

# Better Cotton Standards Committee Terms of Reference

Document Title	Better Cotton Standards Committee Terms of Reference v1.0
Approval and effective dates	Approved by Better Cotton Council, 31 August 2021 Effective from 1 October 2021
Previous versions	This document replaces the 'Standard Setting and Revision Committee ToR (April 2015). Minor updates include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjusting the membership of the Standards Committee (SC) to incorporate members of technical working groups and/or external technical experts as required</li> <li>• Clarification of roles and responsibilities between the SC, technical working groups, and the Better Cotton Council in terms of drafting and final approval of the Standard</li> </ul>
Contact:	Better Cotton Standards & Assurance Better Cotton Chemin de Balexert 7-9 1219 Châtelaine, Switzerland standards@bettercotton.org
Documents referenced	Better Cotton Principles & Criteria v2.1 Better Cotton Standard Setting and Revision Procedure v2.0 Better Cotton Principles & Criteria Terms of Reference v2.0

## Background

Better Cotton is a multi-stakeholder initiative and the largest cotton sustainability programme in the world. Better Cotton's mission is to help cotton communities to survive and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment. The Better Cotton farm standard is known as the Principles and Criteria (P&C), and it lays out the global definition of Better Cotton across seven principles. The P&C ensure that Better Cotton meets clearly defined requirements on crop protection, water management, biodiversity and land-use, soil health, fibre quality, decent work, and management systems.

The current version of the P&C was released in 2018 and applies to more than 2 million cotton farmers across 23 countries, through both Better Cotton direct programmes and benchmarked partnerships with equivalent standards. Indicators in the P&C are differentiated by farm size: smallholders, medium farms, and large farms.

The primary objectives of the P&C are to: define a global threshold for 'Better Cotton', to ensure that all farmers producing licensed Better Cotton are assessed against a consistent set of requirements, and to provide a structure to drive continuous improvement at field level.

As part of Better Cotton's own commitment to continuous improvement, and in line with ISEAL requirements, Better Cotton carries out regular reviews and revisions of the P&C. This helps to ensure the standard remains relevant, effective, and incorporates key developments in sustainable cotton production.

## About this document

This document provides a Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee (SC), which is the designated governance group established by Better Cotton to oversee the development and revision of the P&C. This document explains the role and purpose of the SC and the expectations for members of the group.

## Purpose of the Standards Committee

The Standards Committee (SC) is established to provide technical and strategic oversight of the revision process for the P&C, and to provide the Better Cotton Council with a final recommendation of approval for the revised standard before it can be formally approved.

The key aim of the SC is to ensure that the revised P&C remains fit for purpose to support Better Cotton's strategy and mission, and that revised requirements are clear, accessible, relevant, and effective at driving field-level change.

The role of the SC includes:

1. Ensuring the Better Cotton Standard Setting and Revision Procedure v2.0 is followed; identifying any potential procedural concerns to the Better Cotton project team
2. Supporting the Better Cotton Secretariat in establishing technical working groups to advise on the development of indicators, including ensuring sufficient expertise is represented
3. Monitoring progress of the technical working groups and Better Cotton project teams working to develop the revised standard; identifying key challenges or concerns early on, and raising pragmatic solutions
4. Providing periodic feedback on drafts of the revised standard, for consideration by technical working groups and Better Cotton project team
5. Approving the consultation draft of the revised P&C before any public consultation process is launched
6. Reviewing key points raised during stakeholder consultation, and supporting the project team and technical working groups in addressing this feedback
7. Reviewing the final version of the revised P&C, working with the Better Cotton project team to close out any final issues, in order to make a recommendation of approval for the Better Cotton Council

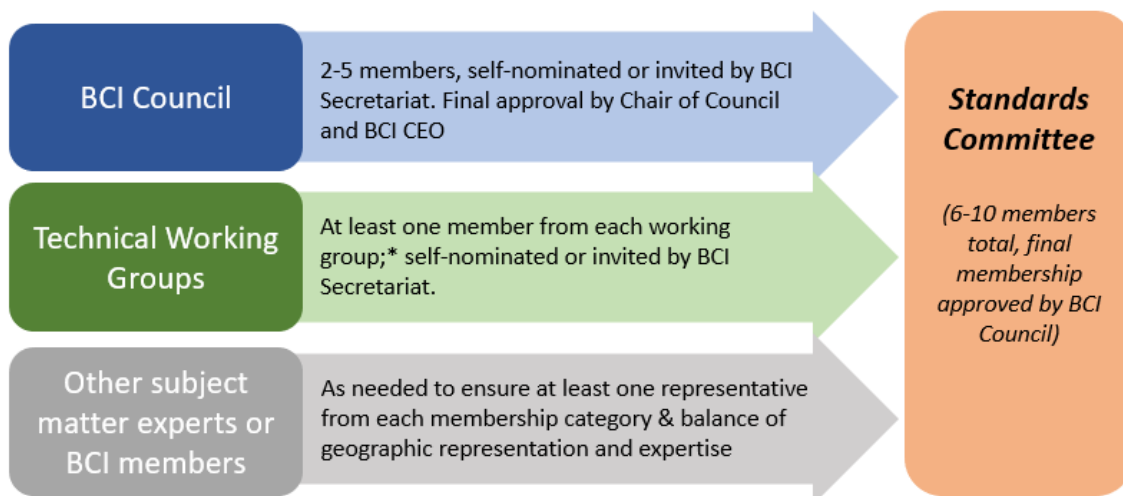
It is expected the majority of the drafting of indicators and guidance for the revised standard will be done by Better Cotton project teams with support of technical working groups. However, the SC will need to have a deep understanding of the content and may suggest key improvements or changes in line with feedback from the group.

## Membership of the SC

As covered in section 3.0 of the Better Cotton Standard Setting and Revision Procedure v2.0

- a) Membership of the SC should represent all stakeholder categories represented in the Better Cotton Council; wherever possible, an equal number of members from each stakeholder category should be represented
- b) Membership of the S C should represent expertise across key technical areas covered by the standard.
  - a. The SC is composed primarily of representatives from the Better Cotton Council and the technical working groups supporting the standards development/ revision.
  - b. A minimum of two and maximum of five Council members should participate on the SC, to ensure that progress and outcomes of the standards development/ revision are well-represented and understood within the Council.
  - c. Where additional expertise or stakeholder groups are required, any other Better Cotton Members in good standing may be invited to participate in the SC.
  - d. Additional technical experts or consultants may also be invited to join the SC where their expertise is considered critical (or if members of working groups are unable to join, e.g., due to capacity).
- c) There is a maximum of 10 seats available, and minimum 6 seats are needed for the SC to be operational.
- d) SC members can be appointed through invitation or via an open call for applications.
- e) Members will be selected based on the following criteria:
  - a. Expert knowledge and/or experience of the issue(s) under consideration.
  - b. Capacity to contribute a wide range of viewpoints, for example from different socio-economic, geographic, cultural, gender, and organisational backgrounds, and representative of different sizes of farms.
  - c. Represent potentially affected stakeholders.
  - d. Understanding of Better Cotton's mission and vision, including knowledge of the Better Cotton systems and procedures.
- f) Final membership of the SC will be confirmed by the Better Cotton Council, and membership along with the Terms of Reference will be publicly available on the Better Cotton website [See Section 5: Appointing of Members]
- g) The work of the SC will be coordinated and supported by a designated Project Manager and/or project team from the Better Cotton Secretariat.

Figure 1: Composition of the Standards Committee



*\* If representatives of a technical working group are unavailable, e.g., due to capacity, similar expertise can be sought via an external experts or from the Better Cotton membership*

## Appointing of members

Members of the Better Cotton Council who are interested in participating in the SC can nominate themselves. Potential members may also be invited to participate by the Better Cotton Secretariat. The Chair of the Better Cotton Council and Better Cotton CEO will then jointly approve the proposed Council members wishing to participate on the SC. If there are more than the maximum of five Council members wishing to participate in the SC, then the Chair of the Council and Better Cotton CEO will jointly make a final decision on membership.

Remaining members of the SC will be invited to participate by the Better Cotton Secretariat, including at least one representative of any technical working groups formed as part of the standard revision process.

If specific skills or expertise (or geographical representation) is required within the SC, additional members may be recruited through an open 'call for applications' process.

Potential member (excluding those in the Council or already part of technical working groups) will be asked to complete a short application form, detailing relevant expertise and experience. In the case of an open call, candidates will be screened by the Better Cotton Secretariat with a short list interviewed by the Better Cotton Secretariat.

The final composition of the SC will be approved by the Better Cotton Council by consensus, following its bylaws.

## Member obligations

SC members will need to participate in regular meetings to monitor progress of the standard revision and provide feedback. The SC will meet regularly during the revision process (expected to run from November 2021 – March 2023), with an expected 1.5 hour meeting every 4-6 weeks. Currently, it is envisioned the SC will work remotely, but a possible in-person session may be planned for late 2022, dependent on schedules and COVID travel restrictions. Members will also need to review draft documents ahead of meetings – estimated 1-2 hours/month.

## Responsibilities and decision-making

The SC is responsible for the following activities:

- approving any drafts of the revised standard which will be shared for public consultation; and
- making a recommendation for approval for the final draft submitted to the Better Cotton Council.

The Better Cotton Council is responsible for approving the final draft of the revised P&C, based on the recommendation for approval made by the SC. The Council will assess and confirm that the process followed by the SC is in line with Better Cotton's Standard Setting and Revision Procedure v2.0.

The SC shall strive to reach agreements by consensus on the content and structure of drafts for consultations and final drafts for Council submission. Consensus is defined here as general agreement in favour of a proposal, plus the absence of a sustained objection to the proposal.

In reaching consensus, the SC should bear in mind the purpose of the group: to help ensure that revised P&C remains fit for purpose to support Better Cotton's strategy and mission, and that revised requirements are clear, accessible, relevant, and effective at driving field-level change (see Section 3).

In case of conflicting views, several options to address this specific issue will be proposed to the Standards Committee. If no consensus can be reached, the options will be submitted to the Council's consideration. The Council will take a decision based on its normal procedure according to the bylaws, which ensure that no single stakeholder group can control decision making.

## Expenses and remuneration

Better Cotton is an international not for profit membership organization with limited funding. Participation in the SC takes place on a voluntary non-paid basis. Should an in-person meeting be scheduled, Better Cotton will seek to sponsor reasonable travel costs for those unable to cover these expenses, upon request.

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Depending on the budget available, Better Cotton may be able to offer SC members from independent or not-for-profit organisations an honorarium or fixed remuneration for their time. If this is required, SC members should apply for a request in writing to the Better Cotton Secretariat.