas

To demonstrate the potential of the BCI programme and its Principles and Criteria for sustainable cotton production, the Fund had partnered with the University of Arkansas in 2019 to fund research evaluating the long-term responses of cotton production with cover cropping and little tillage versus no cover cropping and conventional tillage practices.

Research on a 30-acre demonstration plot had been initiated in 2019 to compare long term responses of continuous dryland cotton to a cover crop with little tillage versus no cover crop with conventional tillage. Soil health and moisture, water infiltration, and crop development were monitored throughout the season.

In the first year, water infiltration after rainfall was significantly deeper in the cover-cropped field, which indicates better moisture retention and resilience during dry periods. Soil health comparisons showed improved sustainability on the cover-cropped field. Though no significant difference in yield was measured, a trend was observed for higher yield on the cover-cropped portion. The research site had been licensed as a Better Cotton producer in 2020.

Based on the field research and findings, learning materials for improved soil health and cotton production were developed and delivered via social media including podcasts and short

videos. The project results to date have been presented at regional and national meetings and are available online.

The project provides educational opportunities for extension, researchers, producers, crop advisors and all segments of the supply chain to understand the Better Cotton Initiative, why sustainability standards are important for US growers and to promote participation. The site is a successful location for ongoing field training.

5. Research on multifunctional vegetation buffers

Implementor: Israel Cotton Production & Marketing Board (ICB)

Recognising cotton production can negatively affect (stream) ecosystems through nonpoint source (NPS) pollution (e.g., runoff sediments, nutrients and agrochemicals), in April 2020, the Fund had partnered with the Israel Cotton Production & Marketing Board (ICB) to research and assess the effectiveness of multifunctional vegetation buffers (MFVBs) as a means to mitigate the effects of agricultural runoff and improve the functionality of the agroecological systems on cotton farms. Also included are the economic evaluation of the ecosystem-services provided by MFVBs.

Based on the research findings, ICB will develop learning tools and a platform for farmers to continue learning about agroecological systems, ecosystem services and environmental conservation practices with MFVBs.

In 2020, ICB had established demo plots with MFVBs. Currently, these plots are carefully monitored and data is collected for further analysis. In 2021, ICB will conduct farmer surveys to evaluate the willingness to adopt such conservation practices, which will be used to design customised training materials in the upcoming year.

6. Integrating female co-farmers in cotton farms in Maharashtra

Project design: Sattva

Implementation Partner: Lupin Foundation

Female cultivators account for the majority of the tasks in cotton cultivation. However, they have reduced access to agricultural extension services, productive resources and opportunities.

To assess the potential of female farmers, IDH commissioned the 'Business case for gender mainstreaming in cotton in Maharashtra' report, which presents findings from gender analysis of cotton cultivation in Maharashtra.

Conducted by IDH and Sattva, The study had found female cultivators are instrumental in driving environmental, economic and social outcomes in cotton cultivation. To validate the expected business and social outcomes while also testing BCI's co-farmer model, IDH-BCI had piloted a project with 2,000 female co-farmers in two Production Units of Lupin Foundation in Maharashtra in May 2020.

This project aims to strengthen the participation of female co-farmers within BCI's Quality Assurance Programme to drive outcome at three levels:

1. Creating a strong foundation by positively influencing gender norms through the integration of gender-based planning and gender-sensitisation training to the community
2. Enabling capacity-building programmes for female co-farmers through agronomic and life-skill trainings



The wall paintings [are] a very useful and successful means of creating awareness among farmer communities.

- Amit Shah, CEO
Spectrum International



3. Driving learning and continuous improvement through a community of practice by the formation of female learning groups and participation in demonstration plots

The project will be concluded in 2021 and is expected to demonstrate proof of concept. Based on the outcomes and learnings from the pilot, phase two of this project will be defined.

Response to COVID-19

1. The online learning tool rolled out has helped to continue the capacity building for the 2,100 FFs despite COVID-related challenges.

Hardeep Desai, Senior Director - Farm Innovations at CottonConnect commented, "The LMS tool has proven to be a very useful tool for capacity building of the GIF projects' field team and farmers. The FFs can easily understand and learn about various agronomic aspects related to cotton crop. The training videos on the platform are also available in local languages, which makes it easy for users to understand and can also be used during farmers' training. The tool is accessible at village level and has specially been very useful during these challenging COVID times."

2. Wall paintings to increase awareness of gender-based violence

IDH has led a wall-painting exercise in the Better Cotton GIF project-area villages to increase awareness of gender-based violence (GBV). Supported by the Better Cotton GIF IPs, the wall paintings have been posted in over 6,100 villages across seven states to create awareness on women's rights. The paintings contain informational messages in regional languages and were placed in prime village locations to create maximum impact.



We got good information on Gender Based Violence and COVID-19 by reading these wall paintings. The content is easy to understand.

- Charandas Rangari, Farmer - Yavatmal
(from CottonConnect project area)



Key meetings

January 2020

Field Impact and Innovation Committee (FIIC) had approved 45 projects for investment across five countries.

1

July 2020

FIIC virtual meeting to follow-up on season progress and set the Better Cotton GIF funding priorities and strategy for the 2021-22 season.

2

August 2020

Better Cotton GIF launched its Request for Proposal (RFP) for BCI implementation in the 2021-22 season.

3

November 2020

RFP face-to-face meetings. Applicants had been invited to virtual meetings to present and discuss their project proposals with the Better Cotton GIF secretariat in preparation for a final investment decision by the FIIC in February 2021.

4

Due to the exceptional context in 2020, the Buyer and Investor Committee (BIC) increased its frequency of meetings during the year. Instead of one annual meeting, the committee met regularly through the year in order to maintain a close interaction and monitor volume based fee (VBF) income to the Fund.

Better Cotton GIF auditor

Better Cotton financial year is 1st April - 31st March. The functional currency of the GIF is the Euro. RSM Audit Switzerland SA had been appointed as the external financial auditor for the GIF on February, 25th 2020.

The audit is performed in accordance with Swiss Auditing Standards (SAS). The auditor submits an audit report to IDH and it is approved by GIF Board.



Annexures

Annexure 1: Better Cotton GIF summary 2020-21

Country	Number of IPs	Number of projects
India	13	24
Pakistan	7	11
China	4	4
Mozambique	2	2
Mali	0	0
Turkey	3	3
TOTAL	29	44

Annexure 2: Better Cotton GIF Project-wide summary 2020-21

INDIA

Project Name	Farmers	Area in (Ha)	Projected BC (MT)
ACF Gujarat	35,255	43,063	31,978
ACF Maharashtra	64,623	125,725	67,246
ACF Rajasthan	13,539	24,085	17,392
ACF Punjab & Rajasthan	55,897	109,679	79,893
AFPRO Gujarat	70,481	115,299	78,985
AFPRO Maharashtra	61,231	91,804	64,200
AKRSPI Gujarat	7,500	3,807	3,476
Arvind Ltd. Gujarat	49,912	89,050	75,320
Arvind Ltd. Telangana	17,619	17,487	12,219
Basil Commodities Gujarat	44,751	106,577	88,751
CottonConnect Gujarat	47,869	65,156	56,833
CottonConnect Maharashtra	170,617	196,074	128,115
Deshpande Foundation Telangana	86,129	114,860	50,680
Deshpande Foundation Karnataka	7,359	11,636	4,000
KK Fibres Madhya Pradesh	25,008	39,818	27,511
Lupin Foundation Maharashtra	75,017	90,950	37,503
Spectrum Gujarat	15,349	26,848	25,842
Spectrum Maharashtra	11,631	25,111	20,874
Spectrum Rajasthan	11,066	27,292	27,019
STAC Gujarat	51,285	107,967	105,609
Udyansh Madhya Pradesh	15,014	16,192	6,560
WWF India Punjab	44,356	84,528	60,331
WWF India Maharashtra	35,267	37,483	21,353
WWF India Telangana	24,799	17,305	12,971
TOTAL	1,041,574	1,587,796	1,104,661

PAKISTAN

Project Name	District	Farmers	Ha	MT
CABI Sindh	Mirpur Khas & Matiari	31,463	114,681	80,001
CottonConnect Sindh	Nawabshah	20,881	58,959	53,438
Lok Sanjh Punjab	Bahawalnagar	59,038	134,211	79,817
	Toba Tek Singh, Faisalabad, Jhang, Khanewal	35,498	25,127	15,774
	Layyah & Bhakkar	62,700	98,866	57,659
REEDS Punjab	Rahim Yar Khan & Vehari	58,009	246,699	150,559
REEDS Sindh	Dadu & Jamshoro	19,243	47,355	26,052
SWRDO Punjab	Rajanpur	28,629	90,880	49,095
WWF Pakistan Punjab	"Khanewal, Sahiwal, Jhang, Bahawalpur, Multan, Muzaffargarh,"	158,600	392,225	239,161
WWF Pakistan Sindh	Ghotki, Sukkur, Khairpur, Shahdad kot	39,689	149,639	102,115
Smart Agriculture Punjab	Lodhran	21,727	82,777	48,192
Total		535,477	1,441,419	901,863

CHINA

Project	Province	Farmers	Ha	MT
CottonConnect	Hebei	18,162	8,833	14,644
Nongxi	Shandong	30,000	42,023	64,000
Songzi	Hubei	46,263	10,957	13,120
Huangmei Cooperative	Hunan	12,000	1,400	2,100
Total		106,425	63,213	93,864

MOZAMBIQUE*

Project	Farmers	Ha	MT
SAN-JFS	37,000	29,000	6,600
Sanam	40,800	28,000	12,400
TOTAL	77,800	57,000	19,000

*Mozambique figures are contracted as their season starts in October.

TURKEY

Project	Farmers	Ha	MT
WWF Turkey	358	7,855	16,848
Canbel	1,079	17,770	25,075
GAP	689	16,653	35,720
TOTAL	2,126	42,278	77,643

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