



Standard-Setting & Revision Procedure v2.0

Contents

Introduction	2
Purpose & Scope	2
Definitions	2
References	3
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Decision to develop or revise a BCI standard	4
Composition & Role of the Standards Committee (SC)	5
Process to develop or revise a BCI standard	6
Terms of Reference and project initiation	6
Role of technical working groups	6
Standard purpose & format	7
Consultation	7
Approval of the draft standard	8
<hr/>	
Publication & Communication	9
Alignment of benchmarked standards	9
Non-substantive changes	10
Complaint mechanism	10

Introduction

Purpose & Scope

- 1.1. The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) exists 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 range of stakeholders to promote measurable and continuing improvements for the environment, farming communities and the economies of cotton-producing areas. BCI aims to transform cotton production worldwide by developing Better Cotton as a sustainable mainstream commodity.
- 1.2. This document specifies the procedure to be followed by BCI for the development of any new standard and when substantive changes to an existing standard are made.
- 1.3. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the credibility of all standards developed by the BCI, by incorporating the values of transparency, participation, and fairness into the processes for their development and revision, and through compliance with international best practice for standards development.
- 1.4. All aspects of this Procedure are considered to be normative, including the scope, effective date, references, terms and definitions, tables, and annexes, unless otherwise stated. As part of the BCI Normative Framework, this Procedure is subject to the review and revision cycle as described in this Procedure.

Definitions

Standard: Document that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristic for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory¹. In the context of this procedure, 'standard' refers to BCI's production standard for sustainable cotton: The Better Cotton Principles & Criteria.

BCI Member: BCI membership is made up of the following categories: Producer Organisations, Civil Society, Retailers & Brands, Suppliers & Manufacturers, Associate Members. All members can attend the General Assembly, at which time a Council is elected and any proposed changes to the BCI statutes are voted on.

¹ Definition from 'Setting Social and Environmental Standards; ISEAL Code of Good Practice', v6.0 December 2014

BCI Council: The Council is an elected board whose role it is to ensure that BCI has a clear strategic direction and adequate policy to successfully fulfil its mission. Council Members are organisations representing the different membership categories: Civil Society, Producers, Retailers & Brands, and Suppliers & Manufacturers. Council members are elected or nominated from the 'General Assembly' which consists of all BCI members; up to three additional council members can also be appointed by the Council.

BCI Secretariat: The secretariat supports BCI's CEO in executing the decisions of the Council and working with partners, members, and other stakeholders to carry out BCI's mission and objectives. The BCI Secretariat, and specifically the Standards & Assurance function, plays a key role in coordinating development and revisions of the Better Cotton standard.

Interested party: Any person or group concerned with or directly affected by a standard – used synonymously in this procedure with the term 'stakeholder'.

Revision: Any change to the existing standard resulting in significant modification or change of the standard application (e.g., adding new criteria or new core indicators). In this case, the process of revision follows this standard setting procedure. Non-substantive or administrative changes are not considered as standard revision and therefore are not subject to this procedure

References

The following referenced documents are relevant for the application of this document.

- ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards (v. 6.0)
- Better Cotton Assurance Manual v4.1, February 2021
- Better Cotton Production Principle and Criteria, v2.1, March 2018
- Better Cotton Principles & Criteria Terms of Reference, v2.0, August 2021
- BCI Standards Committee Terms of Reference, v1.0, August 2021
- By-Laws of the BCI Council, 2 July 2009 (last amended 25 June 2014)

Decision to develop or revise a BCI standard

- 2.1. The final decision to develop or revise a BCI standard rests with the BCI Council.
- 2.2. BCI standards shall be reviewed on a regular basis, with the period of the next review not exceeding 5 years from adoption of the previous version of the standard.
- 2.3. The date of the subsequent scheduled review shall be made publicly available.
- 2.4. A review process shall consider a standard's continued relevance, effectiveness, and whether external circumstances have changed to the point where change is required.
- 2.5. After each review, a decision shall be made by the BCI Director of Standards & Assurance on whether a revision shall be recommended to the BCI Council.
- 2.6. Reasons why a revision process may be recommended and initiated include:
 - a) Stakeholder feedback on effectiveness and relevance of the standard
 - b) New scientific developments
 - c) Change in legislation
 - d) Updates or changes in BCI's strategy or priorities
 - e) Any other significant change in the cotton production and supply chain
 - f) Elements of the standard are not understood or implemented in a way that leads to the expected impacts, in line with BCI's intent.
- 2.7. If the development or the revision of a standard is approved, the BCI Council shall direct the BCI Secretariat to establish a Standards Committee (SC) and to determine whether technical working groups should also be formed (depending on the scope and focus of the project).

Composition & Role of the Standards Committee (SC)

- 3.1. Membership of the SC should seek to represent all stakeholder categories represented in the BCI Council; wherever possible, an equal number of members from each stakeholder category should be represented²
- 3.2. Membership of the SC should represent expertise across key technical areas covered by the standard.
 - a) The SC is composed primarily of representatives from the BCI 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 representation is required, any other BCI 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).
- 3.3. There is a maximum of 10 seats available, and minimum 6 seats are needed for the SC to be operational.
- 3.4. SC members can be appointed through invitation or via an open call for applications.
- 3.5. 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 BCI's mission and vision, including knowledge of the BCI systems and procedures
- 3.6. Final membership of the SC will be confirmed by the BCI Council, and membership along with the Terms of Reference will be publicly available on the BCI website

² In some cases, balanced representation across stakeholder categories may not be possible due to the need to incorporate technical expertise in relevant areas.

- 3.7. The work of the SC will be coordinated and supported by a designated Project Manager and/or project team from the BCI Secretariat.

Process to develop or revise a BCI standard

Terms of Reference and project initiation

- 4.1. When initiating a standards development or review project, the BCI Secretariat will develop or update the Terms of Reference for the standard, as appropriate. This ToR includes:
- An explanation of the purpose of the standard, including an assessment of whether the proposed standard will meet an expressed need.
 - Clear objectives that the standard seeks to achieve, in particular those objectives that focus on social, environmental and/or economic aspects.
 - An assessment of risks in implementing the standard and how to mitigate for these, including identification of factors that could have a negative impact on the ability of the standard to achieve its objectives.
- 4.2. The BCI website shall be updated with information on the status of the standard development or revision activities.

Role of technical working groups

- 4.3. Where external subject matter expertise is required in the development or revision of a standard, technical working groups should be formed, comprising of selected individuals with specific content expertise.
- Participants in a technical working group may be BCI Members but can also be external subject experts.
- 4.4. Where technical working groups are formed, clear Terms of Reference for these working groups shall be developed and made publicly available on the BCI website, including their objectives, member selection criteria, and expected working format and timeframe.
- 4.5. Membership of technical working groups will be approved by the BCI Council members who are part of the Standards Committee, along with the BCI Director of Standards & Assurance, and will be publicly available on the BCI website.

- 4.6. Technical working groups will be responsible for advising on drafting content (i.e. indicators and guidance) in specific areas of the standard, reviewing stakeholder feedback and comments, and proposing revisions to the draft standard content in light of feedback received

Standard purpose & format

- 4.7. The social, environmental, and economic objectives of the standard shall be clearly specified in the standard itself or in the explanatory document accompanying the standard document.
- 4.8. In defining the content of a standard, consideration shall be given to regulatory requirements, market needs as well as scientific and technological developments.
- 4.9. Standards shall be structured to allow for monitoring and evaluation of progress toward achieving the standard's objectives.
- 4.10. A standard shall avoid language and structure that may create ambiguities in interpretation. Consistent interpretation will be sought by setting criteria that are clear, objective, and verifiable.
- 4.11. A standard shall not favour a particular technology or patented item.
- 4.12. The SC shall approve the draft standard or the draft revised standard before releasing it for public consultation.

Consultation

- 4.13. The development of a new standard will include at least two rounds of public consultation
- 4.14. Revisions to an existing standard will include at least one round of public consultation.
 - a) Where substantive changes are made to the draft due to the first round of consultation feedback, a second round of public consultation should be carried out but can be limited to those areas where substantive changes have been made.
- 4.15. Each round of consultation shall normally include a period of at least 60 days for the submission of comments and no less than 30 days if a justification has been established for a reduced consultation period.
- 4.16. The launch of a public consultation shall be officially announced on the BCI website, and shared via email, webinar, newsletters, etc. with interested parties.
- 4.17. The announcement shall include:
 - a) A brief and clear description of the scope and objectives of the consultation
 - b) The justification of the need to introduce or revise the standard
 - c) Objectives of the standard development or revision
 - d) The estimated timeline for completion of the proposed standard or revision
 - e) How to provide feedback or comments on the draft standard or proposed changes
 - f) Contact details.

- 4.18. Through a stakeholder mapping process, the BCI Secretariat shall identify individuals or groups that are likely to affect or be affected by BCI activities covered by the normative document scope.
- 4.19. The BCI Secretariat shall proactively seek contribution from under-represented stakeholders or disadvantaged groups, using consultation mechanisms and tools that are accessible and culturally appropriate for the stakeholder groups in question.
- 4.20. The BCI Secretariat shall proactively encourage organisations that have developed related standards to participate in consultation.
- 4.21. After each consultation, an overview showing the number and type of stakeholders who participated in the consultation shall be prepared by the BCI Secretariat.
- 4.22. The BCI Secretariat shall also develop a synopsis of the comments received and how they have been addressed. The synopsis shall be made publicly available and shall be sent to all parties that submitted comments.
- 4.23. The BCI Secretariat and SC, together with technical working groups as appropriate, shall review the consultation feedback received and amend the draft standard in light of feedback.

Approval of the draft standard

- 4.24. Approval of the final standard shall be made by the BCI Council, based on the recommendation of the Standards Committee (SC)
- 4.25. No decision shall be made by the Council unless a quorum as defined in the Council By-Laws is present.
- 4.26. The Council shall confirm that the standard-setting or revision process has followed requirements as defined in this document (*BCI Standard-Setting & Revision Procedure v2.0*)
- 4.27. The Council shall seek to make all decisions by consensus (absence of sustained opposition).
- 4.28. In the case where the Council is unable to reach consensus, the Council shall resort to a vote as determined in the By-Laws of the Council.
- 4.29. In the case the Council does not approve the draft standard, the reasons for objection shall be clearly documented so they can be further discussed and reviewed by the SC and technical working groups as required.
- 4.30. After further revision the draft standard may be re-submitted to the Council for approval, with an explanation of how objections have been addressed.

Publication & Communication

- 5.1. Throughout the standard development/ revision process, information on developments and progress shall be publicly available on the BCI website and updated regularly.
- 5.2. The approved final standard shall be published on the BCI website within 30 days of approval, and shall include:
 - a) On the cover page, the official language and a note that in case of inconsistency between versions, reference shall default to the official language version.
 - b) contact details where requests for clarification and general feedback can be sent.
 - c) the date of the subsequent scheduled review.
- 5.3. BCI shall keep a file of all records made during standards development and revision activities (consultation comments, how they were taken into account, list of stakeholders, interested parties involved, draft and final versions of the standard, etc.) and these shall be made available on request.
 - a) All records related to standard development activities shall be kept for at least five years.
- 5.4. The BCI Secretariat shall communicate to all stakeholders directly impacted by the new or revised standard, and shall specify the date that the new version of the standard becomes effective, along with any transition period and related guidance documents.

Alignment of benchmarked standards

- 6.1. Sustainable cotton standards that have been benchmarked with the Better Cotton Principles & Criteria shall be considered key stakeholders in the standards development/ revision process;
 - a) the BCI Secretariat shall make every effort to engage them directly in the technical development and stakeholder consultation processes.
- 6.2. Once a standard has been approved by the BCI Council, benchmarked standards (with support of the BCI Secretariat) shall carry out an updated benchmarking exercise to ensure alignment between the BCI and partner standards.

Non-substantive changes

- 7.1. Once a standard has been approved and published, typographical errors and minor inconsistencies may be corrected with the approval of the BCI CEO.
- 7.2. The Director of Standards & Assurance may also propose non-substantive changes to the BCI Council as follows:
 - a) A written proposal for the recommended changes shall be prepared by the BCI secretariat, and shall be circulated to the BCI Council for a 30-day review period
 - b) After this 30-day review period the written proposal may be amended to take account of any comments received
 - c) The final written proposal as amended shall be submitted to the BCI Council for approval
 - d) The updated standard shall be clearly identified with a version number and date and the most recent version shall be posted on the BCI website

Complaint mechanism

- 8.1. All complaints on issues related to standard-setting and revision procedures will follow the grievance management process which is publicly available on the BCI website.