

# Better Cotton Decent Work Advisory Committee

## Terms of Reference

### External Sources

The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) is a multi-stakeholder initiative and the largest cotton sustainability programme in the world. BCI and its Partners currently support over 2.3 million farmers in 23 countries in adopting more sustainable agricultural practices. Thanks to these efforts, Better Cotton accounts for around 22% of global cotton production. BCI works closely with stakeholders all the way from farms to fashion brands and civil society organisations, driving the cotton sector toward sustainability.

BCI recognises that agriculture, and cotton farming specifically, are high risk sectors for labour violations and abuse. BCI intends to proactively mitigate these risks in all its operations. Forced labour of adults and children is the most common manifestation of modern slavery and covers any work or service which has been coerced under threat of penalty. Most individuals at risk of forced labour belong to vulnerable or marginalized groups including women, children, and migrants.

Recognising the importance of forced labour risks in cotton production, in April 2020 BCI formed a dedicated Task Force on Forced Labour and Decent Work. The Task Force comprised experts representing civil society, brands/ retailers, and responsible supply chain consultancies. The Task Force worked over a 7-month period to develop strategic recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS) in identifying, preventing, mitigating, and remediating forced labour risks related to adults and children.

BCI has published its [Task Force recommendations onboarding plan](#) and is now in the early phases of implementing these recommendations, as part of a broader Decent Work Strategy. The first phase of work has focused on global system changes, global capacity building, and development of a high-level risk-based approach. Coming into 2021, the focus will be on two decent work country pilots, in India and Pakistan, as well as revising/expanding assurance tools and processes for further risk-based adaptation at country level.

### Role and Purpose

BCI is looking to set up an Advisory Committee to help steer and advise on the implementation of the Decent Work Strategy. The Decent Work Committee will be established for an initial period of 12 months starting in May 2021 to advise on the implementation of the country pilots and assurance process revisions. The purpose and focus of the Committee will be revisited at the 12 months mark ahead of the next phase of implementation.

The Advisory Committee has several main objectives:

1. To provide strategic and operational guidance to the Director of Standards & Assurance on implementation of the Decent Work Strategy, and to oversee the progress of the country-level pilots
2. To oversee progress against the short and mid-term priorities in the Decent Work Strategy, with a particular focus on the India and Pakistan country-level pilots
3. To advise on and facilitate the high-level stakeholder engagement for BCI to strengthen its network of decent work partners at international and national levels

BCI expects that the Advisory Committee will focus on the following areas in the initial 12-month period:

- Reviewing and giving feedback on BCI's high-level forced labour risk assessment methodology
- Reviewing and validating newly introduced 'interim' indicators of forced labour
- Advising on the scope and design of country level pilots, including:
  - Country-level risk assessment research (approach and outcomes)
  - Adaptations of assurance processes
  - Capacity building approach

## Format and Timing

This Decent Work Advisory Committee (DWAC) will be organised as a group of 4-5 decent work experts who meet every two months, six times in total over the 12 months period, unless additional meetings are required. The group is open to the members of the Task Force who want to continue to play a role in the transition period but can also include new members such as experts in worker voice solutions or grievance mechanisms. It can also include experts from the high-priority pilot countries as outlined below with familiarity and interest in BCI.

- Comprise an estimated 4-5 members with decent work expertise and a solid understanding of BCI
- Membership is voluntary; group composition may change in the course of 12 months or after depending on availability and commitment of members
- While a small group, a balanced representation in terms of gender, regions, expertise and experienced will be sought
- Coordinated and chaired by BCI Decent Work Focal Point and Assurance Officer
- Meetings will be minuted and recorded for internal reference only
- All meetings will observe Chatham House rules – participants are free to use information discussed during the meeting but should not identify the source of the information
- Decisions are recommendations made by DWAC will help validate direction, deliverables and findings, triggering course corrections where needed and prioritise future activities

The Decent Work Advisory Committee will meet virtually between May 2021 and April 2022 every two months for 90-120 minutes with an additional one-hour commitment to review relevant material ahead of the calls or provide written feedback after.

### Expected Time Commitment

Activity	Estimated hours	Comments
Participate in calls	Up to 12	6 calls, 90-120 min each
Document review between calls	Up to 6	Up to 60 min of material review ahead of each call
Review and feedback	Up to 3	Up to 30 min of review after the call
<i>Total estimated hours over 12 months</i>	<i>Up to 21</i>	<i>All meetings will be held virtually</i>