



2020
Impact
Report

Navigating through this report

There are a few ways to find the sections that are of most interest to you.

There is a contents page on page 3. You can click on any section and you will be taken there.

There is a navigation bar on the right hand side of every page. You can click on any section and also be taken there.

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#1 Introduction

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Introduction – Exploring impact in Better Cotton

Impact is what we all want to see in sustainability. For us at Better Cotton, it's why we exist – we want to create a positive impact for everyone touched by our work, from smallholder farmers with a couple of hectares of cotton to the large, fully mechanised farms, and everyone in between. And this means positive environmental, social and economic change.

To be sure we're making a tangible difference, we support millions of farmers and farm workers around the world to grow cotton more sustainably, and importantly, we collect results data where possible.

This helps us to understand whether our approach is effective and identify opportunities for improvement. It also enables us to celebrate progress and demonstrate the value of our work to others, convincing more people and organisations to get involved and support Better Cotton farming.

In past years, we have published information on how Better Cotton Farmers perform on social, environmental and economic criteria, compared to farmers who aren't participating in the Better Cotton programme. We call these our 'Farmer Results', and they cover elements including the use of pesticides, fertilisers and water, decent work and yields and profits.



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Introduction – Exploring impact in Better Cotton

This year, we continue to do that – one of the most important sections of this report is the Farmer Results for the 2019-20 cotton season. You'll find these in the next chapter of this report, and they provide insights into some of the key areas of success, progress – and challenges – during the cotton season.

For this Impact Report, we have gone further to consider a broader set of factors in order to give a more comprehensive overview of our work. In particular, we've included new sections that consider some of the other ways in which our system is contributing to positive changes in the cotton sector.

Our focus is on helping cotton communities to survive and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment. But our work encompasses a lot more than this. We collaborate with businesses and civil society organisations from across the cotton sector, to advance sustainability and encourage demand for Better Cotton among suppliers, manufacturers, retailers and brands.

We support major retailers and brands in fulfilling their sustainable materials strategies by sourcing Better Cotton, and engaging consumers in their

sustainability stories. We monitor and approve any potential claims they make in line with our rigorous Claims Framework. In section three, we take a look at some of the innovative and transparent communications produced by our retailer and brand members.

Finally, in the spirit of continuous improvement – a core principle for Better Cotton – we explore some of the areas where we're strengthening our systems and services to deliver greater impact. This includes important initiatives such as our traceability workstream and the revision of our Principles & Criteria.

I hope you enjoy reading this report and seeing some of the ways in which Better Cotton and our stakeholders are creating a positive impact on the cotton sector, and the steps we're taking to do even better in the future.

Alia Malik,
Senior Director, Data and Traceability



Scope of this report

This Impact Report primarily reflects on the on 2019-2020 cotton season. The data and country summaries in the Farmer Results (Chapter 2), in particular, are drawn from this period, due to our reporting timelines. Some sections, however, refer to projects that have started in 2021, and look forward to the coming years. Please note the use of the word 'impact' in this report - we are using term here in the everyday sense of the word - to refer to positive environmental, social or economic change.



#2 Farmer Results

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Farmer Results

The Farmer Results provide an overview of the outcomes that Better Cotton Farmers are experiencing at field level by participating in the programme and adhering to the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria. Adhering to the Principles & Criteria enables Better Cotton Farmers to produce cotton in a way that is measurably better for people, the environment and farming communities.

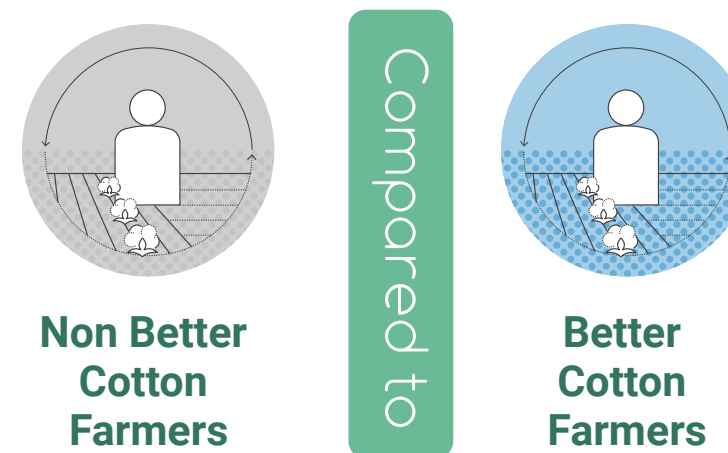
Understanding the results

Better Cotton collects data from all medium and large farms participating in the Better Cotton programme. For smallholders, we use a sampling approach to collect data from a representative sample of farmers. Each year, Learning Groups (small groups of around 35 farmers) are randomly selected by Better Cotton to participate in these samples (at the end of the cotton season).

The Farmer Results presented in the following infographics compare the country averages of licensed Better Cotton Farmers to non-Better Cotton Farmers in the same geographic area who are not participating in the Better Cotton Programme. We refer to the latter as Comparison Farmers.

Reporting on Better Cotton Farmer Results – Results Indicator data – is fully integrated into the Better Cotton Assurance Programme to ensure that sustainability improvements are measured effectively everywhere Better Cotton is produced. You can learn more about Results Indicator data collection and sampling methodologies [here](#).

* Regular data quality monitoring of Comparison Farmers’ field records is not within the remit of the Better Cotton programme. Better Cotton focuses on improving record-keeping systems and data quality among Better Cotton Farmers. While we do strive to check and validate the quality of Comparison Farmers’ data, it may be less reliable than Better Cotton Farmers’ records.



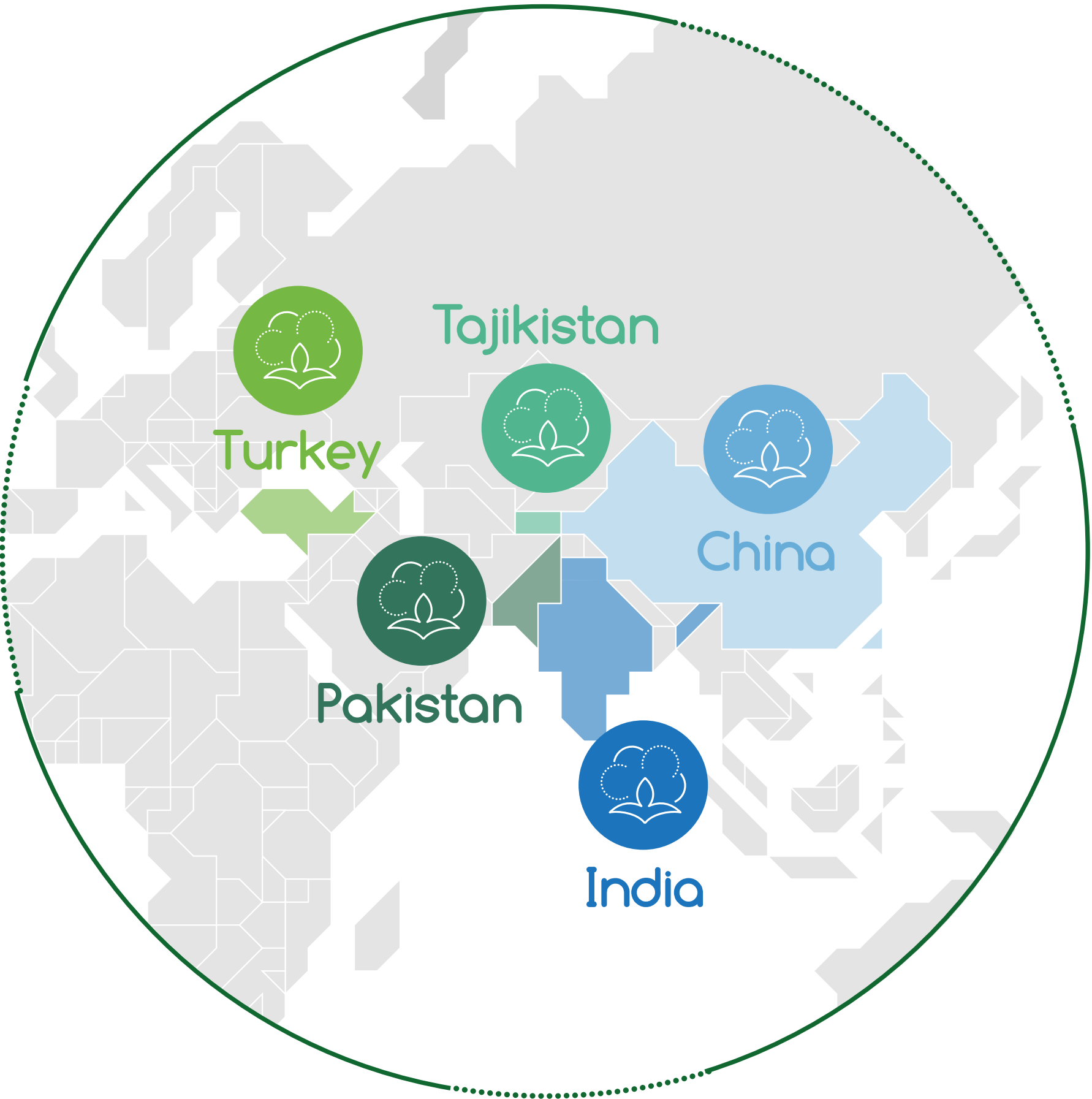
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Explanation of Farmer Results

Data collection

In the 2019-20 cotton season, the Better Cotton programme was directly implemented in 12 countries. This overview shares results from five of those countries: **China, India, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey**. The other programme countries are not included for the following reasons:

- 🌱 In **Israel, Mali, and Mozambique**, Comparison Farmer data was not available because most of the cotton farmers in these countries' project areas were already participating in the Better Cotton programme.
- 🌱 In **South Africa**, Comparison Farmer data was not available due to data protection restrictions.








- 🌱 In **Kazakhstan and Madagascar**, there was only one licensed Producer Unit (a group of Smallholders or Medium Farms) and Better Cotton's confidentially agreement prevents public reporting of a single Producer Unit's results.
- 🌱 In the **US**, Better Cotton only works with Large Farms, and Comparison Farmer data is not available as it is considered commercially confidential information.
- 🌱 We do not share data from benchmarked Strategic Partners in **Brazil** (ABRAPA), multiple **African countries** (Aid by Trade Foundation) and **Australia** (Cotton Australia).

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Explanation of Farmer Results

Environmental indicators

-  **Pesticide Use**
The indicator measures the volume of active pesticide ingredient applied, per hectare of cotton cultivated.
-  **Synthetic Fertiliser Use**
The indicator measures the volume of synthetic fertiliser applied, per hectare of cotton cultivated.
-  **Organic Fertiliser Use***
The indicator measures the frequency of organic fertiliser use
-  **Biopesticide***
This indicator measures the frequency of biopesticide use.
-  **Water Use for Irrigation**
The indicator measures the volume of water used for irrigation, per hectare of cotton cultivated. Water use is not recorded for rain-fed cotton cultivation.

*Frequency of use is compared, not amount.

Economic indicators

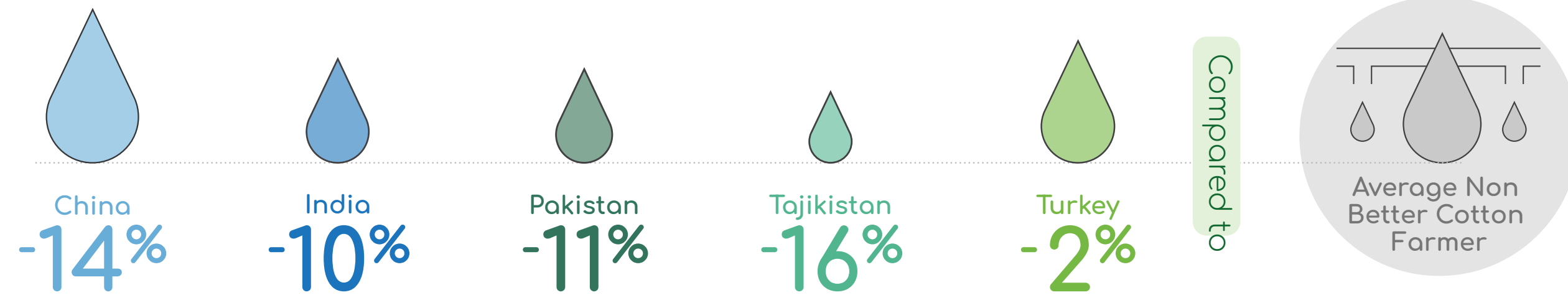
-  **Yield**
The indicator measures the amount of harvested cotton, per hectare.
-  **Profitability**
The indicator measures profitability, defined as the net income earned from producing the cotton crop.

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Results indicators

Water

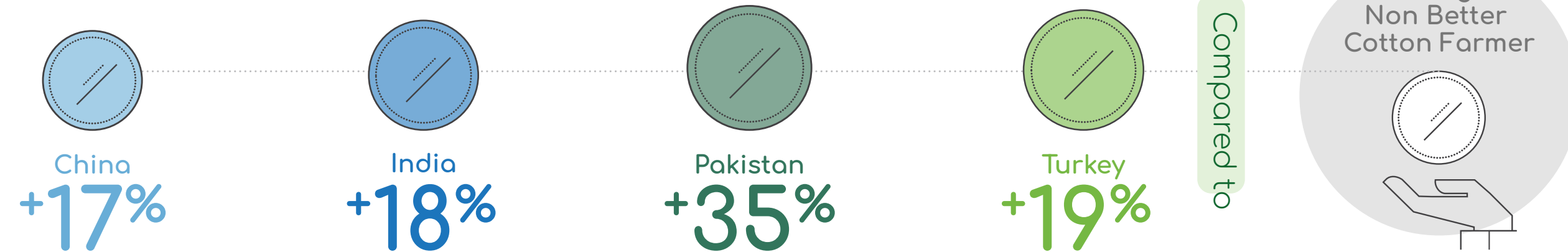
m³/ha



“Tip” How to talk about the results: Better Cotton Farmers in Tajikistan used 16% less water than Comparison Farmers.

Profit

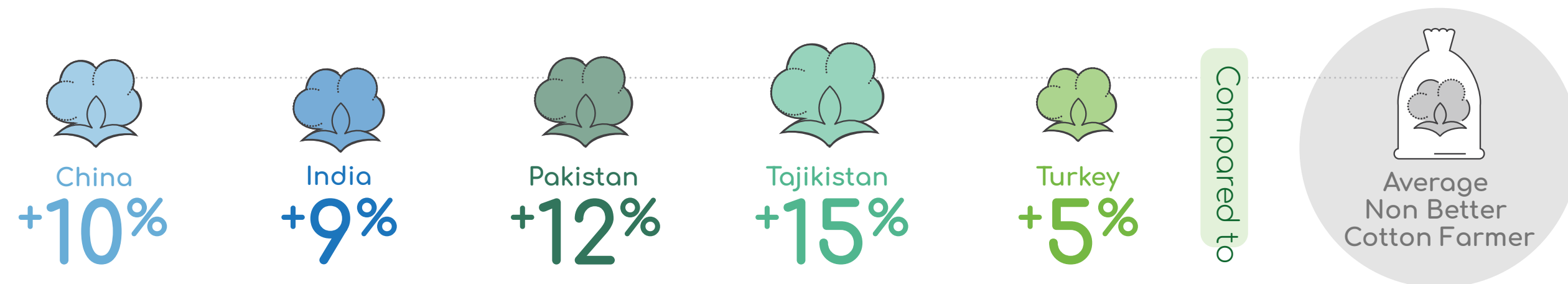
net income/ha



“Tip” How to talk about the results: Better Cotton Farmers in Turkey achieved 19% higher profits than Comparison Farmers.

Yield

lint mt/ha



“Tip” How to talk about the results: Better Cotton Farmers in Tajikistan achieved 15% higher yields than Comparison Farmers.

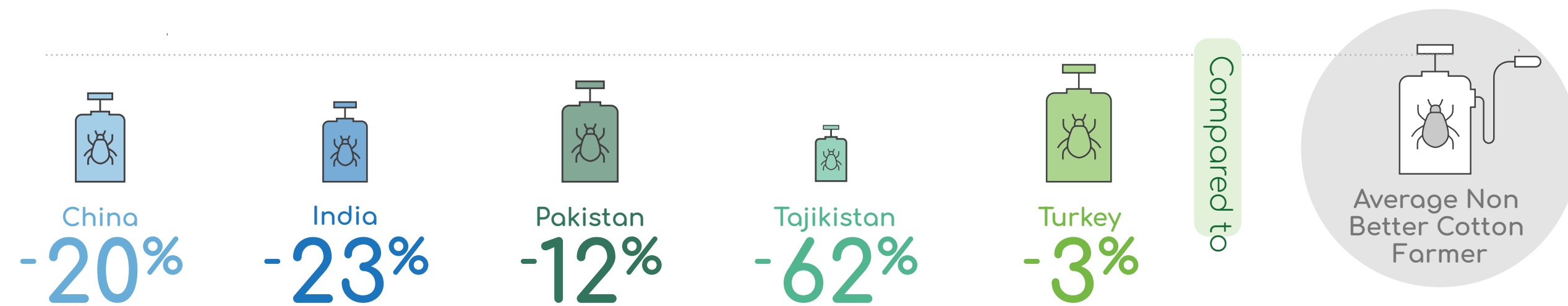
Tajikistan is not included here due to data collection challenges.

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Results indicators

Synthetic Pesticide

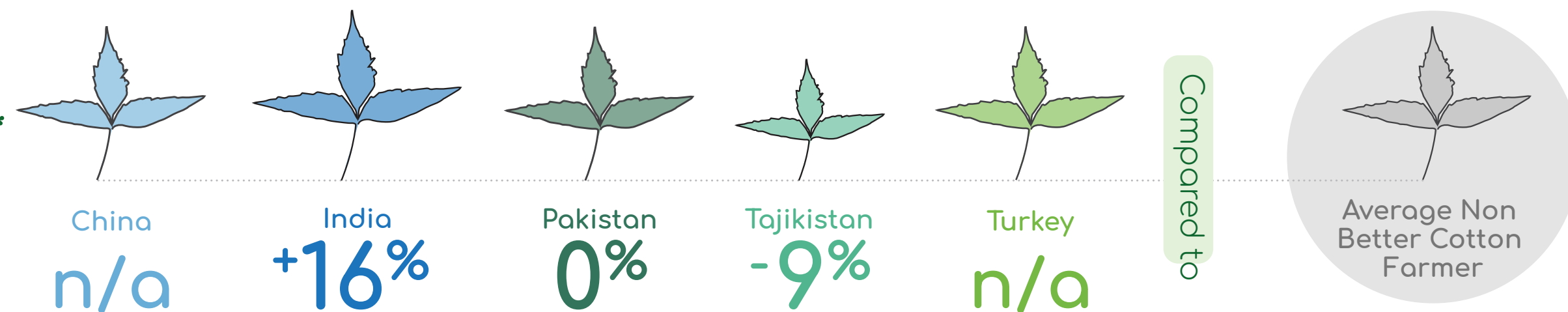
kg/ha



“Tip” How to talk about the results: Better Cotton Farmers in China used 20% less synthetic pesticide than Comparison Farmers.

Biopesticide*

yes/no



“Tip” How to talk about the results: Better Cotton Farmers in India used biopesticide 16% more often than Comparison Farmers.

*Frequency of use is compared, not amount.

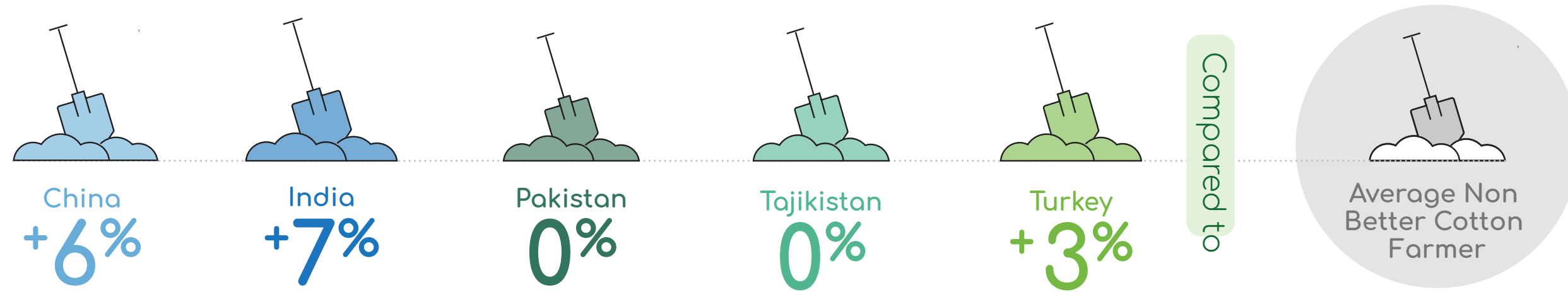
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Results indicators

Organic fertiliser*

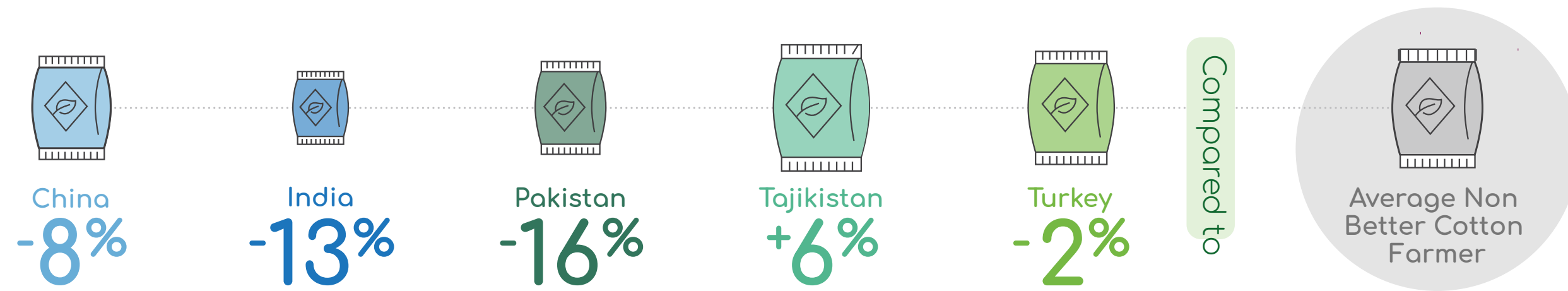
yes/no



“Tip” How to talk about the results: Better Cotton Farmers in India used organic fertiliser 7% more often than Comparison Farmers.

Synthetic fertiliser

kg/ha



“Tip” How to talk about the results: Better Cotton Farmers in Pakistan used 16% less synthetic fertiliser than Comparison Farmers.

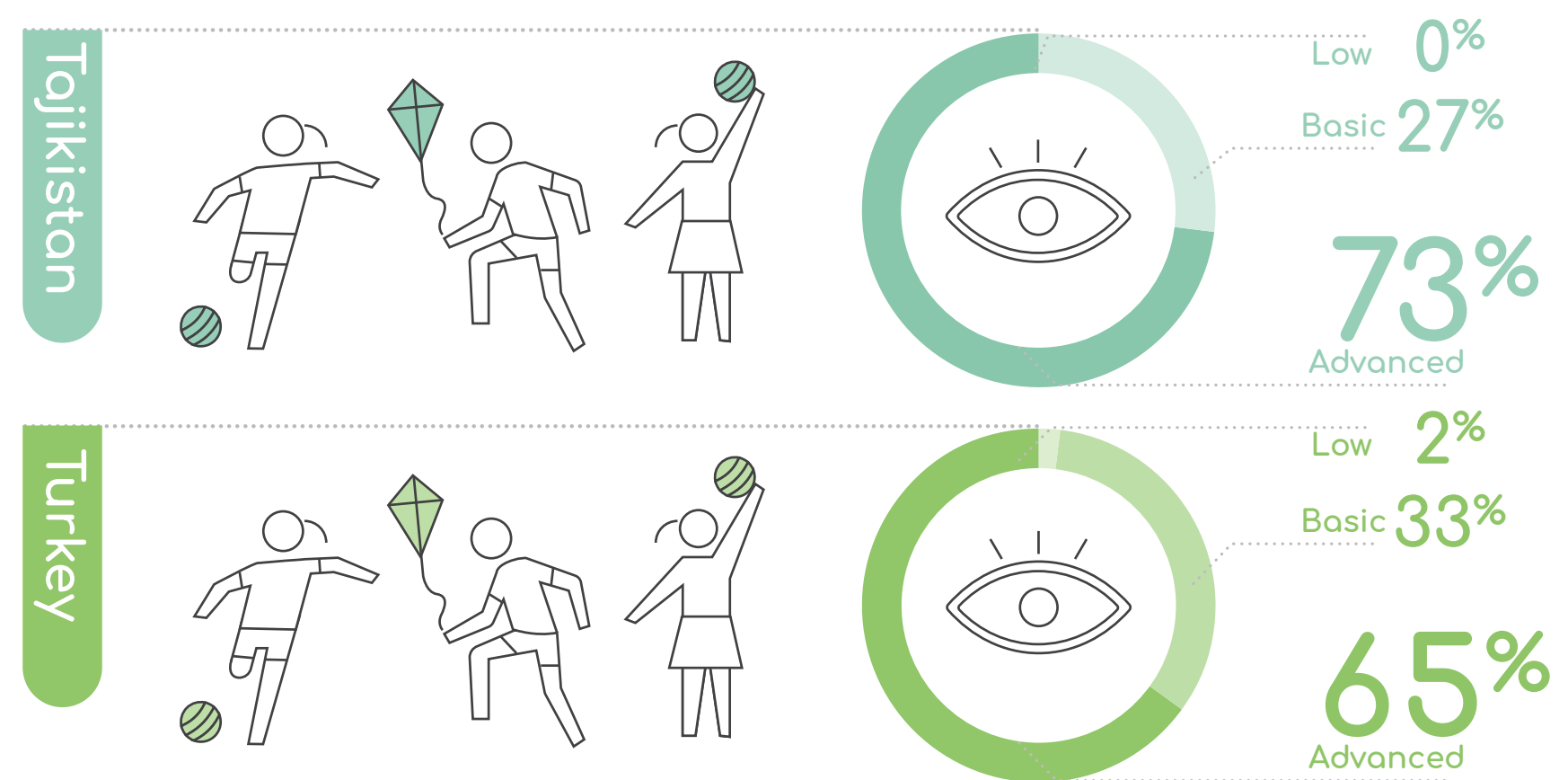
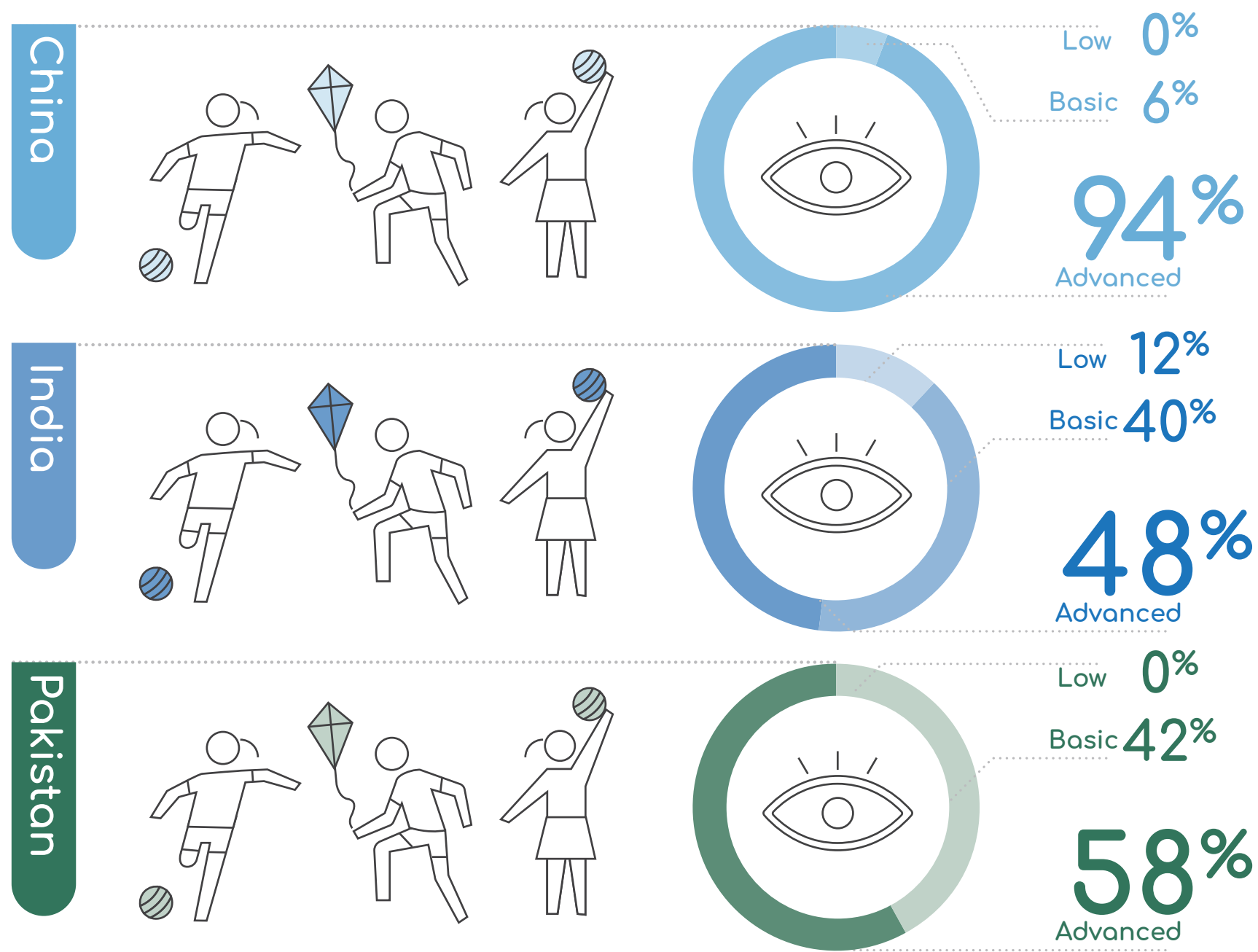
*Frequency of use is compared, not amount.

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Results indicators

Child Labour Issues Level of Awareness

The indicator measures the percentage of farmers who can accurately differentiate between acceptable forms of children's help on family farms and hazardous child labour.



“Tip” How to talk about the results:
In Pakistan 58% of Better Cotton Farmers had an advanced awareness of child labour issues.

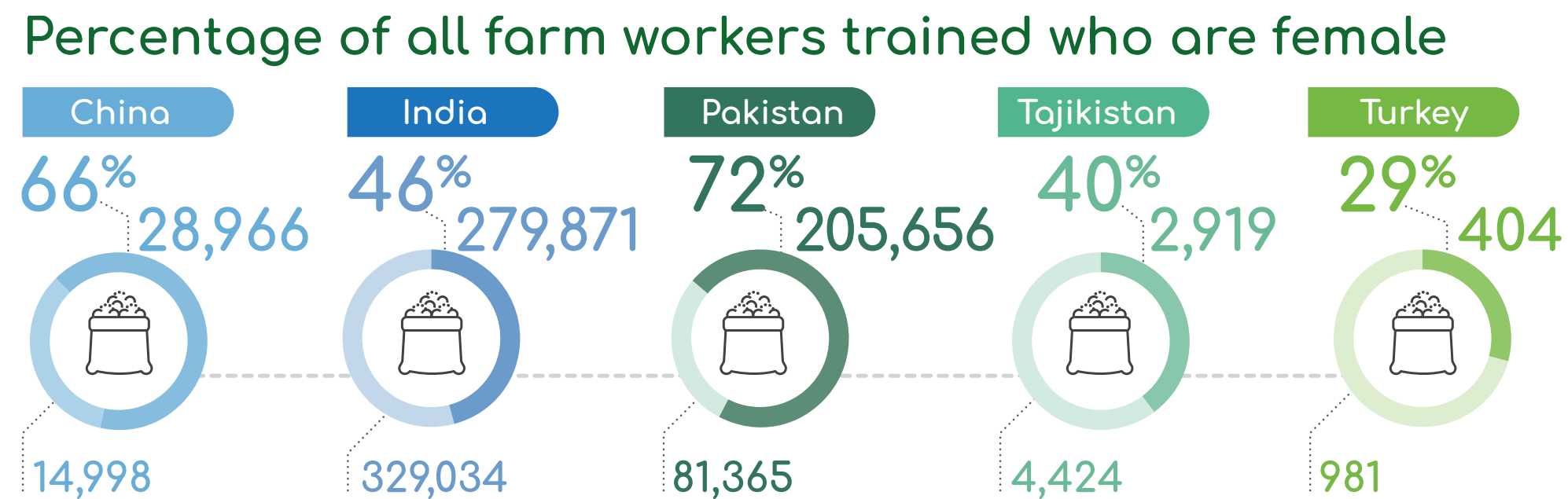
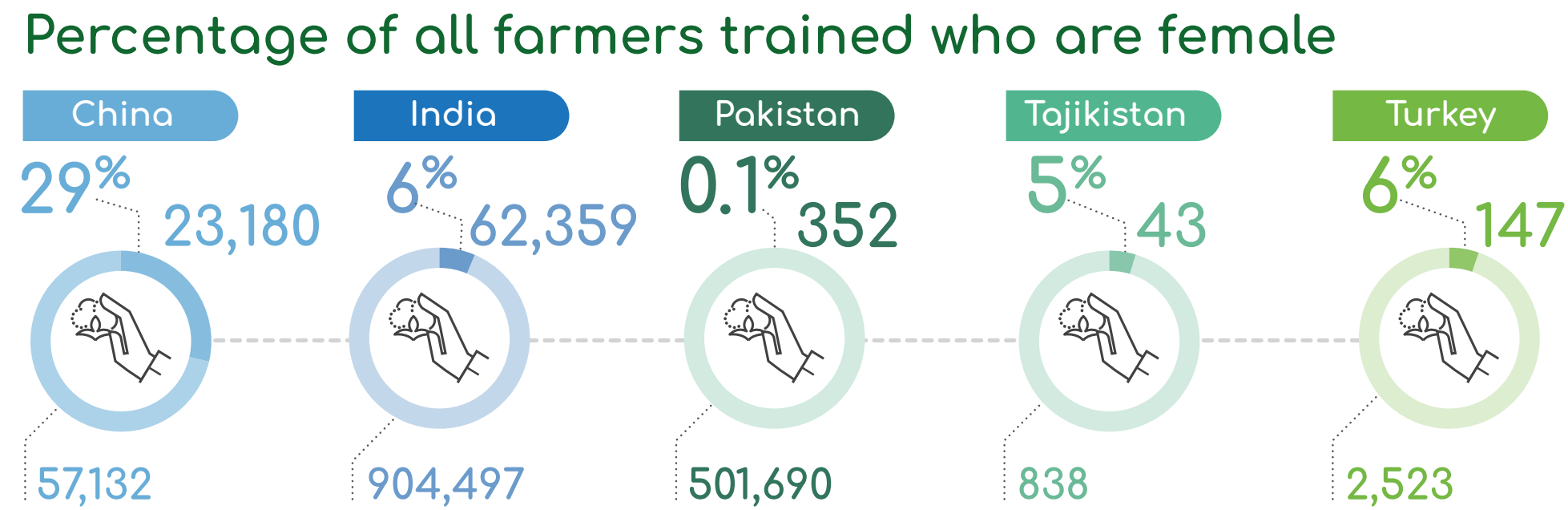
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Results indicators

Women's Inclusion in Training

The figures show the number, in aggregate, of farmers and farm workers who attended training on the following topics:

- 🌱 Preparation and use of pesticides
- 🌱 Other farm practices
- 🌱 Health and safety, labour, gender, or other
- 🌱 Harvest practices to ensure fibre quality
- 🌱 Other topics not directly related to Better Cotton



“Tip” How to talk about the results:
In India, 6% of all farmers who attended Better Cotton training sessions were women.

“Tip” How to talk about the results:
In Pakistan 72% of farm workers who attended Better Cotton training sessions were women.

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Australia (myBMP)

Benchmarked programme country

2019-20 Cotton Season

Participating farmers
48

Licensed myBMP/Better Cotton Farmers
48

Area harvested
14,000 hectares

Volume of Better Cotton produced
31,000 tonnes

In Australia, Better Cotton partners with Cotton Australia, who manages the myBMP (Best Management Practices) programme - the Australian cotton industry's voluntary farm and environmental management programme that includes over 400 best practices and checklist items. The myBMP programme has been benchmarked with the Better Cotton Standard System and recognised as equivalent. Farmers producing cotton to full certification in myBMP can opt to market their cotton as Better Cotton.

Highlights

Farmers growing cotton in line with the myBMP programme achieved an increase in yields compared to

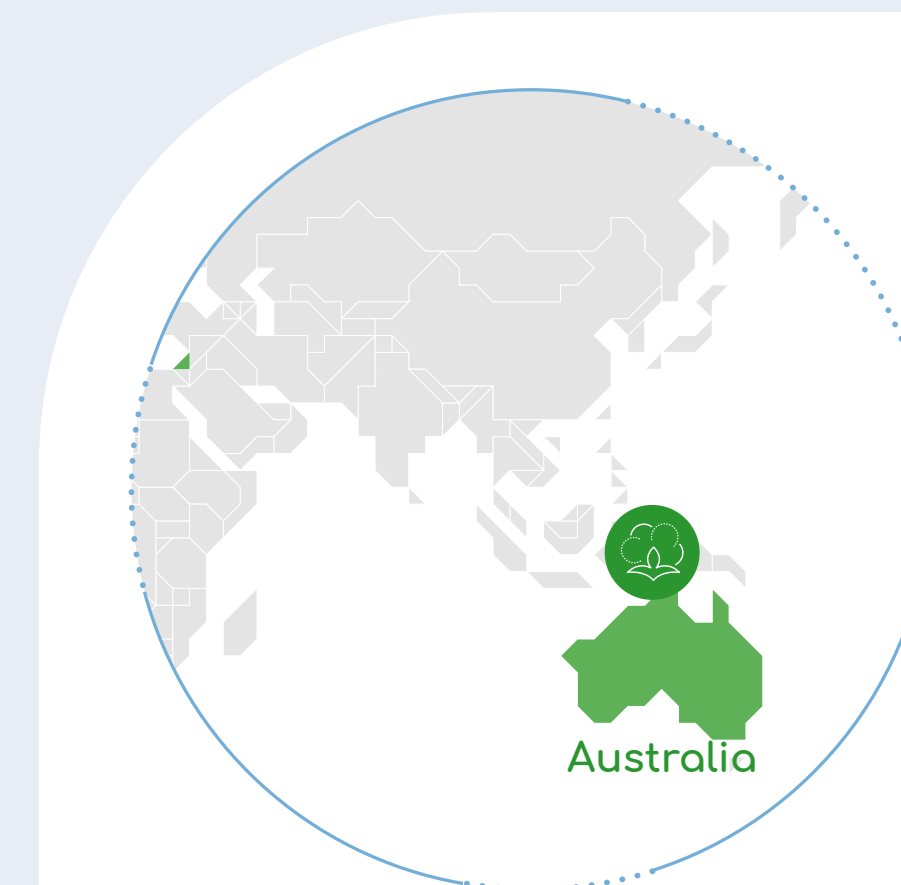
the previous season, in part due to more reliable temperatures, but also by efficiently irrigating a greater proportion of their cotton and by using techniques to raise productivity.

Farmers also completed more soil testing than the season before. This helped them to better understand the level of nutrients in their soil and determine how best to prepare their land for planting

Challenges

The ongoing multi-year drought and depletion of stored irrigation water and reduced soil moisture levels resulted in less land being

planted with cotton in the 2019-20 season. It also led to a slight increase in pesticide and fertiliser use as farmers attempted to maximise yields from a much smaller area of land.



Please note that the figures for area harvested and volumes of Better Cotton produced are rounded to the nearest thousand.

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Australia

Season overview

The impact of climate change

The multi-year drought, combined with less irrigation water available in storage, and decreased soil moisture levels, led directly to the 2019-20 season seeing one of the smallest cotton plantings ever in Australia. Overall, 48 myBMP/Better Cotton Farmers produced 31,000 tonnes of Better Cotton, a significant decrease on 2018-2019, when 77 farmers produced 92,000 tonnes – a direct reflection of the drought.

Increase in pesticide and fertiliser use

With less land to cultivate, farmers were careful to maximise yields. This resulted in an increase in pesticide use compared to 2018-19, as concerns arose surrounding both mirid pests and silver leaf whitefly. Similarly, the 2019-20 season saw an increase in fertiliser use, compared to the previous year.

Soil testing

Due to the long dry spell and an increase in planting fields that had not been in use for a while, farmers were encouraged to do more soil testing to understand the level of nutrients in their fields. This helped them determine how to best prepare their land for planting and the volume of nutrients, including nitrogen, to apply. So, despite some increases in fertiliser use, farmers did apply less pre-season nitrogen fertilisers (one particular type of fertiliser), which helped to reduce the overall GHG footprint of their cotton production.

Better Cotton does not report on Results Indicator data for benchmarked programme countries.

Learn more about Cotton Australia.
<https://cottonaustralia.com.au/>

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Australia

Farmer profile

Name
Andrew French

Country/region
**Dawson Valley,
Queensland
Australia**

Years in my/BMP/Better Cotton programme
**7 years (myBMP/
Better Cotton),
24 years (myBMP)**



“When the myBMP programme first rolled out in 1997, my parents adopted it, became accredited in the first year and held that the whole way through their farming life. Without my mother, that would have never happened. In more recent times, I inherited the accreditation and have kept that going.

A positive change we’ve achieved on our farm since joining the myBMP programme is a reduction in pesticide use. We now have a more robust Integrated Pest Management strategy. We are mindful of the pesticides we use, and we factor in the number of beneficial insects and the impact spraying would have on them. In addition, we have implemented digital spraying technology, which has allowed us to see the impact of chemical efficiency on our crops. If a pest appears later in the season I can go back through my records and see what has happened on the farm in prior years and what worked.

Both the myBMP and Better Cotton programmes encouraged me to think about my data, which in turn has helped me to implement the technology that makes decisions easier and more accurate. The better record keeping has also helped us to continue to adopt more best practices, which has also saved us time.”

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Brazil (ABR)

Benchmarked programme country



2019-20 Cotton Season

- Participating farmers **360**
- Licensed ABR/Better Cotton Farmers **360**
- Area harvested **1,235,000 hectares**
- ABR/Better Cotton produced **2,334,000 tonnes**

In Brazil, Better Cotton partners with the Brazilian Cotton Growers Association (ABRAPA). The organisation's own sustainable cotton programme, the Brazilian Responsible Cotton (ABR programme), is benchmarked with the Better Cotton Standard and recognised as equivalent. This means that cotton farmers growing cotton in line with the ABR programme can opt to sell their cotton as Better Cotton.

Highlights

- Our Strategic Partner ABRAPA supported the creation of 15 regional hubs to enable Better Cotton Farmers to share best practices in managing cotton pests.
- ABRAPA also assisted state-based

grower associations with the implementation of improved practices to monitor and control pests during and between seasons.

Challenges

- Despite progress in supporting farmers in managing pests, boll weevil pest pressure increased, particularly in Mato Grosso and Bahia states, posing risks to cotton fibre quality and yields. However, many farmers were able to reduce the extent of the damage and preserve most of their crops.

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Brazil

Season overview

In the 2019-20 cotton season, the number of farmers participating in the ABR/ Better Cotton programme rose to 360, from 318 in the 2018-19 season. The volume of Better Cotton produced also increased from 2 million tonnes in 2018-19 to 2.3 million tonnes in the 2019-20 season. This expansion was not impacted by the global decrease in cotton prices, and only slightly affected by increased input costs, with the overall cost of production increasing marginally from the previous season.

Rainfall

Cotton production in Brazil is largely rainfed (only 8% is irrigated), and therefore cotton farmers depend on receiving sufficient rain during the season. The majority of states received adequate rainfall for their crops, however, in Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, low rainfall created challenges for farmers from March to May.

Crop Rotation

In Brazil, cotton is mainly produced as a second crop. This is called a “double cropping system” and it means that once farmers have grown and harvested their primary crop (soybean), they then use that same land to grow cotton, creating efficiencies in how existing agricultural land is utilised.

Tackling pest pressure

Pest pressure remained a concern in the 2019-20 season, with increases in boll weevil experienced in Mato Grosso and Bahia. To help farmers in managing the pest challenge, ABRAPA supported the creation of 15 regional hubs, which provided and coordinated action plans to help farmers control cotton pests throughout the year. Better Cotton Farmers carefully monitored their fields to determine the timing and quantity of pesticides applied, and increasingly used biological control methods over conventional pesticides where possible. As a result, farmers were able to reduce the extent of potential pest damage and preserve the majority of their crops.

To learn more about Better Cotton in Brazil, please visit our website: <https://bettercotton.org/where-is-better-cotton-grown/better-cotton-is-thriving-in-brazil/>

Learn more about cotton production in Brazil: www.cottonbrazil.com

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Brazil



Farmer profile

Name
Ernesto Sitta Filho and Cassio Sitta

Farm
Nossa Senhora Aparecida

Country/region
Caiapônia, Goiás

Years in programme
First season



“More sustainable cotton means implementing better production practices, minimising waste, ensuring good working conditions, providing training for employees, and better farm management. It means improvements for everybody: farmers, workers, and the environment.

Sometimes it seems like we have a long road ahead to get to where we want to be, but once we start, step by step we make improvements on our farm. It is a very good feeling to know that we are doing everything that needs to be done now to create a more sustainable future for cotton - it is very worthwhile. It would be great if programmes like the ABR/Better Cotton programme were implemented across other crops.”

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China

Direct programme country



2019-20 Cotton Season

Participating farmers
120,396

Licensed Better Cotton Farmers
104,035

Area harvested
408,000 hectares

Volume of Better Cotton produced
885,000 tonnes

Highlights

- To use water more efficiently, all Better Cotton Farmers practised field levelling (to distribute water evenly across their fields), and some Implementing Partners supported farmers in upgrading pump irrigation systems, installing drip irrigation, and constructing ditches, helping Better Cotton Farmers use 14% less water than Comparison Farmers.
- Better Cotton Farmers took steps to reduce their pesticide use by monitoring pests to inform their spraying decisions and encouraging beneficial insects. These actions resulted in them using 20% less pesticide than

Comparison Farmers.

- Better Cotton Farmers achieved 10% higher yields and 17% higher profits than Comparison Farmers.

Challenges

- Irregular and extreme weather posed diverse challenges across all cotton growing regions. Typhoon wind damage and continuous rains affected yields in the Yellow River Delta area, while high temperatures also prevented cotton bolls from forming correctly in some areas. Elsewhere, in the Yangtze River Delta, hot, humid conditions increased pest pressure.

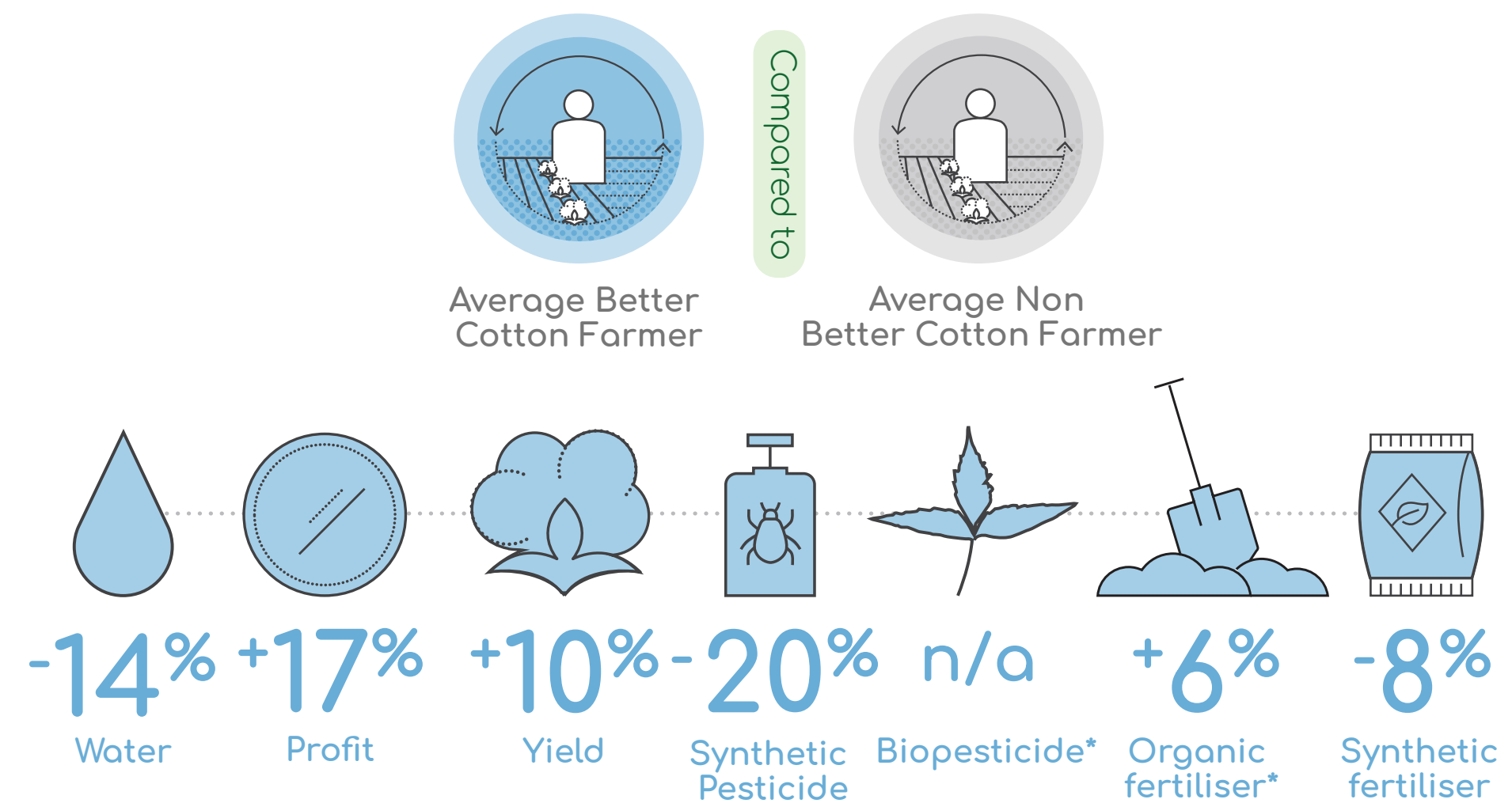
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Season overview

Some 104,035 Better Cotton Farmers in China grew 885,000 tonnes of Better Cotton in the 2019-20 cotton season, a slight drop from 896,000 tonnes in 2018-19, grown by 93,378 farmers. Overall, Better Cotton Farmers achieved 10% higher yields and 17% higher profits than Comparison Farmers in 2019-20, largely due to improved practices and lower input costs, thanks to using less synthetic fertiliser and pesticide.

Tackling irregular weather

Climate change continued to create irregular and extreme weather conditions across China's diverse cotton growing regions. In particular, the Yellow River Delta area suffered the effects of Typhoon Lekima, with strong winds causing significant damage to cotton farms in this river basin. And with continuous rains, some farmers experienced rotting bolls among their remaining cotton crops. The combined effect led to lower yields in the region. Meanwhile, in the Yangtze River Delta area, high temperatures and humidity enabled pests such as mite and bollworm to thrive. Fortunately, the impact was limited to certain areas, with most farmers able to conserve their crops.



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China

Water efficiency

Better Cotton Farmers levelled their fields before irrigation in early spring, enabling them to distribute water more evenly across their land. Our Implementing Partners also helped farmers to upgrade and improve their technology and equipment, with a focus on upgrading pump irrigation systems, installing drip irrigation, and constructing ditches to improve water use efficiency. Harnessing more efficient irrigation techniques enabled farmers to save water, while those who had experienced heavy rainfall in the Yellow River Basin only needed to irrigate their crops once while sowing seeds. Overall, Better Cotton Farmers used 14% less water than Comparison Farmers.

Pesticide use

Better Cotton Farmers reported 20% lower use of synthetic pesticides than Comparison Farmers in 2019-20. They also took steps to reduce their pesticide use by monitoring pests to inform their spraying decisions and making use of beneficial insects. Many Large Farms used drones and spraying machines to help improve the efficiency of pesticide application and reduce the levels of chemicals applied. Despite the overall decrease in pesticide use, some farmers were obliged to apply more pesticides when humid conditions in the Yangtze River Delta prompted high levels of pests including mites, aphids and bollworm.

Synthetic fertiliser use

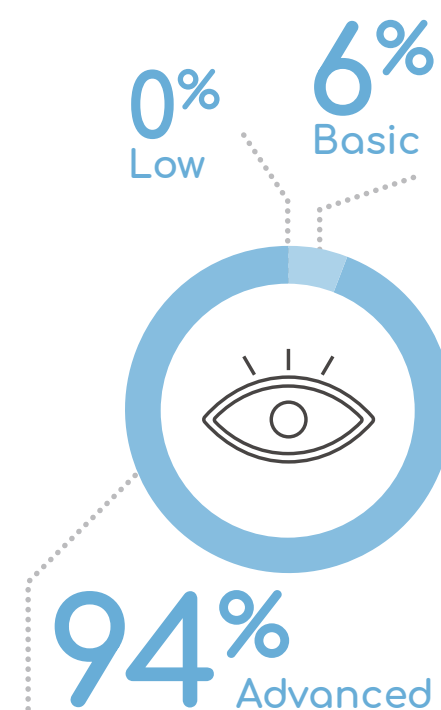
Strong winds damaged seedlings in some areas, which led to farmers applying more fertiliser when re-sowing to help optimise growing conditions and conserve their crops. However, despite the challenges, Better Cotton Farmers reported using 8% less synthetic fertiliser than Comparison Farmers. They also continued

to receive guidance from our Implementing Partners on soil testing, based on the understanding that a precision approach to applying fertilisers is more nourishing for the crops and kinder to the soil. Better Cotton Farmers also used organic fertiliser 6% more often than Comparison Farmers.

Child labour prevention

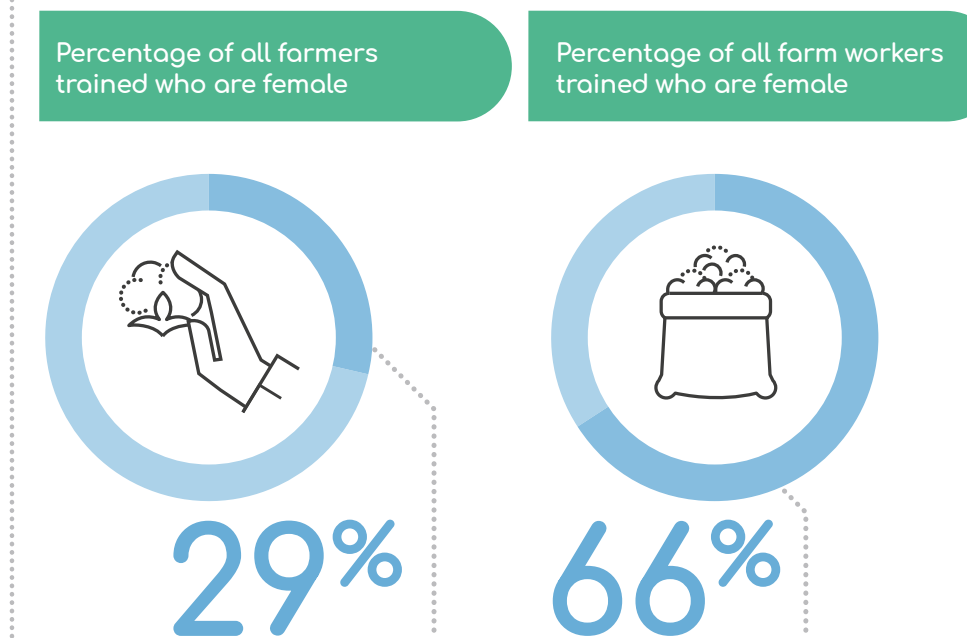
Better Cotton and our Implementing Partners continued to deliver regular training to farmers to raise their awareness of child labour issues, with 94% of Better Cotton Farmers reporting advanced level of awareness in the 2019-20 season.

Level of Awareness of Child Labour Issues



Women's Inclusion in Training Activities

Percentages represent the proportion of women trained as a total of all participants.



Profile

Name

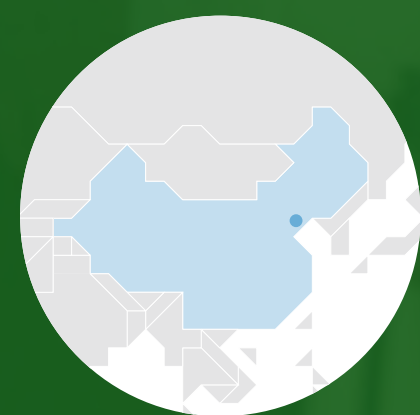
Wang Meishuang

Country/region

Hebei Province

Years in programme

4



“My village is in Weixian County, Hebei Province. It is a traditional cotton planting area, and I’ve grown up with cotton. I heard that villages around me were taking part in the Better Cotton programme, and it sounded interesting, so I applied to join in 2017.

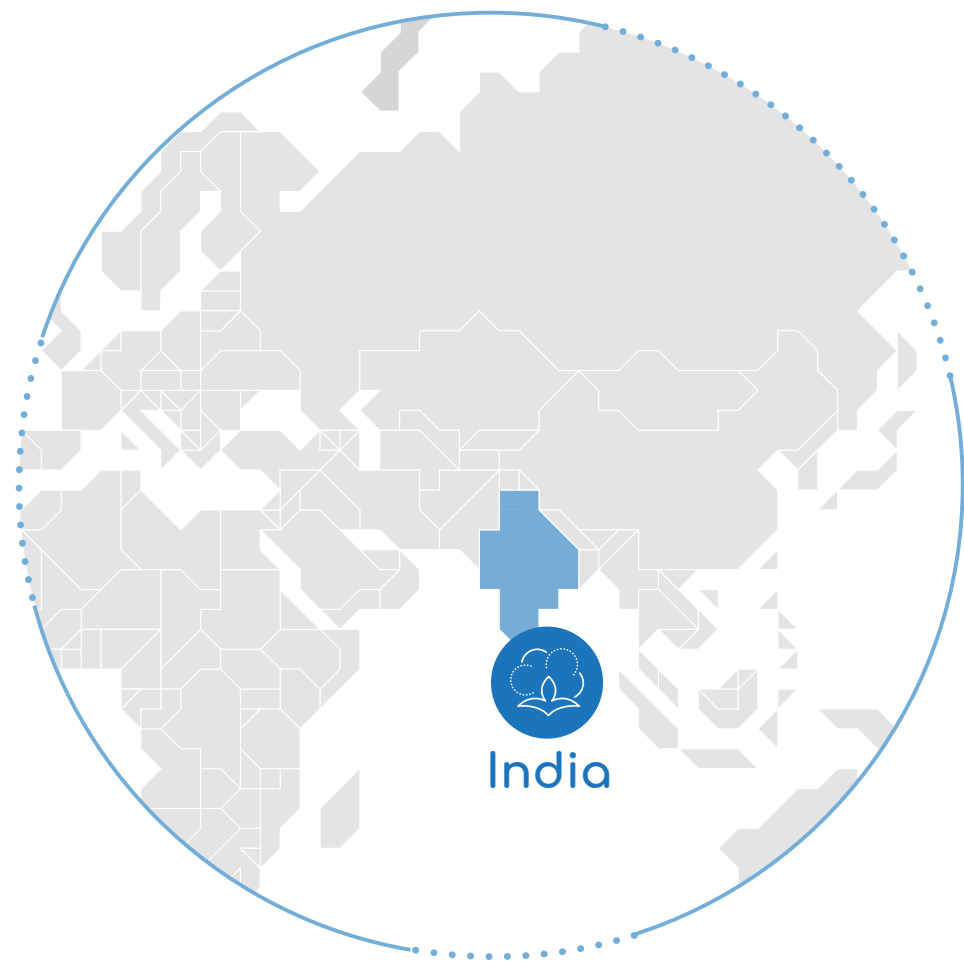
Since joining, the Better Cotton programme has helped me to make cotton planting more scientific, which has saved on labour, reduced the inputs required to farm, and helped me to improve my yield and income. The Better Cotton training I’ve received over the years has covered many topics, such as selecting good seed varieties for local conditions, implementing practices for more efficient use of water, fertilisers and pesticides, and eliminating the use of highly toxic pesticides.

Being part of the programme is also about sharing learnings, and I do this through interactive training sessions, learning groups, live demonstrations, and regular chats with other farmers. We will all visit each other’s cotton farm and share new techniques. All farmers like to learn new things and best practices.”

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India

Direct programme country



2019-20 Cotton Season

- Participating farmers
1,129,795
- Licensed Better Cotton Farmers
1,002,149
- Area harvested
1,547,000 hectares
- Volume of Better Cotton produced
1,022,000 tonnes

Highlights

- In the 2019-20 season, India was the largest Better Cotton programme country by number of participating farmers. There was also a significant increase in numbers of licensed farmers and volumes of Better Cotton produced, compared to the previous season.
- Better Cotton Farmers achieved 9% higher yields and 18% greater profits than Comparison Farmers by adopting more sustainable practices.
- Farmers used 23% fewer chemical pesticides than Comparison Farmers by systematically reducing their pesticide use and adopting biological methods of pest control. They also used 10% less water than Comparison Farmers.

Challenges

- While Better Cotton Farmers improved their pest management practices and reduced their use of chemical pesticides, there is still a need for greater support around the use of minimal personal protective equipment when applying pesticides.
- Awareness of child labour issues remains a challenge, and will continue to be addressed through dedicated training and awareness-raising campaigns.
- Women farmers represented just 6% of training participants.

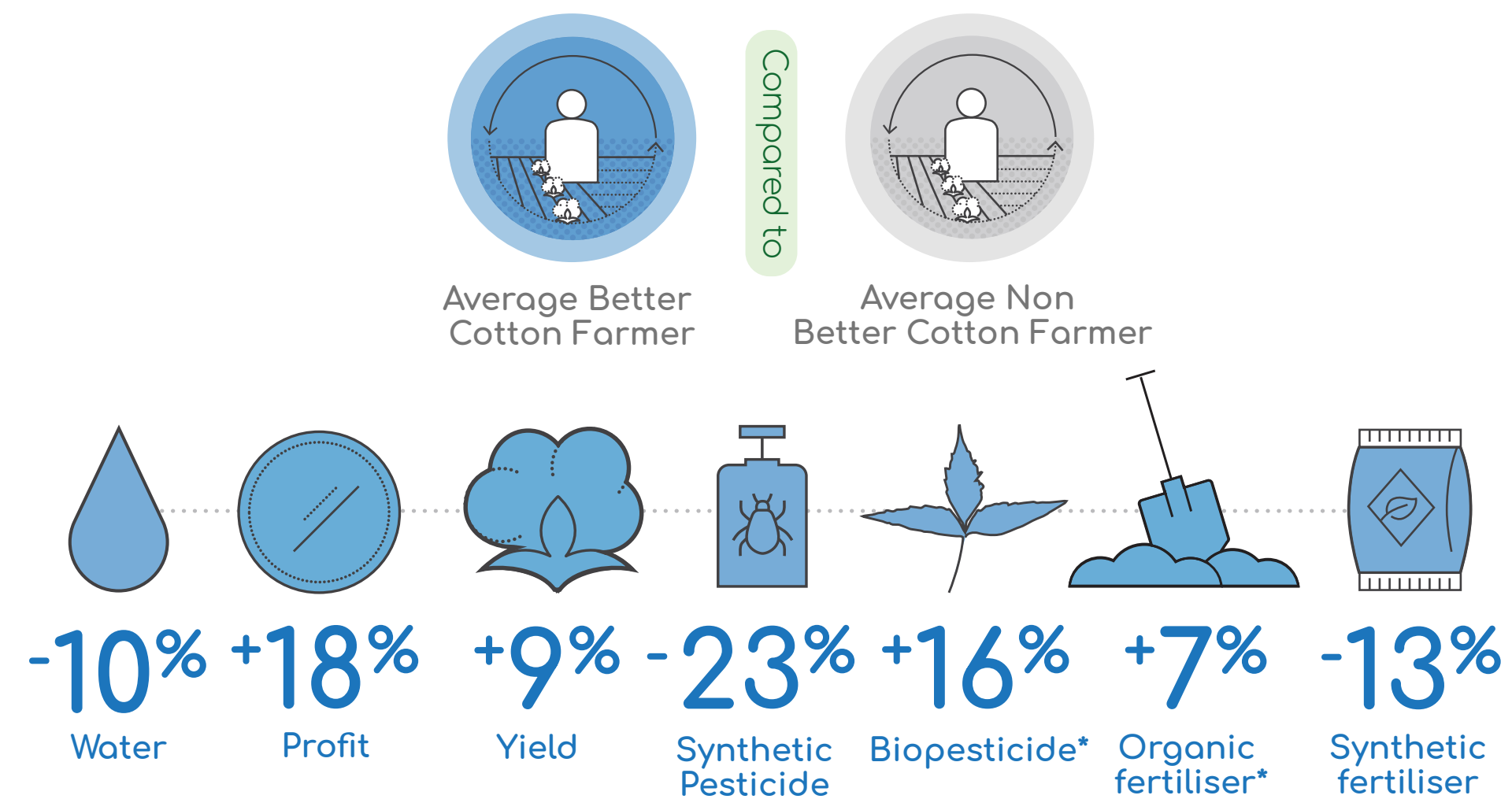
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Season overview

India had the largest number of farmers participating in the Better Cotton programme in the 2019-20 season, with 1,002,149 licensed Better Cotton Farmers producing 1,002,000 tonnes of Better Cotton. There was a 46% increase in farmer numbers and 57% rise in cotton volumes, compared to the previous season. This can be attributed in part to additional funding provided through the Better Cotton Growth and Innovation Fund. Better Cotton Farmers achieved 9% higher yields and 18% higher profits than Comparison Farmers by reducing and optimising their use of synthetic fertilisers and chemical pesticides.

Managing cotton pests

Pink Bollworm remained a major pest challenge in Maharashtra and Telangana in the 2019-20 season mostly due to its evolving resistance to genetically modified Bt cotton (which contains a strain of a bacteria that produces toxins that are harmful to a variety of pests, in particular the bollworm). Whitefly infestation was severe in some districts of Punjab due to hot and humid weather conditions post monsoon, while some locust attacks were reported in Rajasthan and Gujarat. Our Implementing Partners continued to help Better Cotton Farmers protect their crops while using 23% fewer pesticides (and 13% fewer synthetic fertilisers) than Comparison Farmers, providing dedicated Integrated Pest Management training. For example, Better Cotton Farmers grew leguminous crops in between the cotton rows (which helps cotton plants gain more nitrogen, reducing the need for synthetic fertilisers), and planted other crops in and around the cotton fields to create habitats for beneficial insects that prey on cotton pests.



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India

Phasing out highly hazardous pesticides

Better Cotton Farmers continued to replace conventional chemicals with more sustainable alternatives. Our Implementing Partners were successful in raising awareness of the need to use nationally registered pesticides (as required in the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria), based on their efficacy to target particular pests and diseases, promote healthy crop growth and protect farmers and workers. They also highlighted the dangers of using highly hazardous pesticides or applying a mixture of certain pesticides.

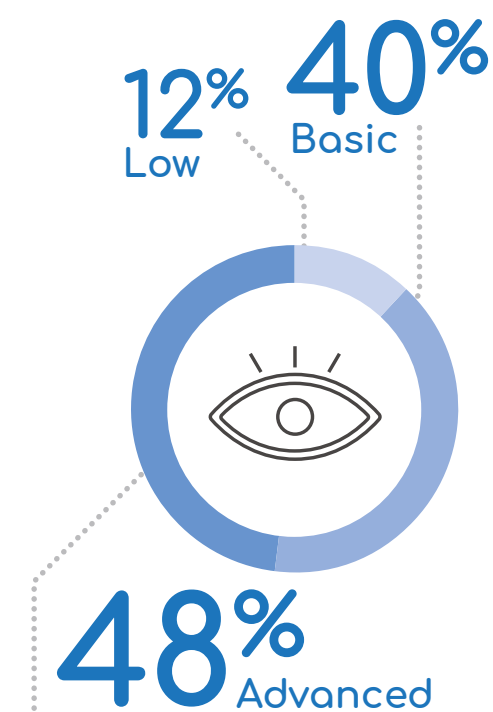
Child labour

The risk of child labour remains in India, particularly in underprivileged rural communities and among the families of migrant workers. Our Implementing Partners worked with schools in farming communities to strengthen the ability of village-led child protection committees to prevent child labour. Partners also ran awareness campaigns on the importance of education and child labour laws. While nearly 50% of Better Cotton Farmers demonstrated an advanced awareness of child labour issues, there is still work to be done to help ensure a broader understanding and prevent child labour in India's cotton fields.

Women's empowerment

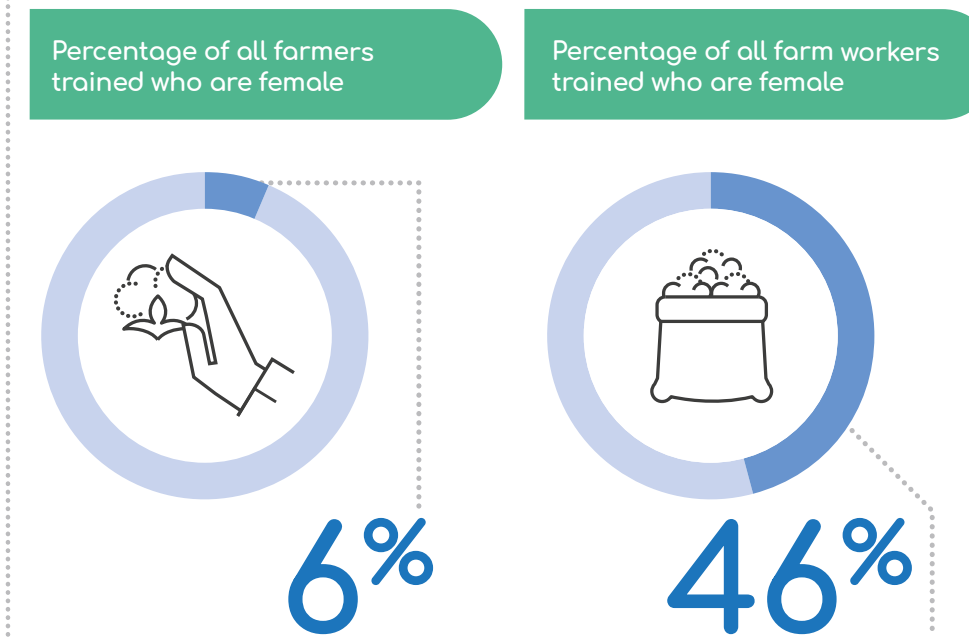
With few women able to attend training sessions due to societal norms that see women spending the majority of their time in the home, female farmers represented just 6% of training participants in the 2019-20 cotton season. We continue to work with our Implementing Partners to help them provide inclusive training sessions at convenient times, to ensure more women can participate in trainings at times suitable for them.

Level of Awareness of Child Labour Issues



Women's Inclusion in Training Activities

Percentages represent the proportion of women trained as a total of all participants.



India

Farmer profile

Name
**Sabari Jagan
Valvi**

Country/region
**Nandurbar
district,
Maharashtra,
India**

Years in programme
3



“To me, sustainable cotton means cotton being of good quality, having lower costs of cultivation and higher profits, while also doing no harm to environment with the cotton production system.

We adopt almost all the practices taught to us by the Better Cotton Field Facilitator. Specifically, single seed sowing is more suitable for my farm. By adopting this method, the cost of seed sowing is reduced by 50%. It also promotes crop growth more than in the case of multi-seed sowing, and preserves nutrients in the soil better too. Using red gram (pigeon peas) as an intercrop, marigold as a trap crop (to lure cotton pests) and maize as a border crop helps with pest management, and I have seen an increase in the beneficial insects on my farm. Last year I purchased vermicompost from Sompanda village, and now I have my own vermicompost unit supported through the Better Cotton project. By using organic manure I can save costs and improve the soil quality too.

Even though my farm is rainfed I would like to encourage other farmers to use water more efficiently, such as through the use of alternate furrow irrigation, so that there is more water available for all farms in the area.”

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Israel

Direct programme country



2019-20 Cotton Season

Participating farmers
53

Licensed Better Cotton Farmers
53

Area harvested
4,000 hectares

Volume of Better Cotton produced
9,000 tonnes

In Israel, Better Cotton partners with the Israel Cotton Production and Marketing Board (ICB), a farmer-owned producer organisation representing all cotton farmers in the country.

Highlights

- ➊ Better Cotton Farmers continued to take action to limit crop damage and prevent future outbreaks of charcoal rot (a soil-borne fungus), following an attack in the previous seasons. Charcoal rot affects cotton plant roots and tissue, particularly after extreme heat or drought.
- ➋ Our partner, the Israel Cotton Production and Marketing

Board (ICB), completed the development of the Israel Cotton Production Standard System, which we benchmarked against the Better Cotton Standard in 2020 and recognised as equivalent to Better Cotton.

Challenges

- ➊ Climate change continues to create difficulties for cotton production. In particular, higher temperatures increase the risk of charcoal rot, and can lead to farmers having to irrigate their crops in a timelier manner to ensure there's enough moisture in the soil for healthy yields.

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Season overview

All cotton production in Israel was licensed as Better Cotton in the 2019-20 cotton season. A total of 53 farmers produced 9,000 tonnes of Better Cotton, the same amount as was produced in the previous season. This is still, however, a decline compared to 2017-18 (12,000 tonnes produced by 75 farmers), which can be largely attributed to the aforementioned charcoal rot. A decline in cotton price also impacted profitability.

The impact of climate change

Global climate change, particularly a gradual increase in temperature, has posed challenges for farmers, whose crops and practices have not adapted sufficiently rapidly to the hotter weather. Scientists in Israel are researching a new variety of cotton that can withstand the heat, in order for farmers in Israel to continue cultivating cotton for the long term. Similarly, farmers must continue to reduce the risk of charcoal rot, which is likely prompted by climate change, with the fungus thriving in hotter temperatures.

Managing plant health

To help manage and protect crops from charcoal rot and to reduce plant stress effectively, farmers focused on improving soil health, managing moisture levels through improved timing of irrigation (particularly during the early season), managing pests in a timely manner, and regulating plant growth. Additionally, the ICB began research that will inform farmers on best practice in developing field margins (buffers of land that protect hedgerows, ditches, and streams from farming operations), to further their sustainable farming practices.

Reducing pesticide use

2019-20 was a good season from a pest perspective, with low pest pressure, particularly from the pink bollworm (a common cotton pest). Farmers continued to apply pheromones to plants (which disrupts the reproduction of pink bollworms), and later in the season they took a precision approach to applying pesticides, which means pest populations are observed and measured, and pesticides only used where the number of pests reaches an unacceptable threshold.

A new standard

The ICB developed their own sustainable cotton standard, the Israel Cotton Production Standard System (ICPSS), which was recognised as equivalent to the Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS) in 2020. From the 2020-21 cotton season, farmers growing cotton in line with the ICPSS can also opt to sell their cotton as Better Cotton.

Israel

Profile

Name

Eitan Avivi

Country/region

Hazorea

Years in programme

6



“The Better Cotton programme and its Principles and Criteria have increased our overall awareness of sustainability.

Since joining the programme, we have been focusing on soil conservation by adopting minimum tillage and avoiding excess water and fertiliser usage during irrigation. We have also introduced smart farming technologies such as remote sensing, plant monitoring and soil monitoring. We are now looking beyond growing practices alone and we are participating in a research programme to improve ground cover along canal banks while restoring biodiversity on field margins.

Agriculture is a long-term productive pursuit. We need to pursue sustainable farming practices for the sake of the environment as well as humanity and the next generations.”



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Kazakhstan

Direct programme country



2019-20 Cotton Season

Participating farmers
331

Licensed Better Cotton Farmers
311

Area harvested
3,000 hectares

Volume of Better Cotton produced
3,000 tonnes

Highlights

- Better Cotton Farmers continued to use more sustainable farming practices, which included techniques to care for soil health, using biological methods to control pests, and restoring degraded areas of farmland.
- Farmers benefitted from high quality practical advice provided by Implementing Partner Louis Dreyfus Company's field staff, who advised on aspects such as regularly monitoring soil health and purchasing higher quality seeds.

Challenges

- Climate change is a growing challenge, with conditions becoming less favourable for cotton. In the 2019-20 cotton season, Better Cotton Farmers had to sow seeds and harvest crops later than usual. Later sowing and harvesting can result in lower yields, due to a shortened growing season, and the higher probability of late season rains damaging the cotton while it's still in the field.

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Kazakhstan

Season overview

Though there were fewer Better Cotton Farmers in the 2019-20 season, they managed to improve their yields and produce more Better Cotton: 311 licensed farmers cultivated 3,000 tonnes of Better Cotton, compared to 334 farmers and 2,000 tonnes of Better Cotton in the 2018-19 season. This was largely due to large farms continuing to modernise their equipment (including cotton pickers), benefitting from government subsidies, and starting to plant higher quality seed varieties. Additionally, the average price for seed cotton remained relatively good, compared to global prices.

The changing climate

This is a growing challenge for Better Cotton Farmers in Kazakhstan, with the seasons becoming more irregular. In particular, spring is arriving later, which can lead to seeds being sown and crops harvested later than usual. However, the impact on farmers' yields is negligible for now, with temperatures still in an acceptable range to ensure a good harvest.

Promoting soil health

Among the more sustainable practices adopted by Better Cotton Farmers in 2019-20, farmers used biological methods to control pests and promote soil health. This included using beneficial insects and biological pesticides such as sulphur against mites, and natural fertilisers such as manure to nourish the soil. Although the application of manure was helpful, it is still not carried out on a level that would achieve significant improvements, and therefore farmers also relied on some conventional fertilisers.

Water efficiency

All farmers levelled their fields prior to sowing, which while being costly, also prevented water and salts accumulating in pits and degrading the land. We aim to build on this good practice by further supporting Better Cotton Farmers to preserve water and conserve soil health in the next season.

To find out more about Better Cotton in Kazakhstan, please visit our website: <https://bettercotton.org/where-is-better-cotton-grown/bci-helps-farmers-in-kazakhstan-to-grow-better-cotton-and-improve-their-livelihoods/>

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Kazakhstan

Farmer profile

Name

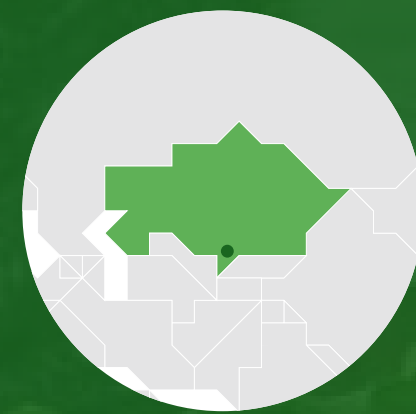
Narkoziev Mukhit

Country/region

South Kazakhstan Oblast

Years in programme

6



“The training I have received through the Better Cotton programme has helped me to increase my overall yield and income. I now prefer to use biological methods to control cotton pests on my farm, and I’m always looking for ways to use water more efficiently. I also practice crop rotation to improve soil health.”

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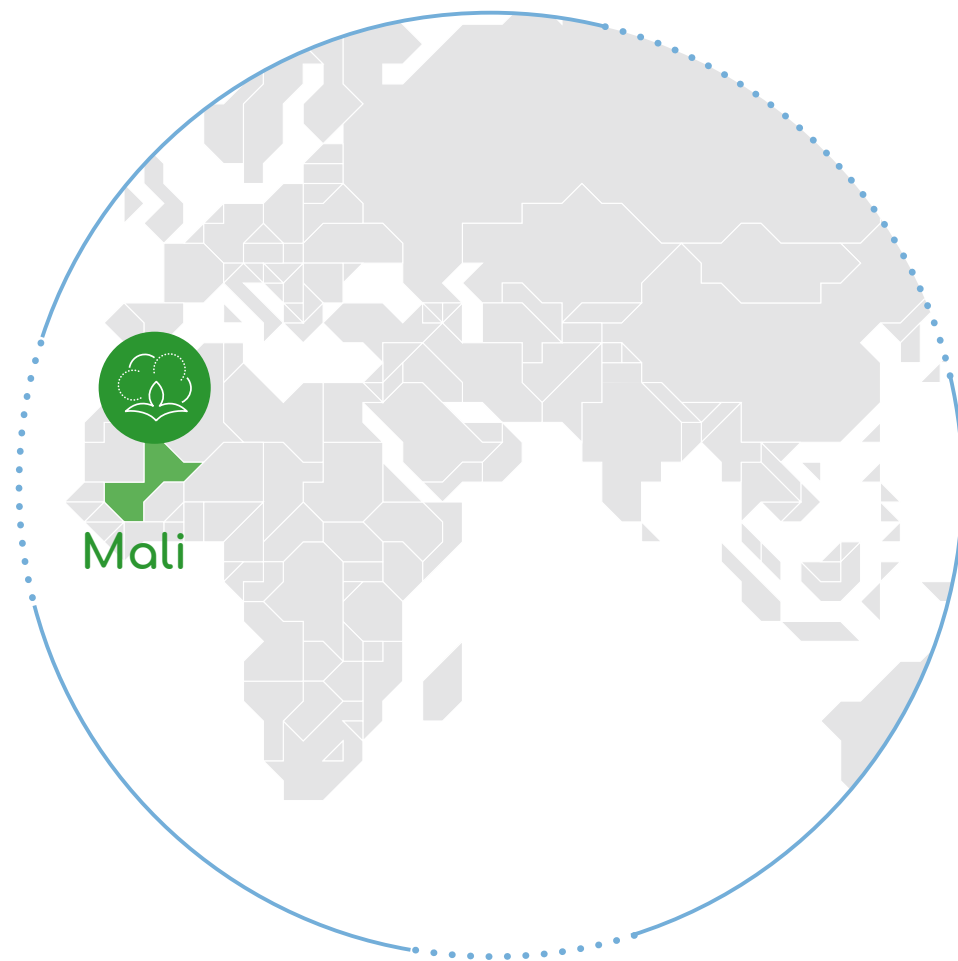
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Mali

Direct programme country



2019-20 Cotton Season

Participating farmers
84,684

Licensed Better Cotton Farmers
19,515

Area harvested
54,000 hectares

Volume of Better Cotton produced
23,000 tonnes

Highlights

- Better Cotton Farmers monitored pest levels regularly to help manage pest pressure and maintain the quality of their cotton fibre, despite numerous pest attacks.
- Farmers employed a series of cost-effective techniques, such as soil moisture management, to help build resilience to irregular rainfall and pockets of drought.
- Many farmers attended training sessions about the importance of children's education and preventing child labour, delivered by Better Cotton's Implementing Partner Compagnie Malienne pour le Developpement des Textiles (CMDT).

Challenges

- With rain falling later than usual in the early planting season, some farmers were obliged to re-sow their cotton seeds, which increased their costs and impacted their profitability. Sowing later can also lead to increased pest attacks on cotton plants, and this can impact yields.
- Due to challenges complying with the core requirements of the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria, several Producer Units did not receive a Better Cotton licence in the 2019-20 season, which led to a decrease in the number of licensed farmers, area under cultivation, and volume of Better Cotton produced.

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Season overview

With a year-on-year increase in cotton prices and government subsidies for farming inputs and equipment, more farmers decided to grow cotton in the 2019-20 season and joined the Better Cotton programme. However, despite the increase in participating farmers, several Producer Units (groups of Smallholder farmers participating in the Better Cotton programme) had challenges complying with the core requirements of the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria and did not receive a Better Cotton licence in the 2019-20 season. This led to a decrease in the number of licensed farmers, area under cultivation, and the volume of Better Cotton produced compared to the previous season. Better Cotton's Implementing Partner continued to work closely with farmers to support them in meeting the core requirements for the next season.

Cost effective soil moisture management

Although climatic conditions were generally favourable for cotton growing in the 2019-20 season, some farmers had to re-sow their cotton due to late rainfall and pockets of drought reported in the early season, creating some additional costs. Better Cotton Farmers sought to address this challenge and maintain yields by using simple, cost-effective soil moisture management techniques. For example, they ploughed strips in and around the edges of fields to help prevent erosion and run off, composted organic matter and applied organic manure.

Comparison Farmer data was not available because most of the cotton farmers in Mali's Better Cotton project areas were already participating in the Better Cotton programme.

Preserving fibre quality

The pest pressure experienced in 2019-20 was within normal levels, with various pest attacks reported during the season. However, by continually observing the number of pests, and applying certain harvesting techniques, such as carrying out two or three rounds of picking, drying, and sorting harvested cotton, and then storing it well, Better Cotton Farmers managed to conserve most of their crops and preserve fibre quality.

Child labour awareness

Farmers attended training seminars and focused sessions on child labour prevention, delivered by Better Cotton's Implementing Partner. In some areas, farmers also received messages about the importance of children's education, health and nutrition, and preventing child labour. This was provided by organisations such as the ILO, Save the Children, Plan International and local charities who shared information through school talks, media stories and posters.

To learn more about Better Cotton in Mali, please visit our website:

<https://bettercotton.org/where-is-better-cotton-grown/bci-is-helping-cotton-farmers-in-mali-to-adopt-sustainable-farming-practices/>

Farmer profile

Name

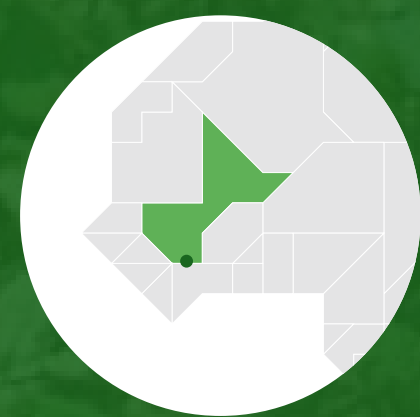
Abou Diallo

Country/region

Sikasso Region

Years in programme

6



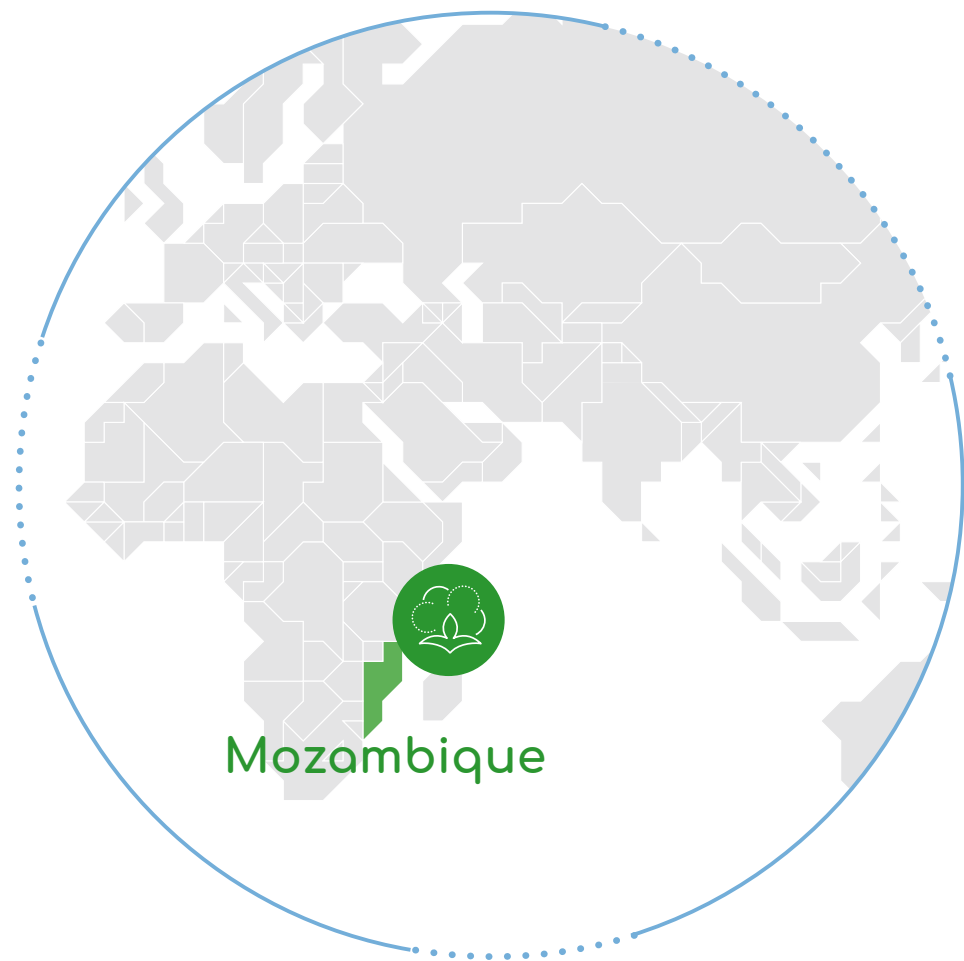
“Since joining the Better Cotton programme, we have stopped using toxic pesticides, which made us sick before. Now we use very few chemical pesticides and if we do, we use those that are less toxic for our health and the environment. Another change Better Cotton has positively influenced is our approach and awareness of child labour issues. We received training on the type of support our children can and cannot provide on our family farms alongside their schooling.

Cotton is a precious product all over the world, but for us farmers it is above all a source of critical income - it is our livelihoods. For me, cotton is the most important crop.”

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Mozambique

Direct programme country



2019-20 Cotton Season

Participating farmers
74,568

Licensed Better Cotton Farmers
61,341

Area harvested
66,000 hectares

Volume of Better Cotton produced
6,000 tonnes

Highlights

- ➊ Better Cotton Farmers used less pesticide compared to the previous season. This can be attributed to many farmers adopting a scouting-based approach to applying pesticides, only spraying when pest numbers reached a certain level.
- ➋ Our Implementing Partner SAN-JFS launched a women's empowerment initiative, enabling women to derive financial benefit by collecting and returning pesticide containers for recycling.
- ➌ Implementing Partner SANAM expanded their community school outreach programme to improve awareness of child labour issues.

Challenges

- ➊ Climate change is contributing to an unpredictable rainy season, creating challenges in predicting appropriate planting times.
- ➋ Increasing market strength for competing crops like maize, sesame and pulses continued to drive a reduction in land planted with cotton. In some cases, farmers shifted away from cotton entirely to grow other crops.

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Mozambique

Season overview

The number of participating and licensed Better Cotton Farmers decreased in the 2019-20 season due to farmers shifting from cotton to competing crops like maize, sesame and pulses, as those crops became stronger in the international market. There was also a significant reduction in the cotton area planted per participating farmer as many dedicated more of their land to growing alternative crops. With the addition of challenging climatic conditions, the total area harvested, and overall volume of Better Cotton produced declined in the 2019-20 season.

Irregular rainfall

Irregular rainfall meant that farmers could not be certain when to plant for optimum growing conditions, which then affected the whole cotton cycle. Similarly, excessive late rain during the cotton fruiting period increased the risks of plant disease and decreased productivity for some farmers. In addition, high rainfall in Nampula province came just as the cotton bolls were opening, which negatively affected the cotton fibre quality.

Pesticide use and productivity

Better Cotton Farmers used less pesticide in 2019-20 by improving their skills in pest management and only using pesticides when pest numbers reached a certain threshold – this also helped with reducing input costs. Lead Better Cotton Farmers, (role models with an advanced understanding of good practices, who typically trial new farming practices), were particularly successful in applying these techniques, and reported even higher yields than other Better Cotton

Farmers. Through the season, they shared their learnings and knowledge to help others in the Better Cotton programme benefit from better pest management.

Women's empowerment

Our Implementing Partner SAN-JFS launched an initiative focusing primarily on women, whereby women gain some economic independence by collecting, emptying, and delivering pesticide containers for recycling. In addition to the financial benefit, some have been promoted to Field Facilitators. To be more inclusive, SAN-JFS altered their regular training schedule to ensure more woman could participate in trainings at times suitable for them.

Child labour awareness

Our Implementing Partners continued to conduct awareness-raising campaigns in schools. With many schools later closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they ran child labour awareness campaigns in village health centres and through local radio stations to reach wider audiences.

To learn more about Better Cotton in Mozambique, please visit our website <https://bettercotton.org/where-is-better-cotton-grown/better-cotton-mozambique/>

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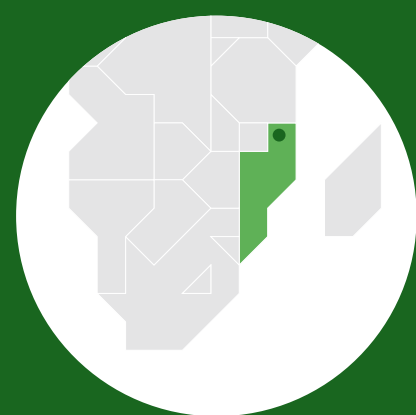
**Manuel
Maussene**

Country/region

Niassa Province

Years in programme

8

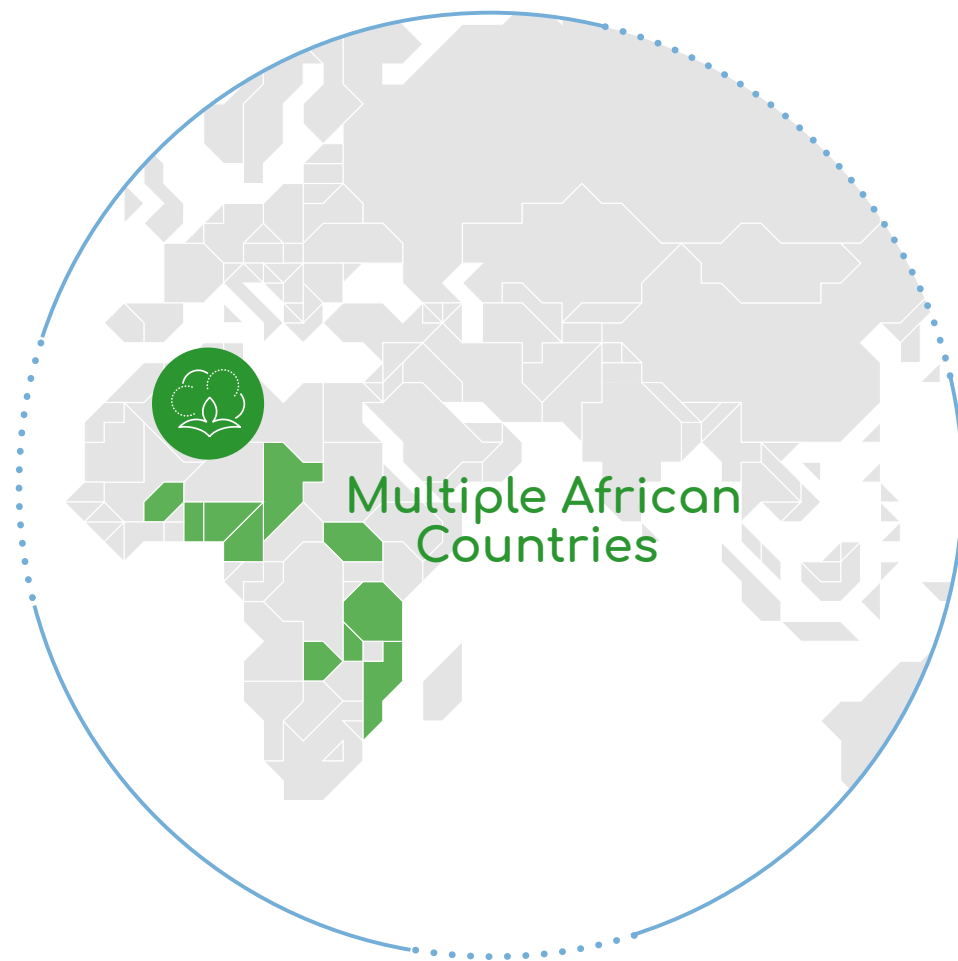


“Since joining the Better Cotton programme, I’ve taken many steps to boost productivity on my farm, focusing on more efficient approaches to managing pests, maximising my use of rainwater, and improving soil health and fibre. Where possible, I use natural substances such as neem leaves to make botanical pesticides, which also saves me money. I also use perished weeds from my farm to create a nourishing cover for the topsoil. This has the double benefit of providing nutrients to the soil while helping to maximise moisture retention and ensuring more water is directed to the roots, essential in times of drought and irregular rainfall. Improving soil health is vital. I also try to improve my overall soil health by rotating my cotton crops with maize, cassava and beans, which gives the soil a chance to regenerate.”

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Multiple African Countries

Benchmarked programme country



2019-20 Cotton Season

Participating farmers
990,925

Licensed CmiA/Better Cotton Farmers
756,000

Area harvested
1,402,000 hectares

Volume of CmiA/Better Cotton grown
578,000 tonnes

In 2013, Better Cotton entered into a Strategic Partnership Agreement with the Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF), owners of the Cotton made in Africa (CmiA) Standard. The Better Cotton and CmiA standards were benchmarked and recognised as equivalent, and as a result, cotton verified as CmiA can also be sold as Better Cotton.

In the 2019-20 cotton season, the CmiA Standard was implemented in the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Mozambique* Nigeria, Tanzania, Chad, Uganda and Zambia.

Highlights

In the 2019-20 season, CmiA/Better Cotton-benchmarked farmers were able to improve

their practices and increase their yields, achieving an average yield of 950kg/ha of seed cotton (compared to an average of 840 kg/ha in the 2018-19 season).

Despite restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, CmiA's partner cotton companies managed to continue to deliver farmer support and trainings while ensuring safety measures for all participants, this included delivering small training groups and practicing social distancing.

Challenges

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, regional workshops and visits to supply chain partners could not be conducted.

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Multiple African Countries

Season overview

In the 2019-20 cotton season, 756,000 licensed CmiA/Better Cotton-benchmarked farmers produced 578,000 tonnes of cotton. Despite the slight decline in the number of licensed farmers compared to the previous season (822,371 farmers in the 2018-19 season), farmers were able to improve their practices and increase their yields (on average). As a result, they managed to produce the same overall volume of cotton year on year.

Learn more about the Aid by Trade Foundation:
<https://www.aidbytrade.org/en/home/>



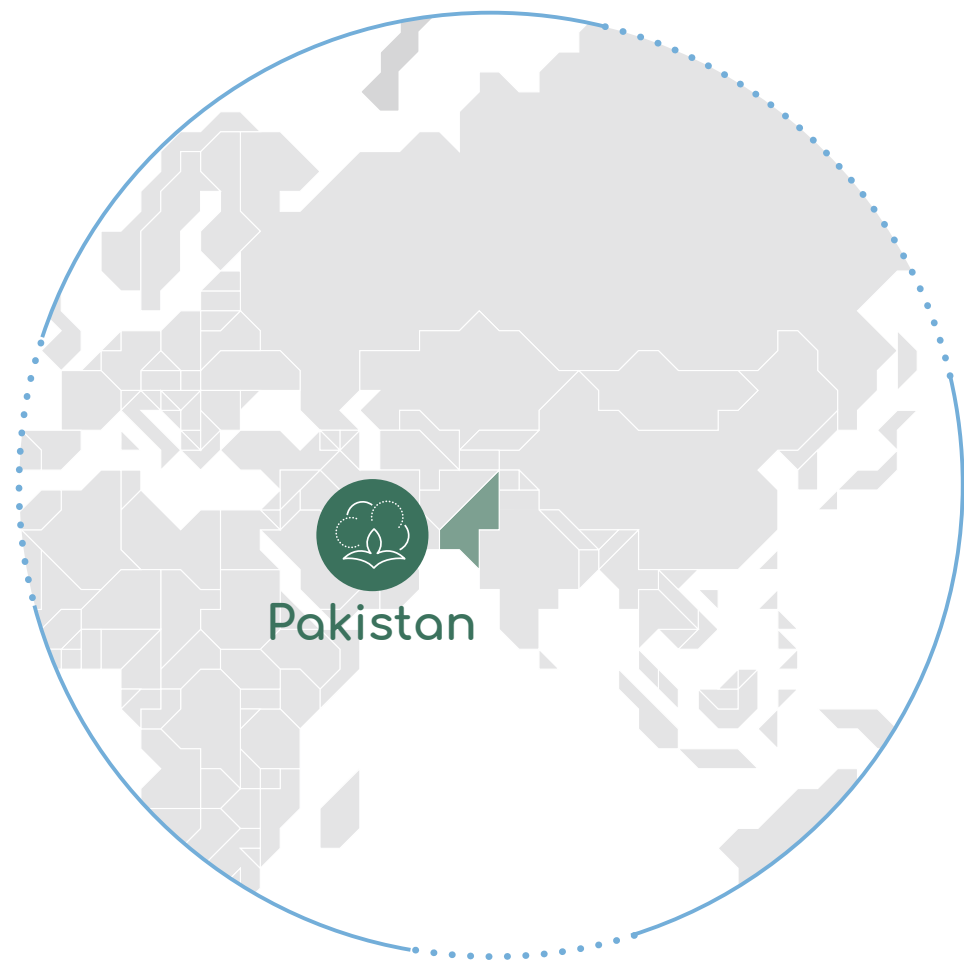
Better Cotton has a contractual agreement with AbTF to share data in a consolidated form, rather than on a country-by-country basis. Better Cotton does not share the Results Indicator data of Strategic Partners.

*Better Cotton also operates a direct programme in Mozambique, therefore farmers in Mozambique who may be both CmiA and Better Cotton licensed are only counted once.

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Pakistan

Direct programme country



2019-20 Cotton Season

Participating farmers
502,042

Licensed Better Cotton Farmers
460,220

Area harvested
1,286,000 hectares

Volume of Better Cotton produced
944,000 tonnes

Highlights

- ➊ Better Cotton Farmers reported 12% higher yields and 35% higher profits than Comparison Farmers, largely due to their improved knowledge on seed selection, crop protection and soil health.
- ➋ By harnessing multiple water-saving techniques, and laser-levelling their land before sowing, Better Cotton Farmers reported 11% less water use than Comparison Farmers.
- ➌ Better Cotton Farmers used 16% less synthetic fertiliser than Comparison Farmers, opting for natural fertilisers such as farmyard manure where possible.

Challenges

- ➊ Cotton production was affected by unfavourable weather conditions, particularly unpredictable rains, high temperatures and low water availability in some areas during crop sowing and plant development.
- ➋ Pest attacks created significant damage to cotton crops, contributing to reduced yields in some areas.

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Season overview

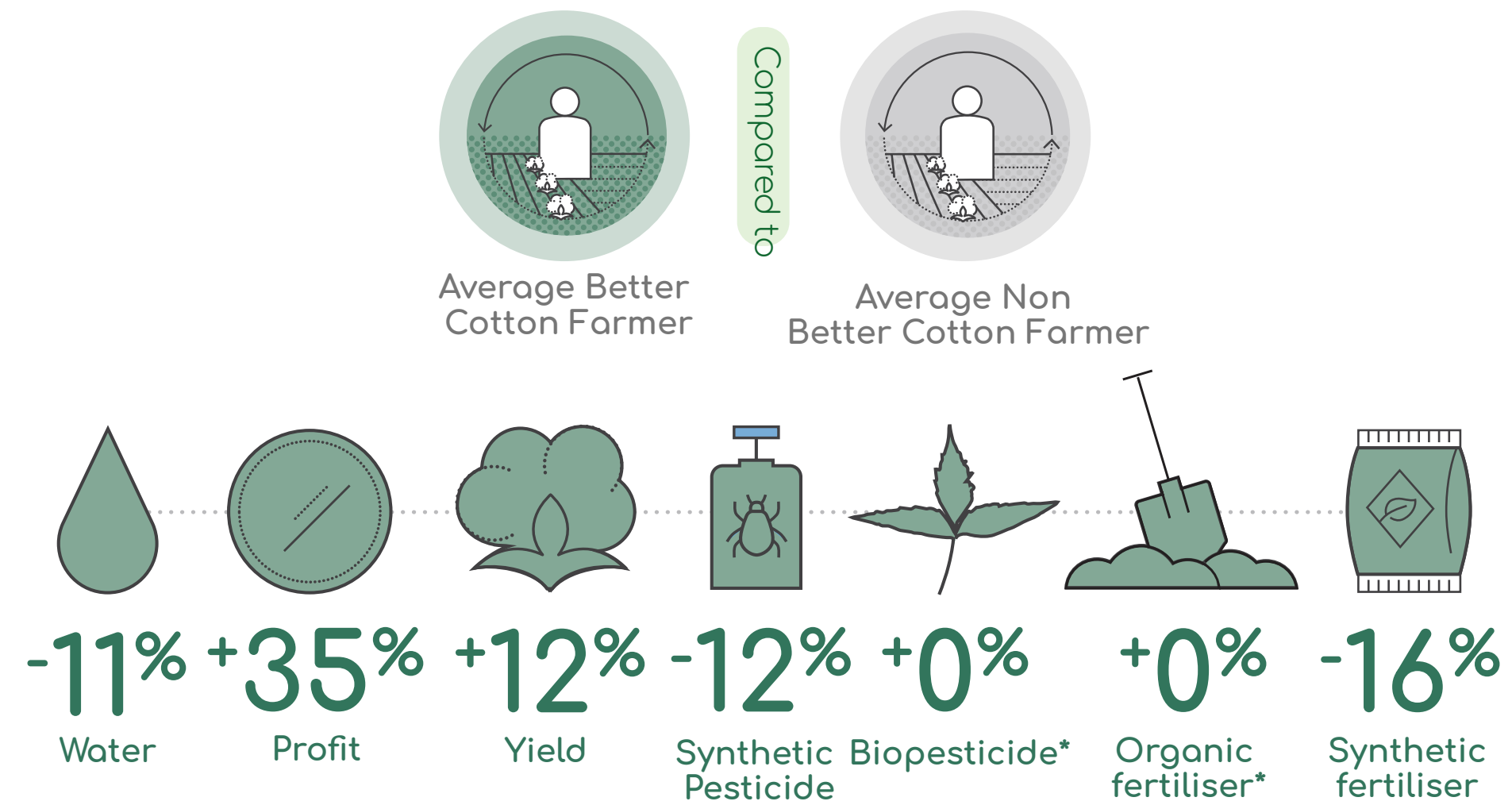
Some 502,042 Better Cotton Farmers in Pakistan produced 944,000 tonnes of Better Cotton in the 2019-20 cotton season. Challenging growing conditions meant a lower yield per hectare compared to the previous season. However, Better Cotton Farmers still achieved 12% higher yields and 35% higher profits than Comparison Farmers, largely due to their improved knowledge on seed selection, crop protection and soil health.

Climate challenges

In particular, cotton farmers faced unpredictable rains, high temperatures and low water availability in some areas, during important stages of crop sowing and plant development. Pest attacks added further challenges, with locusts, whitefly and pink bollworm all damaging the crops, leading to lower yields for some farmers.

Reducing pesticide use

Despite the challenges, Better Cotton Farmers leveraged the knowledge gained through their Better Cotton training to use 12% fewer pesticides than Comparison Farmers. In particular, Better Cotton Farmers learnt to only spray pesticides when pest levels reached a certain threshold, to apply biopesticides such as natural neem oil instead of chemical pesticides, and to plant a diverse range of plants to encourage and preserve beneficial insects.



*Frequency of use is compared, not amount.

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Pakistan

Opting for natural fertilisers

During the season, fertiliser and pesticide costs increased, though this was partially offset by the government providing subsidies for farmers for nitrogen, phosphorous and potash fertilisers. Better Cotton Farmers also opted for natural fertilisers and applied farmyard manure to help promote soil health, which contributed to their using 16% fewer synthetic fertilisers than Comparison Farmers. Improving soil health in this way also helped to reduce the need for irrigation. They also used laser levelling before sowing, ensuring the land was level to promote the more even distribution of water across the fields. Overall, Better Cotton Farmers used 11% less water than Comparison Farmers.

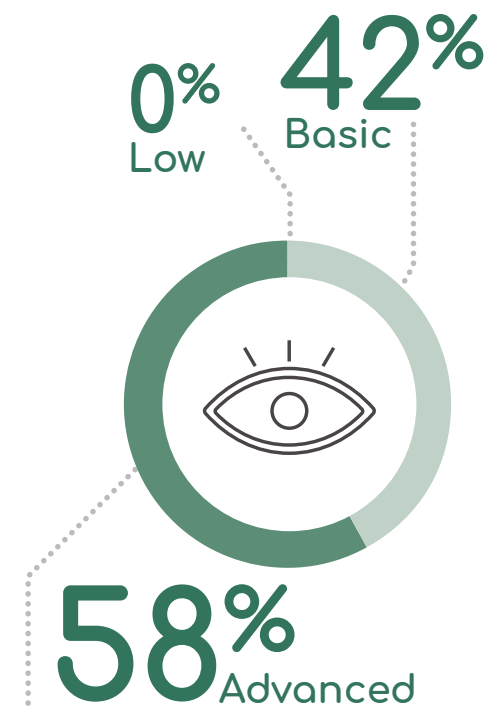
Training on child labour issues

With continuous training on child labour prevention, some 58% of farmers reported an advanced level of awareness on this important issue. Some Implementing Partners, including WWF Pakistan, showed videos on decent work on LED screens mounted on vans in their villages. These proved popular with farming families. Further work is planned on this topic for the coming season.

To learn more about Better Cotton in Pakistan, please visit:

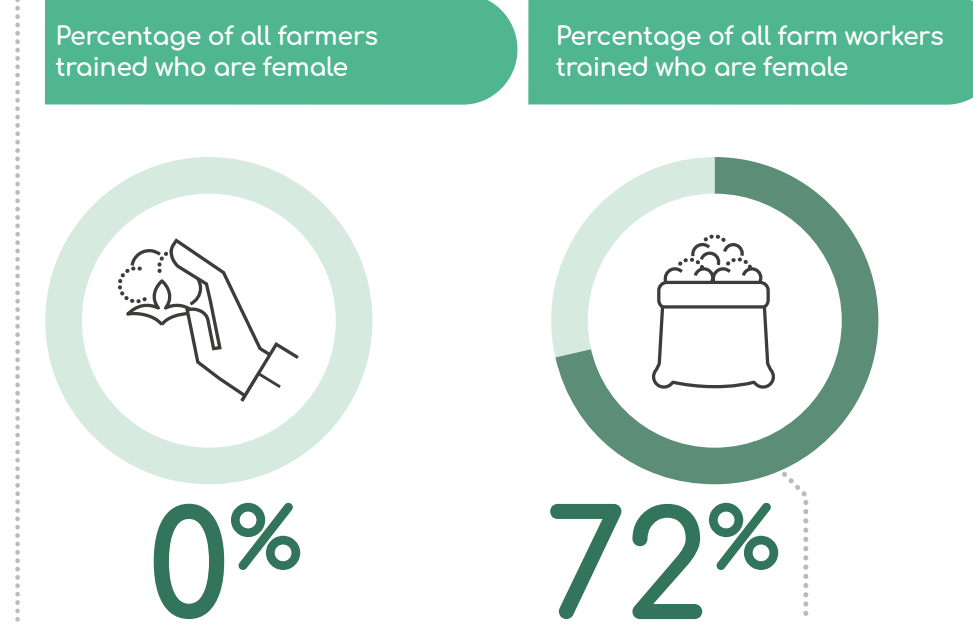
<https://bettercotton.org/where-is-better-cotton-grown/better-cotton-pakistan/>

Level of Awareness of Child Labour Issues



Women's Inclusion in Training Activities

Percentages represent the proportion of women trained as a total of all participants.



Profile

Name

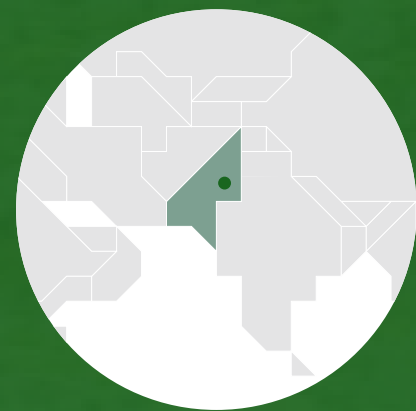
**Muhammad
Shahbaz**

Country/region

Vehari

Years in programme

4



“For me, Better Cotton means analysing the best suitable ways of cultivating cotton, keeping in view the long-term effects. Then with this knowledge, it’s about adopting changes in a sustainable way, while teaching and transferring the skills to our children and so on to the next generations.

I have adopted many different practices since becoming part of the Better Cotton programme, but the one that gives me maximum benefit and helps me to save inputs and utilise land in efficient way is intercropping – it’s helped me to increase my cotton yields and profits. I’ve also significantly reduced my overall use of water. Growing cotton requires dedicated and a willingness to learn new things.”

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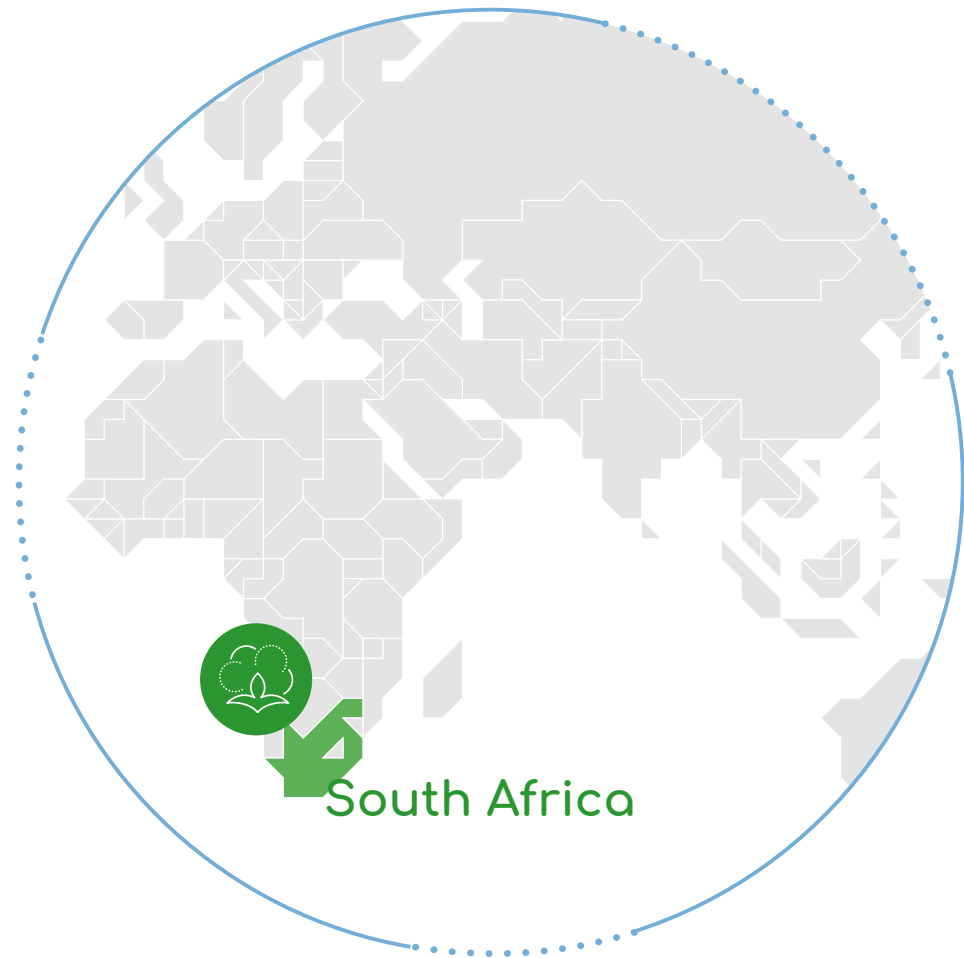
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South Africa

Direct programme country



2019-20 Cotton Season

Participating farmers
559

Licensed Better Cotton Farmers
559

Area harvested
12,000 hectares

Volume of Better Cotton produced
11,000 tonnes

Highlights

- Better Cotton Farmers continued to optimise their pesticide use, replacing conventional pesticides with more sustainable alternatives. In particular, this included phase-out plans for certain pesticides, and exploring the use of biopesticides.
- Awareness of child labour prevention was high, with no incidents reported during the season, and Better Cotton Farmers reporting 95% advanced awareness on child labour issues.
- Yields rose on some Large Farms and Medium Farms, with more Better Cotton Farmers adopting precision farming techniques, particularly in terms of irrigation, pest control and fertiliser application.

Challenges

- Delays in early season rainfall led to fewer fields being planted with cotton, while Better Cotton Farmers who rely on rainfall (rather than irrigation water) to nourish their crops also experienced lower yields.
- Additionally, decreased government investment in agriculture further contributed to the reduction in planted area and yields. This affected smallholder farmers in particular, and led to fewer farmers participating in the Better Cotton programme overall.

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South Africa

Season overview

In South Africa, 559 Better Cotton Farmers cultivated 11,000 tonnes of Better Cotton, a decrease compared to the 2018-19 cotton season, when 646 farmers produced 18,000 tonnes of Better Cotton. This is largely due to reduced government support and subsidies for agriculture. The effect of this was largely felt by smallholder farmers. Meanwhile, delays in early season rainfall also resulted in fewer fields being planted with cotton and lower yields. In addition, the rotational cropping system used for soil management by licensed Medium Farms and Large Farms in South Africa led to a slight decrease in cotton cultivated area in the season.

Precision farming techniques

Despite these challenges, Large Farms and some Medium Farms made important gains on improving sustainable practices by using precision farming techniques, with a focus on irrigation, pest control, soil health and fertiliser application. For example, some Better Cotton Farmers adopted seed varieties engineered to resist certain pests and respond positively to particular herbicides. They also thoroughly analysed their crops to clarify that pest numbers had reached a certain level before applying pesticides, supported by experts. Despite this progress, a serious invasion of jassids (a common sap-sucking cotton pest) prompted higher pesticide use in some cases.

Utilising biopesticides

Many Better Cotton Farmers sought to replace some pesticides with biopesticides. While this was a positive move, it did also contribute to increased costs in some cases (as the less mass-produced biopesticides came at a higher cost), highlighting the challenges sometimes experienced by farmers in adopting more sustainable practices.

Soil health and water stewardship

With a greater understanding of soil health and requirements, Better Cotton Farmers were also better placed to know when to apply fertilisers, and in what quantities. Similarly, more Better Cotton Farmers conducted analysis to understand water availability and opportunities to conserve natural resources, including water on their farms.

Awareness of child labour issues

Overall, awareness of the importance of preventing child labour was high, with 95% of Better Cotton Farmers demonstrating high levels of awareness, and no incidents recorded during the season.

To find out more about Better Cotton in South Africa, please visit our website: <https://bettercotton.org/where-is-better-cotton-grown/better-cotton-south-africa/>

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Tajikistan

Direct programme country

2019-20 Cotton Season

Participating farmers
881

Licensed Better Cotton Farmers
876

Area harvested
14,000 hectares

Volume of Better Cotton produced
13,000 tonnes

Highlights

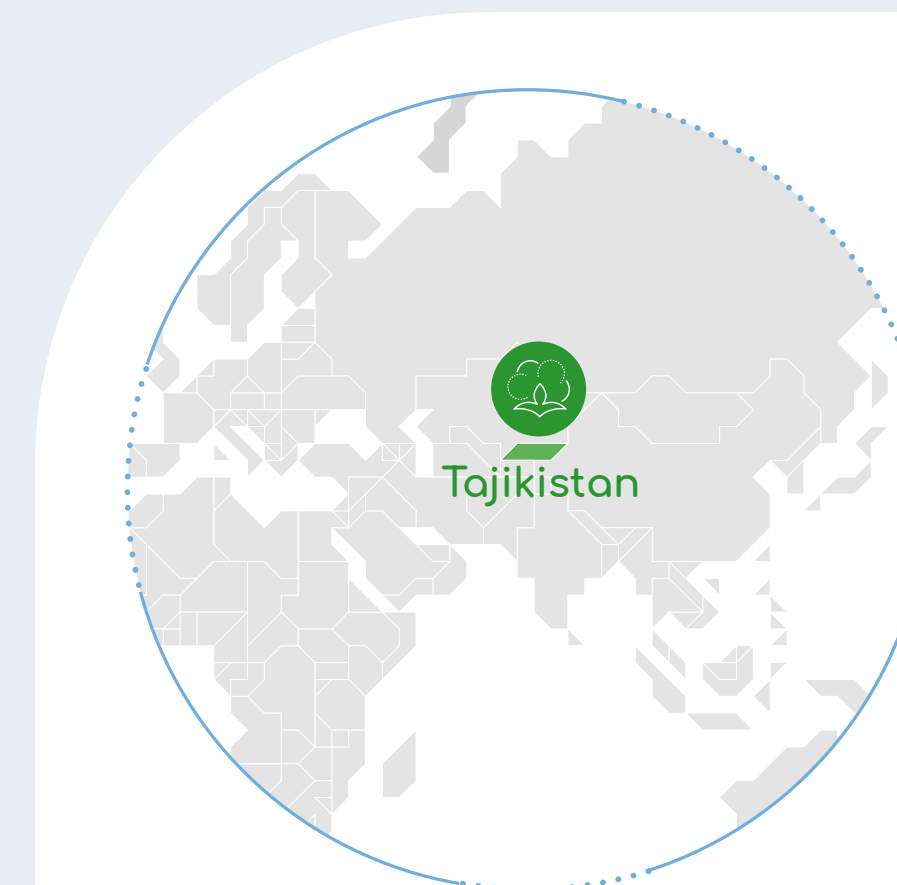
- ➊ Better Cotton Farmers developed their knowledge of water saving and efficient irrigation techniques through their involvement in the WAPRO project, and as a result used 16% less water in relation to Comparison Farmers.
- ➋ Synthetic fertiliser use among Better Cotton Farmers was 62% lower than Comparison Farmers, with Better Cotton Farmers able to harness agronomists' soil health recommendations to inform their choice and use of fertilisers.
- ➌ Better Cotton Farmers achieved 15% higher yields than Comparison Farmers.

- ➍ Awareness around the importance of preventing child labour continues to grow among both farmers and workers in Tajikistan, and 73% of farmers had an advanced awareness of child labour issues as a result of training and dedicated support during the harvesting season.

- ➎ In the 2019-20 season, a large number of cotton pests such as spider mites and aphids were observed in some area. Farmers took preventive control, but when the number of pests continued to grow, farmers had to resort to applying pesticides.

Challenges

- ➏ Better Cotton Farmers experienced heavy rains and mudflows in the early season followed by drought and sharp fluctuations in air temperature mid-season, which led to some farmers having to replant their cotton.



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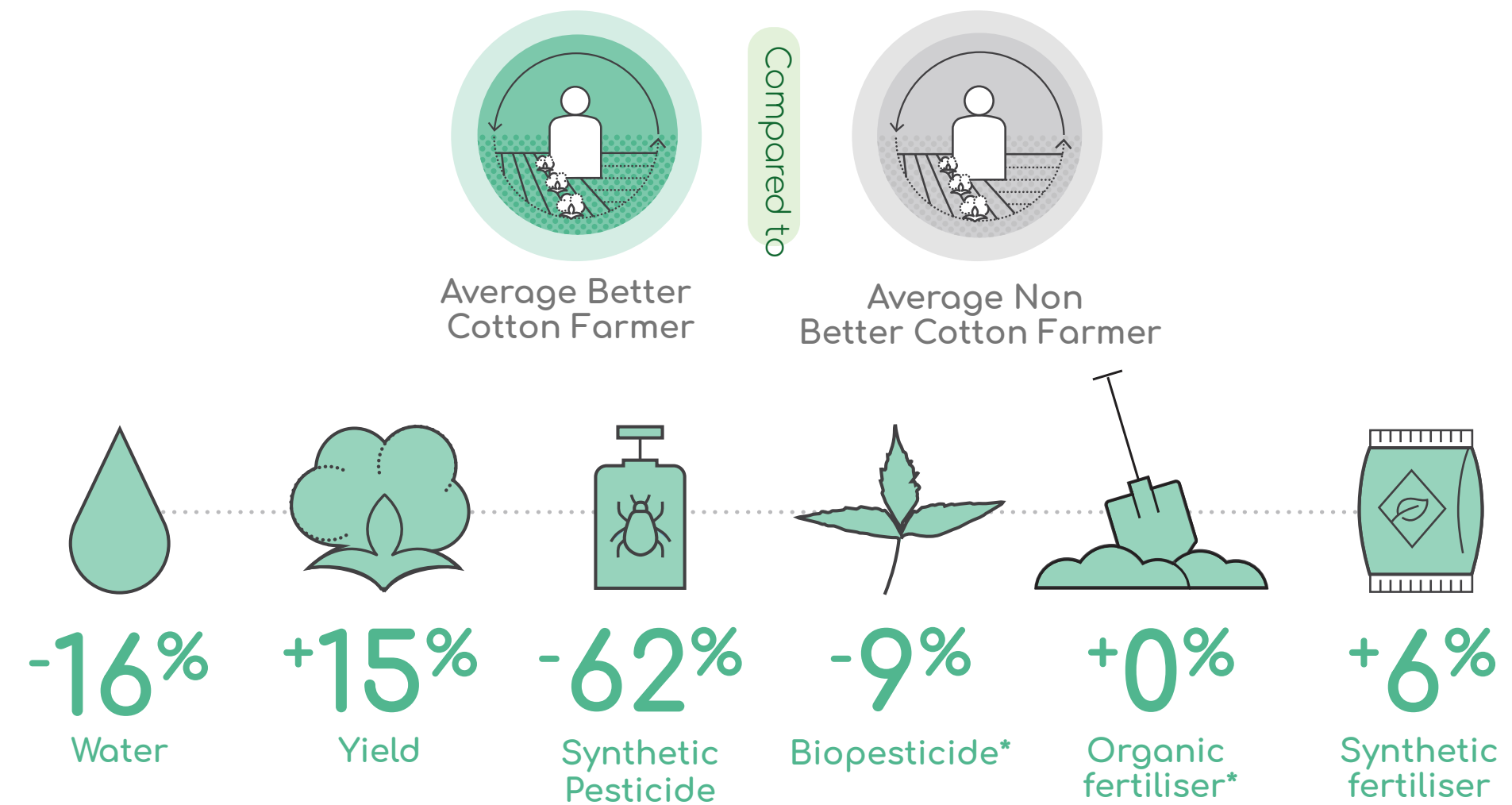
Tajikistan

Season overview

In 2019-20, fewer farmers produced a larger volume of Better Cotton in Tajikistan, compared to the previous season. Some 876 farmers received a Better Cotton licence, compared to 964 in 2018-19, and they produced 13,000 tonnes of Better Cotton on the same amount of land - a thousand tonnes more than the previous season. Better Cotton Farmers experienced 15% higher yields than Comparison Farmers, as many planted high-yield cotton varieties and worked closely with expert agronomists, who provided comprehensive advice on all aspects of preparing the soil, planting cotton, water efficiency and best practice in applying pesticides and fertilisers. In terms of profitability of the cotton crop, the relatively higher yields were offset slightly by a lower price of cotton, and higher fertiliser costs, as prices had increased.

Climate challenges

Climatic conditions were challenging, with Better Cotton Farmers experiencing heavy rains and mudflows in the early season, which led to some farmers having to replant their cotton. This challenge was followed by drought and sharp fluctuations in temperature mid-season. However, Better Cotton Farmers were able to use the irrigation knowledge they had gained through the WAPRO project to conserve and use water efficiently though the season. Overall, they used 16% less water than Comparison Farmers.



*Frequency of use is compared, not amount.

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Tajikistan

Reducing pesticide use

Farmers in some areas also faced a significant number of cotton pests, including spider mites and aphids. This prompted the use of pesticides in order to preserve the crops. However, by using preventive methods such as encouraging beneficial insects, precision application techniques, and using natural bio-pesticides, Better Cotton Farmers used 62% less synthetic pesticide overall compared to Comparison Farmers. The increased costs of pesticide in the 2019-20 season also encouraged farmers to use less inputs than in the previous season, especially as they had alternative methods to fight pests.

Adapting practices

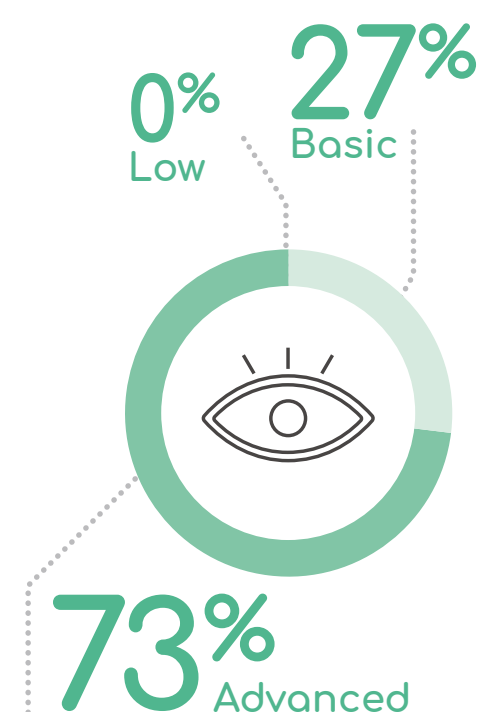
Conversely, they used 6% more conventional fertiliser than Comparison Farmers. However, Better Cotton Farmers harnessed agronomists' soil advice and expertise to make more sustainable fertiliser choices, opting for macronutrients (such as phosphorus and potassium) in some cases, and decreasing their use of carbon-intensive nitrogen-based fertilisers.

Awareness of child labour issues

73% of Better Cotton Farmers in Tajikistan had an advanced level of awareness of child labour issues, as a result of training and advice on child labour prevention, particularly during the harvesting season, when children have traditionally helped their families in the fields.

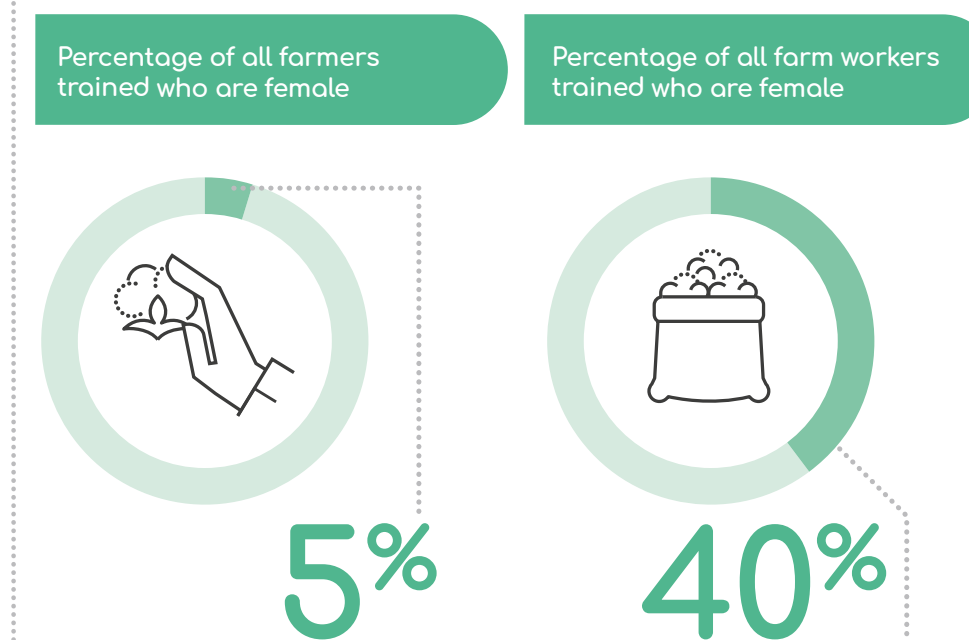
To learn more about Better Cotton in Tajikistan, please visit our website: <https://bettercotton.org/where-is-better-cotton-grown/better-cotton-tajikistan/>

Level of Awareness of Child Labour Issues



Women's Inclusion in Training Activities

Percentages represent the proportion of women trained as a total of all participants.



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Profile

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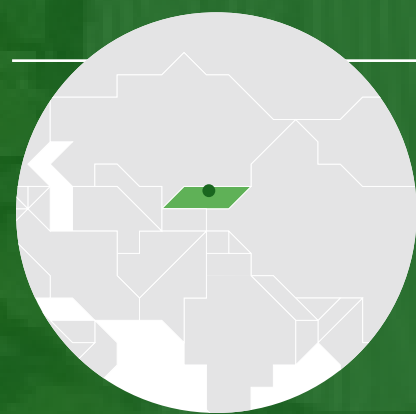
**Etmishev
Shukurjon**

Country/region

**Sughd,
Kanibadam City**

Years in programme

7



“Better Cotton is about growing cotton using the least amount of pesticides possible, or removing the use of chemical pesticides all together, using water and fertilisers efficiently, and thinking about and caring for the environment. At the same time, it’s about looking at ways to improve yield and income. On our farm we are focusing on reducing the harmful effects of plant protection and using biological methods, such as light traps, to control cotton pests.

Through the Better Cotton programme, I have attending various training sessions, field demonstrations, and meetings related to cotton cultivation and irrigation technologies. I’ve been introduced to effective methods of irrigation, biological pest control, and ways to improve soil fertility. By implementing fertigation (a method of applying organic fertilisers at the same time as watering, which contributes to increased soil fertility and moisture retention), we have increased our yield by more than 25%.”

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Turkey

Direct programme country



2019-20 Cotton Season

Participating farmers
4,801

Licensed Better Cotton Farmers
3,299

Area harvested
53,000 hectares

Volume of Better Cotton produced
103,000 tonnes

Highlights

- Our Implementing Partners continued to engage with Better Cotton Farmers by helping to build their capacity to test the soil to understand soil nutrient needs and know which nutrients and fertilisers to apply and when. This led to them using 3% less pesticide and 5% less fertiliser than Comparison Farmers.
- With the expert help of agronomists, Better Cotton Farmers were also able to leverage best practices to achieve 5% higher yields and 19% higher profits than Comparison Farmers, despite challenging growing conditions and higher production costs.

- We completed the first phase of our collaborative project in Şanlıurfa to improve farmers' working conditions. In the 2019-20 season, 65% of Better Cotton Farmers in Turkey had an advanced level of awareness of child labour issues.

Challenges

- Extreme or irregular weather prompted by climate change was a particular challenge for Better Cotton Farmers in the Aegean region, where irregular rains led to delayed or repeated sowings. In Southern Anatolia, a rainy sowing period led to delayed sowing and increased pest pressure, lowering yields.

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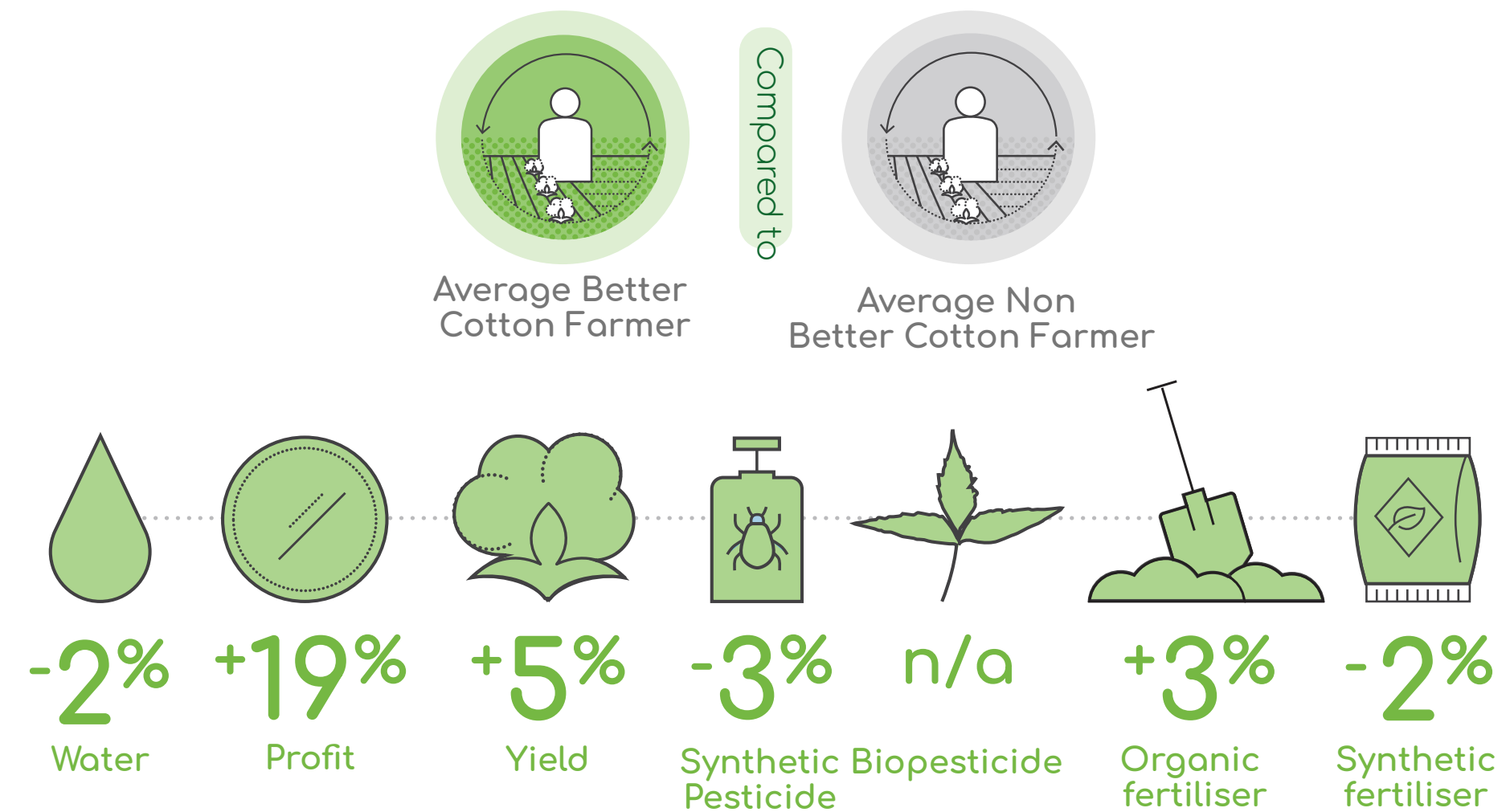
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Season overview

Significantly more Better Cotton Farmers (4,801 compared to 1,691 in 2018-19) cultivated 103,000 tonnes of Better Cotton in the 2019-20 cotton season, nearly twice the volume produced in the previous season. They also experienced 5% higher yields and 19% higher profits than Comparison Farmers. The Aegean region performed best, with favourable weather conditions for cotton growing (and just a few farmers having to re-sow due to irregular rains). In the Çukurova and Southeastern Anatolia Regions, Better Cotton Farmers faced challenging conditions, largely due to adverse weather and an aphid epidemic. Despite the overall strong performance, some farmers' profits were affected by a decrease in cotton price.

Reaching more farmers

In the Aegean Region, Canbel (an existing partner) took on a larger role with Better Cotton and became an Implementing Partner in the 2019-20 season. Through the season, Canbel introduced the Better Cotton programme to more farmers and more generally supported effective training, delivered by Field Facilitators with expert agronomic knowledge.



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Turkey

Effective pest management

Among the notable practices implemented by Better Cotton Farmers, a focus on effective pest management and fertiliser use led to farmers using 3% less pesticide and 5% less fertiliser, on average, in relation to Comparison Farmers. The reduction in pesticide use from the year before was also in part due to lower pest pressure overall, though an aphid epidemic in the Eastern region affected yields and prompted higher pesticide use by some farmers. Better Cotton Farmers also used organic fertiliser (in the form of manure) 3% more often than Comparison Farmers.

Water use

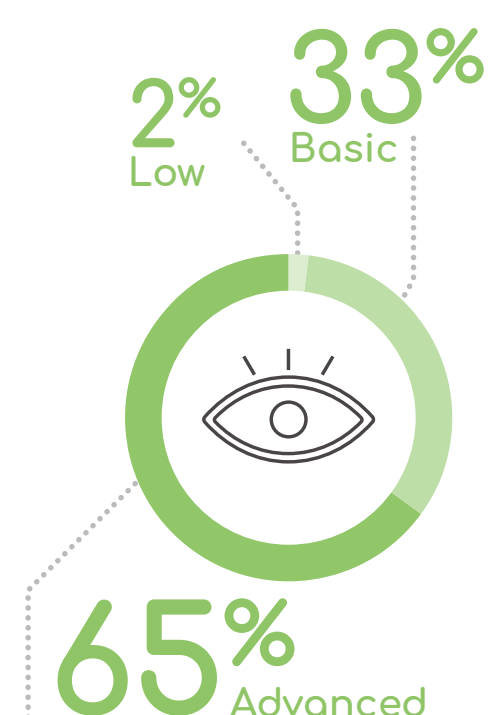
While more investment is needed to better understand Better Cotton Farmers' water use in Turkey, our Implementing Partners have noted that some farmers are benefitting from drip irrigation techniques, reporting higher yields and profits. Overall, Better Cotton Farmers used 2% less water than Comparison Farmers.

Awareness of child labour issues

Our Implementing Partners retained a strong focus on preventing child labour, with our partner IPUD completing a four-year project called **"Improving Working Conditions in the Turkish Cotton Industry Towards Decent Work Conditions in the Cotton Fields in Şanlıurfa"**. Through the project, we supported Better Cotton Farmers in promoting decent work on their farms and preventing forced labour and child labour. In the 2019-20 season, 65% of Better Cotton Farmers in Turkey had an advanced level of awareness of child labour issues.

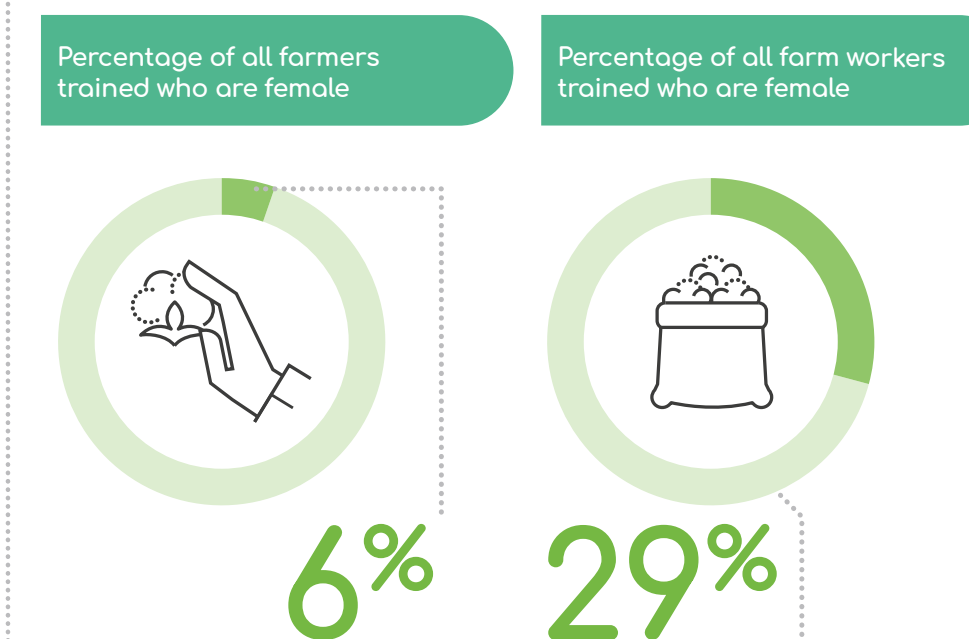
To find out more about Better Cotton in Turkey, please visit our website: <https://bettercotton.org/where-is-better-cotton-grown/better-cotton-turkey/>

Level of Awareness of Child Labour Issues



Women's Inclusion in Training Activities

Percentages represent the proportion of women trained as a total of all participants.



Farmer profile

Name

Abdullah Kavak

Country/region

Söke, Aydin

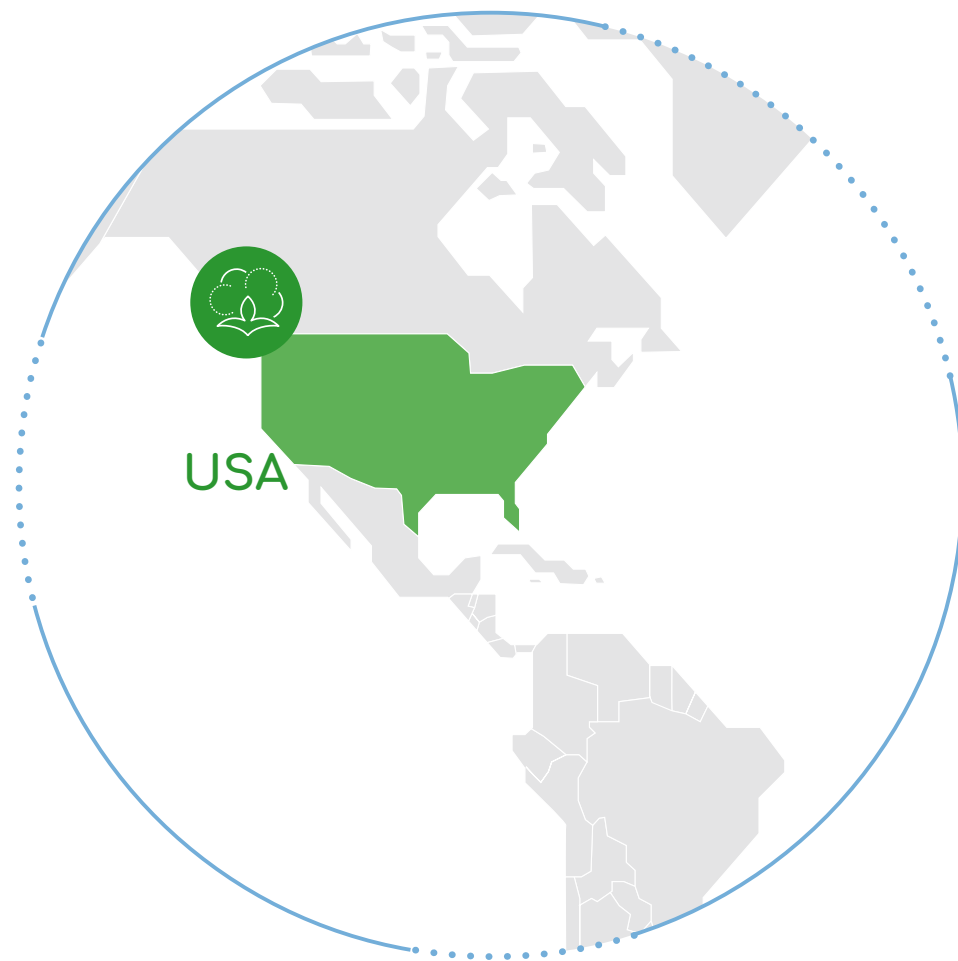
Years in programme

3



“Better Cotton means protecting our soil, water, and environment by respectfully growing cotton for the benefit of both nature and humans. Better farming practices also help us to minimise input costs, increase fibre quality, and achieve higher quality product.

Controlling cotton pests is very important for us because they cause damage, decrease yield, and increase our input costs. I learnt about Economic Damage Thresholds (the pest density at which a control tactic must be implemented to avoid an economic loss) through the Better Cotton programme. Now, we follow this practice to control pests more efficiently and effectively, applying pesticides only when absolutely necessary. We also take care to use water optimally and care for soil health by rotating crops every two years.”



2019-20 Cotton Season

Participating farmers
398

Licensed Better Cotton Farmers
289

Area harvested
192,000 hectares

Volume of Better Cotton produced
241,000 tonnes

Highlights

- ➊ Better Cotton Farmers continued to use soil conservation practices to improve overall soil health on their farms.
- ➋ Farmers also focused on reducing their water usage, optimising their use of pesticides, and protecting pollinators and beneficial insects.

Challenges

- ➊ Better Cotton Farmer numbers decreased to 289 across 14 US states, down from 639 in the 2018-19 season. In the previous season there had been a large increase in farmer enrolment in the Better Cotton programme, despite a modest increase in demand for US Better Cotton – this rebalanced in the 2019-20 season.
- ➋ A decrease in cotton prices in the US, due to international trade disputes, led to some farmers planting less cotton in the 2019-20 cotton season.

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Season overview

Better Cotton Farmer numbers rebalanced to 289 (across 14 states) in the 2019-20 season, down from 633 in the 2018-19 season. This was largely due to an oversupply of Better Cotton from the previous year, where we saw a large increase in grower numbers, which added surplus Better Cotton to cotton merchant inventories. This, combined with the overall decline in cotton prices in the US, led to fewer farmers cultivating Better Cotton in the 2019-20 season. In addition, some states along the Mississippi river experienced significant rainfall in the spring, which also reduced their ability to plant cotton.

Soil health

In the 2019-20 season, we asked Better Cotton Farmers in the US to report their soil improvement practices through a self-assessment survey on continuous improvement planning. We found that the majority of respondents were implementing numerous measures to protect soil health. For example, 91% were using reduced tillage methods (which can help to build organic soil matter and reduce soil erosion), 85% were using cover crops, and 77% were adding organic matter to their soils.

Efficient water use

In the same survey, we found that for irrigated farms, 90% were monitoring soil moisture (which also leads to improved soil health), 78% were scheduling irrigation for the best possible times (avoiding extreme heat or wind) 75% were using drought-resistant seed varieties, and nearly 70% were using efficient drip irrigation. Additionally, 95% were timing pesticide and nutrient applications to prevent chemicals entering the water system, and 86% were taking measures to protect pollinators and beneficial insects.

Tackling cotton pests

Farmers continued to report herbicide resistance in the 2019-20 season. In particular, farmers reported having few options to address resistant Palmer amaranth (also known as pigweed), the primary weed challenge across the cotton belt. Plant bugs, stink bugs, spider mites, nematodes and thrips were also commonly noted pests. US farmers relied on the recommendations of crop consultants and extension services to implement the best technologies and practices to reduce pesticide use, protect beneficial species, and minimise risk of worker exposure to pesticides.

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#3 Better Cotton: Set up for impact

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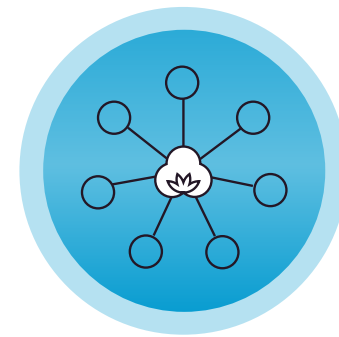
Delivering impact through our Better Cotton Standard System



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System overview



Principles and Criteria

How it works

The Better Cotton Principles and Criteria lay out the global definition of Better Cotton through seven guiding principles:

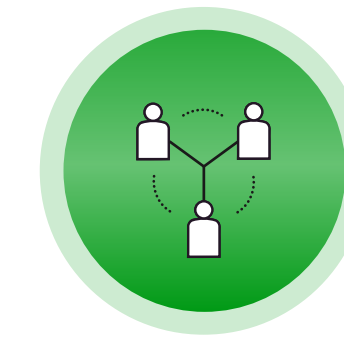
- Minimise the harmful impact of crop protection practices
- Promotion of water stewardship
- Care for the health of the soil
- Enhance biodiversity and use land responsibly
- Care for and preservation of fibre quality
- Promotion of decent work
- Operation of effective management systems

How it contributes to impact

By following these principles, farmers produce cotton in a way that is measurably better for themselves, their communities, and the environment.

Today, the principles are applied by more than 2.7 million cotton farmers around the world

We periodically review the Principles and Criteria to ensure they continue to meet best practice, are effective and locally relevant, and support our ambitions to drive field-level change and impact. See page 90 for more information on the next revision of the Principles and Criteria.



Capacity Building

How it works

Better Cotton's Capacity Building Programme is delivered by Better Cotton Implementing Partners in over 20 countries around the world.

These experienced, field-level partners teach the Principles and Criteria of the Better Cotton Standard System and provide farmers with the support they need to implement the Standard effectively.

How it contributes to impact

Helping farmers survive and thrive is central to our mission at Better Cotton. Achieving that mission starts with building the capacity of

farmers on the ground to adopt more sustainable practices. We know that to create positive change and deepen the impact of our programme, we must ensure that farmers and farm workers have access to the necessary tools, training, and support that they need to continuously improve their practices.

Our Capacity Building Programme puts farmers and farm workers front and centre, and by working with experienced partners, we are better able to tailor field-level training and interventions and maximise our ability to contribute to more sustainable cotton production for farming communities around the world.

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System overview



Assurance Programme

How it works

The Assurance Programme ensures that farms and farmer groups meet all the core requirements of the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria before they can be licensed to sell Better Cotton.

Our approach combines assessments by approved third-party verifiers with assessments by trained Better Cotton staff members, support visits by Implementing Partners, and regular self-assessments by producers.

Assurance includes farm assessments and measurement of results through eight results indicators, encouraging farmers to continuously improve.

How it contributes to impact

Our assurance model is unique from many other standard systems in two ways: we aim to balance credibility with scalability and cost-effectiveness, and we recognise that sustainability is a journey of continuous improvement.

The multi-level structure of our Assurance Programme helps keep Better Cotton cost-neutral for small and medium-sized farms. It also means that knowledge from assessments can be more easily fed back and used to inform our capacity building priorities and system improvements.



Chain of Custody

How it works

The Better Cotton Chain of Custody is the key framework that connects Better Cotton supply with demand.

Though this framework, Better Cotton is documented as it moves through the supply chain. It ensures that the volume of Better Cotton claimed by Better Cotton Retailer and Brand Members does not exceed the volume of Better Cotton produced by licensed Better Cotton Farmers in any given time period.

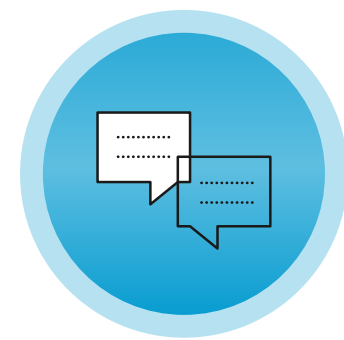
The Chain of Custody Guidelines incorporate two different chain of custody models: product segregation between the farm and gin and mass balance beyond the gin.

How it contributes to impact

A robust chain of custody that is cost-effective and designed with complex supply chains in mind is essential for facilitating demand for Better Cotton. The mass balance approach does just that.

We are also now looking at how we can develop mechanisms that support physical traceability throughout the entire supply chain. See page 98 for more details.

System overview



Claims Framework

How it works

The Claims Framework equips our members to make credible and positive claims about Better Cotton while allowing flexibility in how to communicate about their commitment.

It provides guidelines on what can and can't be said according to a member's cotton sourcing threshold as well as the approval process for a claim.

How it contributes to impact

The Claims Framework is crucial to ensure that claims being made are not misleading, which is why we are committed to ensuring that claims made about Better Cotton are credible, transparent, and accurate.

By combining claims in the framework with other resources, such as farmer stories, Better Cotton Members can articulate a compelling story that is meaningful to them and their customers.

Read more about how the claims, and the Claims Framework, help to drive demand for Better Cotton on page 67.



Results and Impact

How it works

Via our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Programme we collect and analyse data from across the breadth of the cotton community, from smallholders using traditional manual equipment to the most high-tech, large-scale operations.

To understand the reach of Better Cotton, we document the number of farmers and farming communities reached by our projects, the number who achieve a Better Cotton Licence, the volume of Better Cotton that is grown and sourced, and the number of hectares under Better Cotton cultivation.

To understand the Better Cotton's impact, we collect data from all

countries where the Better Cotton Standard System is implemented and examine the results to gauge improvements in sustainability. See the Farmer Results in the previous section for the 2019-20 figures and insights. We also gather qualitative outcome information, such as Stories from the Field.

How it contributes to impact

By collecting and analysing data on the reach, outcomes and impact of Better Cotton, we can understand what is working, and what needs to improve. Similarly, this information can help out partners and Better Cotton Farmers to continually adjust their work on sustainable cotton farming practices to improve.

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Overview of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Approach

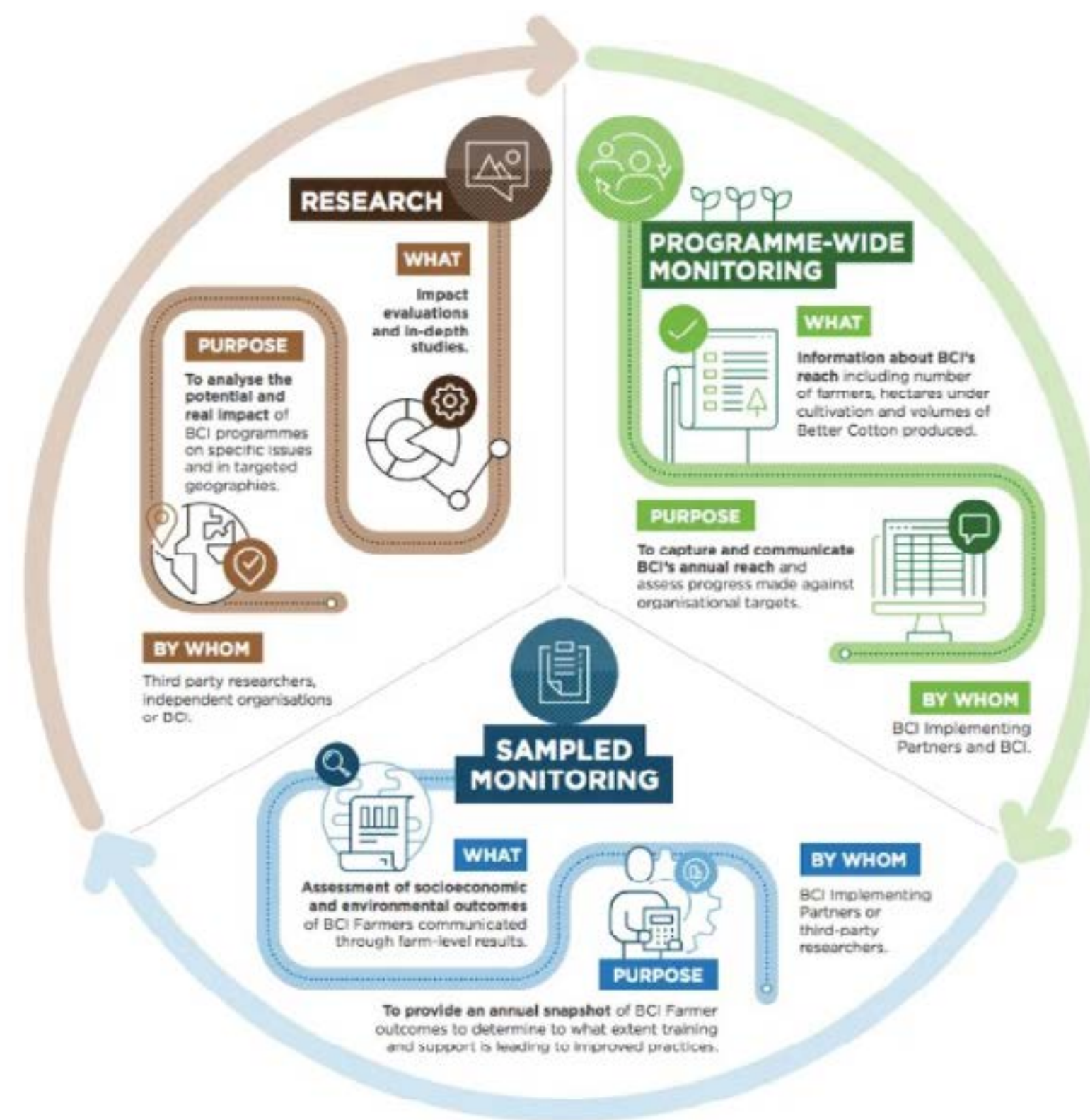
Measuring the results and impact of the Better Cotton programme is essential to understanding the difference we're making to people, the environment and the cotton industry. We're committed to measuring sustainability results everywhere Better Cotton is produced and evaluating how we can continuously improve our approach for greater impact— we want to be sure that our work benefits cotton farming communities. Importantly, creating meaningful progress will help us achieve our 2030 strategy (set to be published in December 2021) and deliver our ambitions.

How do we measure results?

We use complementary research and evaluation methods and work with independent organisations and researchers to assess the impact we make in the field. We're also growing our own expert team. This diversity of approaches is necessary to effectively measure results and impact both at scale and in depth. See the below infographic for more details.

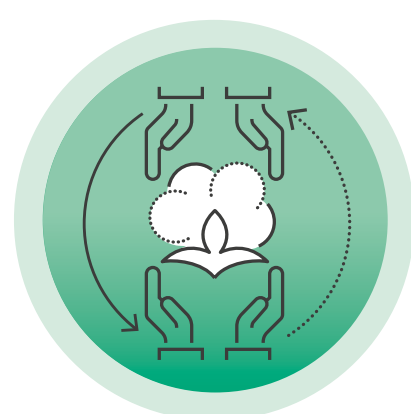
How do we use results to drive impact?

Equipped with these insights, we're better able to measure the effectiveness of the Better Cotton Standard System. We give farming communities information on the results they're achieving, so they can see the benefit of sustainable practices and keep improving the way they farm. We can also provide our donors and members with tangible evidence of the positive impact we're making, helping to ensure we retain both their trust and the investment we need to support farmers on the ground.



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Engaging the market to drive impact in the field



Better Cotton brings people and businesses together across the cotton sector – to deliver a shared vision for the future of sustainable cotton. We focus primarily on supporting farmers on the ground. But it's vital that we also drive demand for Better Cotton, in order to continue our growth and impact, firmly establishing Better Cotton as a viable commodity for farmers to grow and supporting them to improve their livelihoods.

So how does this work in practice? Every year, we attract new members and work with existing commercial members to support them in transitioning to Better Cotton sourcing and helping to ensure that purchasing Better Cotton works for their business.

The investment that these businesses make in sourcing Better Cotton leads directly to funding change on the ground. In particular, retailer and brands members pay a Volume-Based Fee (VBF) relating to the amount of Better Cotton they source – the vast majority of this goes to our **Growth and Innovation Fund**, which supports capacity building for farmers in cotton farming communities worldwide. In 2020, 204 Better Cotton Retailer and Brand Members sourced 1.7 million tonnes of cotton as Better Cotton. Between 2010 and 2021, the fund and its predecessor, the Better Cotton Fast Track Program (led by IDH) raised 99 million euros. By the 2021-22 season, this is projected to grow to just over 125 million euros. An overwhelming majority of this goes directly to field-level programmes.

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Engaging the market to drive impact in the field

And it's not just about funding. Many of our Retailer and Brand Members are major household names with reach and influence across their global supply chains. They have a real opportunity to encourage their suppliers to join and source Better Cotton. Beyond this, they also have the power to communicate their story with consumers, creating further interest in and demand for brands that support Better Cotton.

Importantly, we provide strict guidelines for members to ensure their marketing and communications are fully substantiated by evidence and tangible progress towards sourcing goals. This means companies must make specific time-bound commitments and targets for sourcing Better Cotton – and demonstrate that they have reached certain levels of sourcing – before they can use our logo on or alongside products. Within our [Claims Framework](#), we design these thresholds to encourage continuous improvement over time. Members are also required to explain our mass balance [chain of custody](#) system. This level of transparency is central to the credibility and success of our programmes and our ability to create impact for cotton farmers.

In late 2021, Better Cotton will revise its Claims Framework to account for the new Better Cotton brand and ensure that the rules we issue are in line with evolving industry best practice and legislative requirements.

Examples of Retailer and Brand claims

Some of our Retailer and Brand Members have made impressive progress in their Better Cotton sourcing and are able to make advanced claims to their customers. In this section, we take a look at three such members and how they communicate their Better Cotton progress with consumers in interesting and innovative ways.

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Engaging the market to drive impact in the field

Björn Borg

Björn Borg is a Swedish sportswear company named after the legendary tennis player. Its first collection was sold in 1984, and today its products are sold in around twenty markets, with their biggest being Sweden and the Netherlands.

The company joined Better Cotton as a Retailer and Brand member at the start of 2017 and has made a commitment to comply with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and to follow the pathway towards limiting global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Björn Borg’s sustainability communications speak openly and honestly about the challenges of sustainable sourcing. In particular, the company emphasises the notion that the company can always do more to improve.

By 2023, the company aims to have “100% Sustainable products within sports apparel and underwear”. In its latest sustainability report, Bjorn Borg states that “A majority of our clothing is classified by us as sustainably sourced through the usage of recycled polyester and recycled polyamide and the support of the Better Cotton Initiative.”



SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS AND PROCESSES					
Activity	Goal 2023	Reached 2020	Traffic Light	What to do	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
Working towards a fully sustainable range of clothing.	100% sustainably sourced products	100%	Reached	Introducing more organic cotton.	12, 13, 7
Working towards a fully sustainable range of bags.	50% sustainably sourced products	15%	On track	Set detailed roadmap for goal fulfilment.	12, 13, 7

1 - Sustainability communications on the Bjorn Borg website



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Engaging the market to drive impact in the field / Björn Borg

Q&A with Pernilla Johansson

Corporate Communications Manager, Björn Borg

[Click here to listen to Pernilla speak about Björn Borg and its sustainability sourcing work](#)



Can you tell me a little about Björn Borg's approach to sustainability?

We approach our sustainability work in the same way as we do with everything else - full speed ahead! In 2015, we concluded that running a more sustainable business is the only way forward - both for the planet, for people, and for the company to survive. We always set high goals, no matter what we do, and this is no exception. We want to *do* better, be better at as fast a speed as possible.

You reached your 2023 sustainability goals in 2020, earlier than planned. Can you talk about that journey and how Better Cotton played a part?

Well, we reached one of our goals which was to offer a clothing range where all products were sustainably classified.

Since a product can't ever be sustainable no matter how you twist and turn, we had to settle at getting better than before. Preferably better than most. Since there wasn't any official standard back then, and still isn't, we, just like many other fashion brands, landed in setting our own standard, a classification of how products would end up in our more sustainable range. We created our own label, which

we called 'B. Tomorrow', and to earn that label a product would need to either be made of a minimum of 70% more sustainable material or support the Better Cotton mission (to improve cotton farming globally). Since we offer a lot of cotton products in our clothing range, products supporting Better Cotton were, therefore, a big part of this range. Apart from that, we work with for instance recycled polyester and recycled polyamide, TENCEL™ Lyocell and S.Café® to name a few.

On your website, you talk about challenges in fashion and how 'fashion is not sustainable, period.' Can you tell us why you're taking this approach to sustainability communications?

I think that honesty and transparency are extremely important and the only way to gain the trust of the consumers. To meet the Agenda 2030 goals, companies and governments will have to pull the biggest load, but you and I, ordinary consumers, have to contribute as well. Plus, businesses are made out of people, people are consumers - oftentimes the lines are blurry between the two.

I don't think it's riskier to be open, rather the other way around. If we are to accomplish a better world for our

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Engaging the market to drive impact in the field / Björn Borg

children, we all have to join hands and change our behaviour. We want to inform and enable our followers to make better choices as well.

And what comes next for your sustainability goals?

We are just initiating the second step of our journey, which is to follow the UN 1.5° pathway and have signed up to decrease our emissions by 50% in absolute numbers by 2030. For a company with big growth ambitions, this is an ambitious goal, but we like challenges.

Could you tell us some more about your targets and how Better Cotton will play a part in this going forwards?

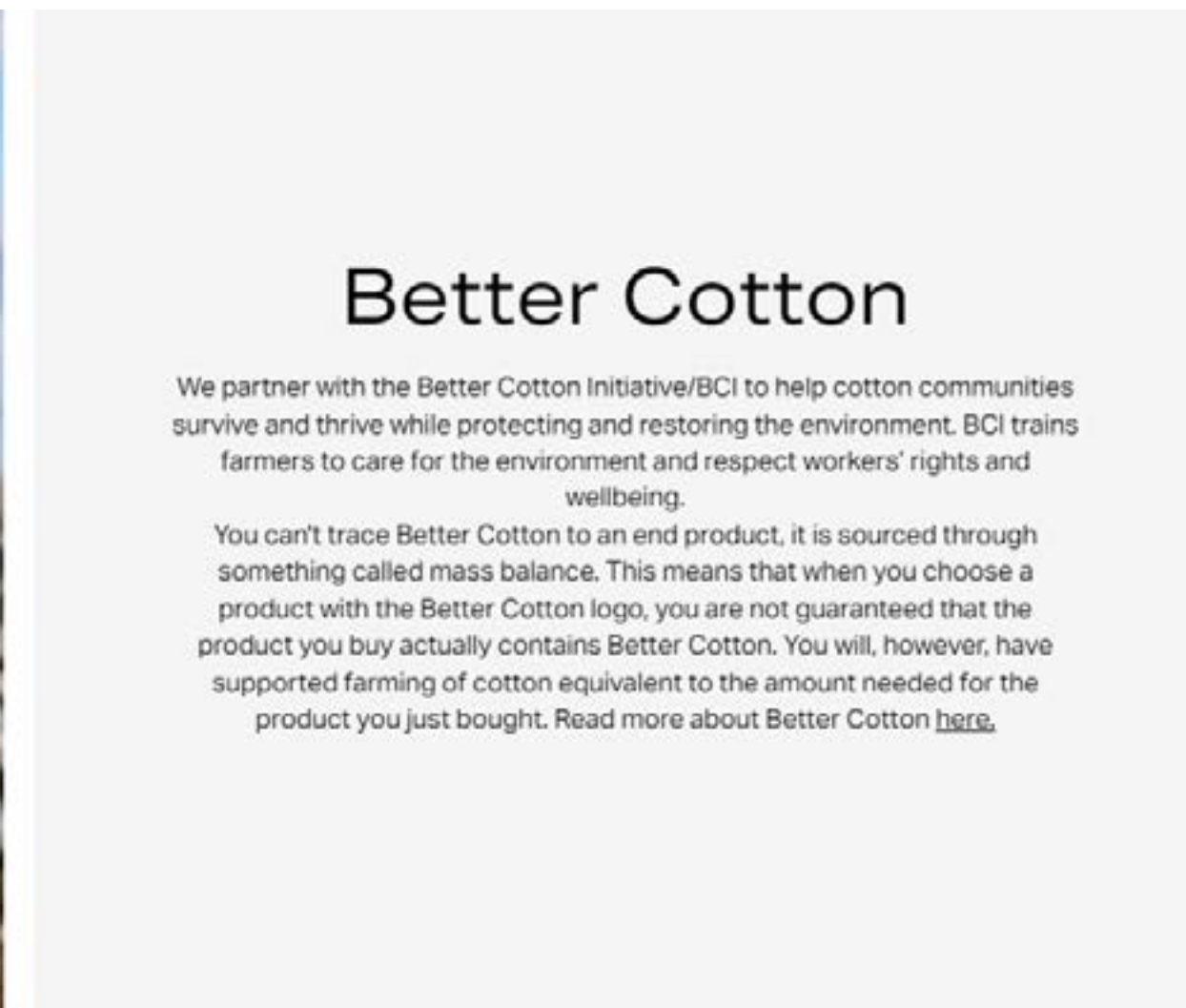
As a result of our membership in STICA (Swedish Textile Initiative for Climate Action) we have committed to follow the 1.5° pathway. Better Cotton plays a role, among other things, since our collaboration enables our customers to support better cotton farming practices.

It is a way for us to enable others to make a better choice, and ultimately a contribution to the global 1.5 degree goal.

Hopefully it will also contribute to a better tomorrow. We support Better Cotton with a large part of our range today and as long as we feel that we can make a difference, we will continue to do so. For measurements it would make a big difference with traceability though, since Better Cotton counts as conventional cotton in emission calculations.



2 Better Cotton communications on the Björn Borg website.



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Engaging the market to drive impact in the field

George at Asda

Asda is one of the UK's largest supermarket chains, and its clothing range, George was launched in 1990 – the first supermarket clothing brand in Britain. The company states that its George clothes are sold in over 560 stores and its online business serves over 800,000 people per week.

As part of its 'George for Good' campaign, George at Asda has made a commitment to source 100% more sustainable cotton for their own-brand clothing and soft home textile products. They state that they are working with their suppliers to source more sustainable cotton through Better Cotton.

In October 2020, the company launched a new sustainability-focused store in Middleton, UK. As well as offering refill stations for other products such as tea and pasta, recycling options, and second-hand clothing options, the store featured messaging about George at Asda's Better Cotton sourcing commitments.

On digital screens above the clothing racks, customers were able to see videos of Better Cotton farmers, while information boxes next to the clothes rack also provided more information on the company's cotton sourcing approach.




3 - Better Cotton farmer stories being shown on digital screens in the Middleton store

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Engaging the market to drive impact in the field / George at Asda

Q&A with Jade Smart

Senior Sustainability Manager, George at Asda

 Click here to listen to Jade talk about their Middleton store, and how they are working on cotton sustainability



Can you tell us more about your approach to sustainability within George at Asda?

Sustainability has become business as usual for us at George, we set our 'George for Good' strategy back in 2018 and it is now part of everyone's KPI's to deliver it. Our trading teams have targets to meet in terms of meeting our public commitments on responsibly sourced fibres, and I am pleased to say that over 80% of our shop floor now uses responsibly sourced fibres.

For us however, it is more than just the fibres we source, it's how our products are produced and packaged, what happens to them at the end of life and what impact that might have on the environment. We work with a number of partners to help us deliver our strategy and Better Cotton has become an integral part of everyday sourcing for us.

You're a relatively new sustainability team and have made a lot of progress in a short period of time. Can you tell us about the challenges you foresaw and how you overcame them to reach the point you're at today?

The biggest challenge for us was the education piece, it was



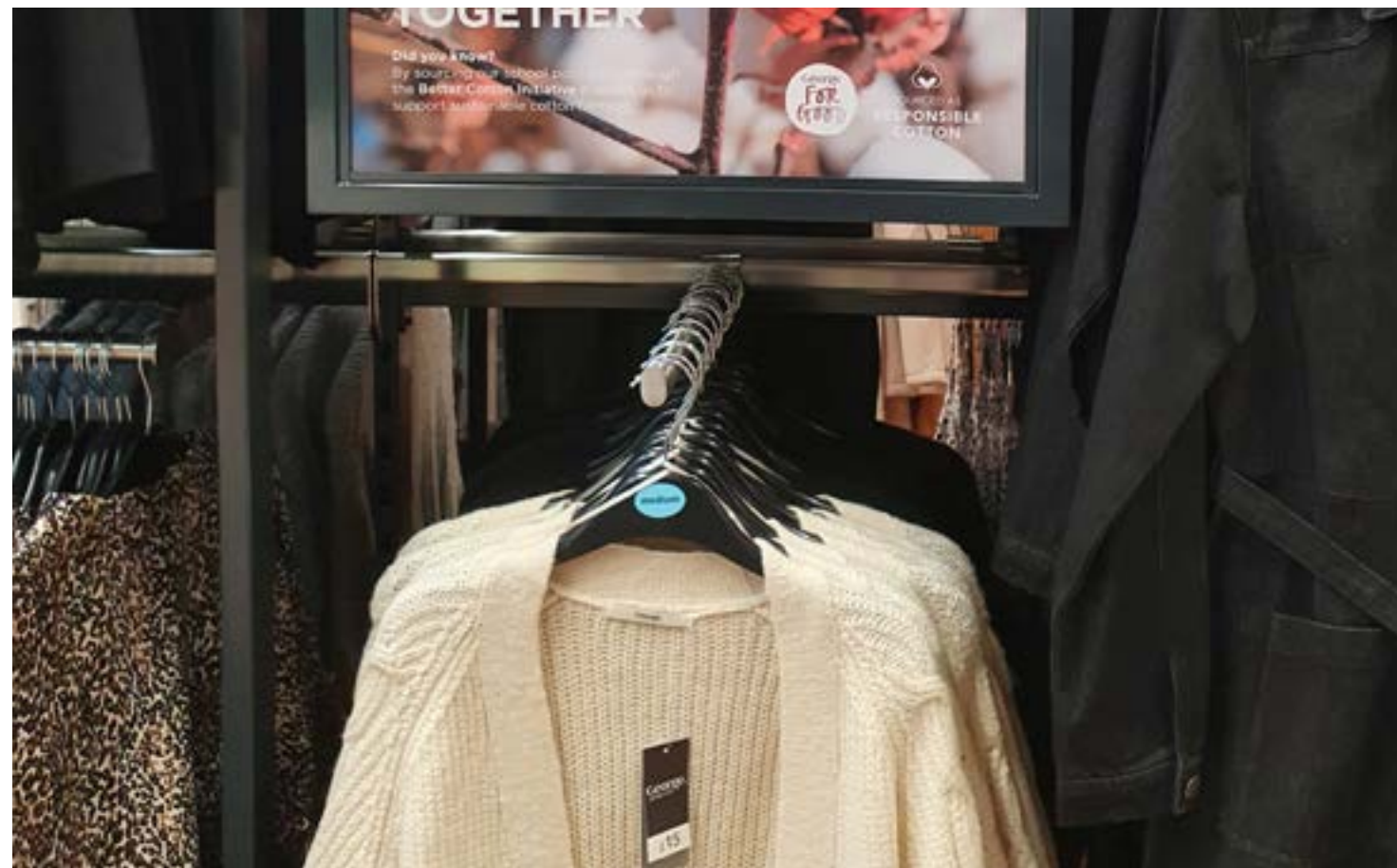
4 In-store Better Cotton messaging so important that our colleagues and suppliers understood why we have set the strategy that we have and why playing their part is so important to help us along the way. In the early days we spend time with all of our colleagues and suppliers, including colleagues outside of the trading functions as we believe that if we are to become a truly sustainable business, we need everyone to be on the bus with us too.

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Engaging the market to drive impact in the field / George at Asda

Commercially we have come across a few challenges with switching to responsibly sourced fibres along the way, but



5 In-store Better Cotton messaging

we took this in bitesize chunks to enable us to move forward with our strategy but without having to pass any of the cost onto our customers. The current focus for us is now moving on to educating our customers to understand what steps we are taking, why we are taking them and how they can also make small changes in their day to day lives that can make a huge difference collectively.

In 2020, you launched your first sustainability store, in Middleton, UK. Can you explain how Better Cotton featured within this store in your communications with customers?

Yes, that's right, we launched our first ever sustainability store back in October last year, the store was a fabulous opportunity for us to showcase all the work we had been doing in the background but hadn't been able to share with our customers before. We wanted to use the platform to talk about what responsibly sourced fibres really means and it was important for us to take it as far back as the field where possible. We used story telling boxes and videos of Better Cotton farmers in the field on our digital screens, this was a first for us and the feedback has been brilliant.

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Engaging the market to drive impact in the field / George at Asda

Why did you set this store up, and how was this received?

We recognised as a business that we didn't do a very good job of telling customers about all the great initiatives we had been working on and driving through our business. Setting up this store gave us a platform to test different forms of communication, test new initiatives and really listen to what resonates with our customers the most.

From a George perspective, customers and colleagues were really intrigued with the storytelling boxes and were keen to learn more. We spent time with our colleagues in store, sharing our strategy and educating them to enable them to be our 'in store experts', the feedback we received from them was phenomenal, they love being able to explain to customers what it was all about and why we are doing what we are doing.

Do you have any specific consumer insights regarding your Better Cotton information in the store and your communications?

The main feedback we received was via our colleagues who had been asked questions firsthand by customers in store.

They said that was the first time they have been inundated with questions relating to anything other than product. Lots of customers wanted to understand more about Better Cotton and what it was all about and I truly believe that having the story telling boxes and the digitals screens really prompted customers to want to learn more.

You use digital screens to show footage of Better Cotton Farmers in store. Why was this important?

For us, it's always been more than just on product marks, and we wanted to use this store to educate our customers more about what responsibly sourced fibres really means and how sourcing in this way not only has a positive impact on the environment but what it means to the farmers in the fields too.

What comes next?

We have taken some huge learnings from the Middleton store and still continue to do so. As a result of the trials in that store, we now have a constant 'drumbeat' of storytelling across our stores, this has been mainly executed on our digital screens within our stores and we continue to look at other ways that we can bring our customers along on this journey with us.

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Engaging the market to drive impact in the field

Kmart Australia

Since 2017, Kmart Australia has been a Retailer and Brand member of Better Cotton. The company operates over 200 stores across Australia and New Zealand.

In October 2020, Kmart – one of Australia’s largest retail brands, celebrated an important milestone with their customers since setting the ambitious goal of ‘100% more sustainably sourced cotton by July 2020’ back in 2017 as part of their Better Together sustainability program.

Kmart launched it’s ‘100% sustainably sourced cotton’ brand campaign to celebrate that all of the cotton for Kmart’s own brand clothing, bedding and towels range is now sourced as Better Cotton, organic or recycled cotton.

A significant amount of work was undertaken to ensure that Kmart had sufficient systems in place to measure and verify the progress made against its cotton commitment, and that all claims were credible and in line with Better Cotton’s Claims Framework and Australian Consumer Law, whilst keeping messaging simple and easy for customers to understand.

Kmart had employed the use of the Better Cotton On-Product Mark, along with featuring cotton sustainability messaging in advertising, but to mark their 100% sustainably sourced cotton they developed a digital communications campaign to consumers.




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Engaging the market to drive impact in the field / Kmart Australia

Q&A with Lucy King

Sustainable Materials Manager, Kmart Australia

 Click here to listen to Lucy speak about Kmart Australia's approach to cotton sustainability



Can you tell us a bit about Kmart's cotton sourcing approach and your work with Better Cotton?

In 2017, Kmart set an ambitious commitment to source 100% of the cotton for our own brand clothing, bedding and towels 'more sustainably' by 2020, as part of our Better Together sustainability program. With partnerships playing a very important part of this program, we were one of the first Australian retailers to join Better Cotton and with strong leadership support, we set up a cross-functional project team to lead the rapid roll-out of Better Cotton across our global supply chain. In just three years, we managed to get all of our key cotton suppliers onboarded into the program and all of the cotton sourced for our own brand clothing, bedding and towels range is now sourced as either Better Cotton, organic or recycled.

What have you learnt from when you began Kmart's sustainability journey?

Transforming the way we work and source product as a large retailer is not easy and takes time. It involves working across multiple product categories, teams across six countries, and a global supply chain, but we've understood for some time that we have a responsibility to lead the way and with the right partners and level of leadership support,

a clear project plan and the willingness of our teams and suppliers to do things differently, it is possible to drive meaningful impact.

We still have a long way to go and the expectations from our stakeholders are only growing in this space, but we are committed to seeing this through and constantly evolving our approach to do better.

How did you arrive at your messaging for Kmart's campaign?

Previously Kmart had done a lot of work in labelling cotton products with the Better Cotton logo and launching a TV Ad talking to our partnership with Better Cotton.

This time around, as we were wanting to celebrate a significant milestone of achieving our '100% sustainably sourced cotton commitment', we decided to go after an all-encompassing 'sustainably sourced cotton' message as we felt this was a simple and easy message for the customer to grasp and it included all aspects of our sustainable cotton commitment – cotton sourced as Better Cotton (including Australian cotton), organic cotton as well as recycled cotton.

Being a digital campaign comprised mostly of a video and

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social media assets, the messaging needed to be impactful, punchy and to the point, but the message also needed to be credible and water tight from a claims perspective. Given that the majority of our cotton has been sourced as Better Cotton and therefore via a mass balance system, we were careful to ensure that we didn't make any claims that would mislead our customers into thinking that the products themselves physically contain sustainable cotton.

What consideration did you give to making sure that the campaign featured credible and transparent claims?

A significant amount of work has been undertaken in collaboration with our IT and sourcing teams over the years to ensure that we have sufficient systems and processes in place to measure and verify the progress made against our cotton commitment.

When it came to developing the campaign messaging itself, we worked hard to find the right balance between developing bold, succinct and simple claims that are easy for customers to understand and suitable for digital assets

such as video and social media content; yet ensuring that they were credible, in line with the Better Cotton Claims Framework and Australian Consumer Law.

The sustainability and legal teams, as well as the Better Cotton team, were involved in every step of the process, providing guidance to our marketing team and agency along the way.

How important was it to bring the farmer voice, through Cotton Australia, into the campaign?

It was important to bring both the visuals of real-life cotton farms and the farmer voice, represented by our industry partner - Cotton Australia, into this campaign. Having their voice included in the campaign added credibility and provided a tangible illustration of what 'sustainably sourced cotton' means in practice. In this case, we were able to demonstrate that we are investing in and supporting the top 20% of growers in Australia who working and third-party audited to best practice farming standards.



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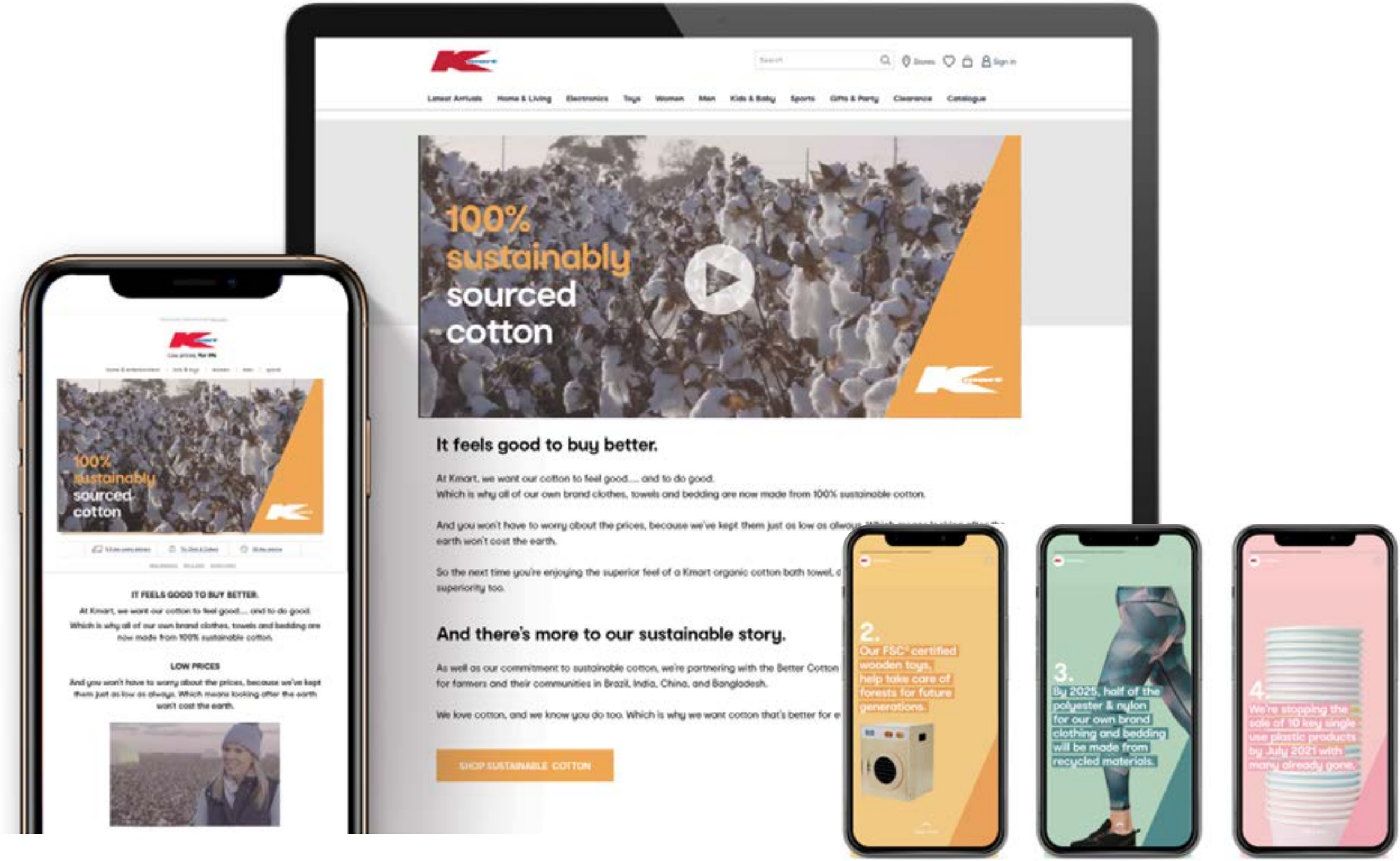
Engaging the market to drive impact in the field / Kmart Australia

What, in your experience, is the reception of customers to Better Cotton messaging like, and how has this evolved over time?

The campaign was received well by our customers who perceived the campaign to share new and different information, and indicated that they are hungry to learn more about what Kmart is doing in other areas of the business when it comes to sustainability.

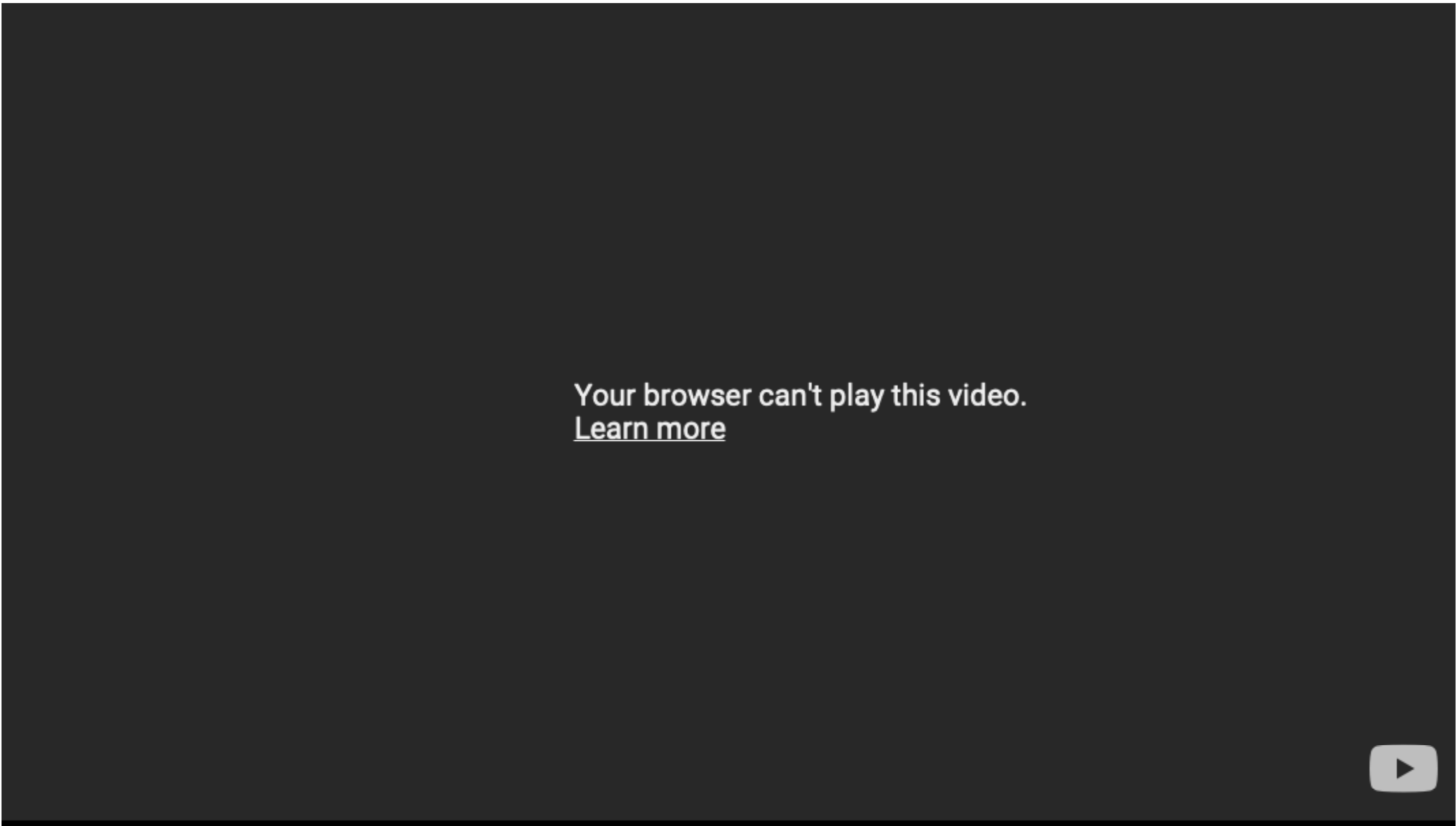
We can see through our ongoing customer research that customers awareness of Better Cotton and their recent purchases has grown over time – an indication that the Better Cotton labelling on cotton product in-store and online over the past two to three years is really starting to cut through.

Our customer research also shows that a growing number of customers associate Better Cotton labelling with product that supports the future of workers in the cotton industry. This shows us that customers are starting to make the link between our investment in Better Cotton and the impact this has on the lives of cotton farmers both here in Australia and abroad.



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Engaging the market to drive impact in the field / Kmart Australia



At Kmart, we're working to truly make everyday living brighter for our customers and so we wanted to use this campaign to reflect one of the areas we're working on behind the scenes to protect our planet and improve the lives of cotton farmers both here in Australia and abroad, while retaining our ongoing focus on affordability and everyday low prices. It was an important moment for our brand to celebrate the impact we are making through our partnership with Better Cotton, whilst also sharing our new sustainability goals and plans for the future."

Natalie Howes
Head of Brand, Kmart Australia

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Working with civil society to promote water stewardship

Better Cotton currently counts with around thirty members in its Civil Society category, many of whom are also Implementing Partners, helping to build farming communities' capacity to adopt sustainable practices.

One example of our work with civil society organisations is in the WAPRO project, a unique multi-stakeholder partnership. Led by [Helvetas](#), the independent Swiss development organization, WAPRO spans 16 countries across Asia and Africa, bringing together 22 partners from the public and private sector.

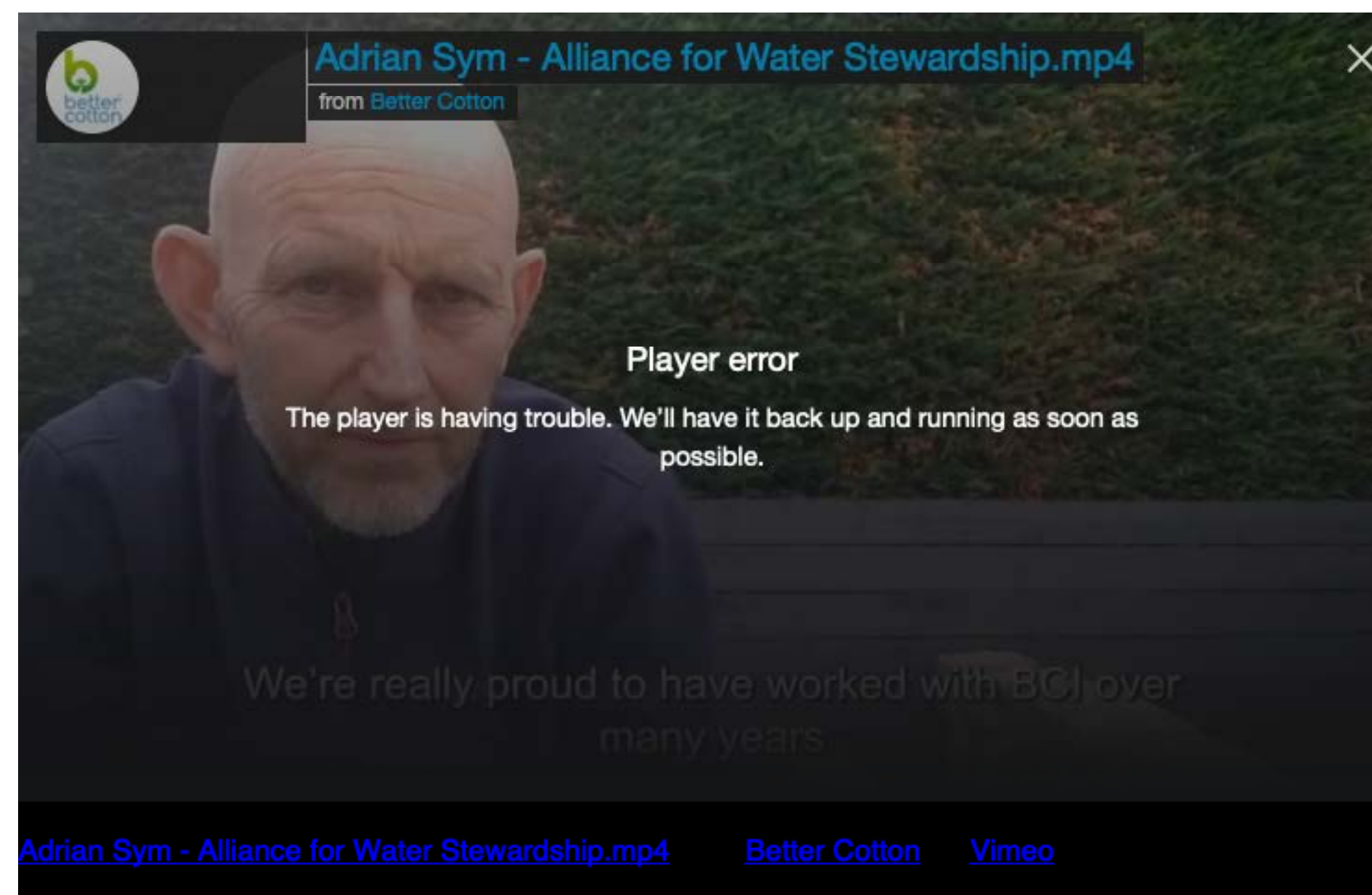
Using a push-pull strategy that combines market incentives and public policy advocacy with on-the-ground farmer training, the project encourages water stewardship and action at every level of the global supply chain.

[Helvetas](#) and the [Alliance for Water Stewardship](#) implemented the WAPRO framework in Tajikistan. Through the initiative, some farmers invested in tubular irrigation to help direct water to their plants more precisely.

In Gujarat, India, monsoon rains are becoming less predictable, making water for farming harder to come by. Our Implementing Partner in the region – the [Coastal Salinity Prevention Cell](#) (CSPC) – translated the Better Cotton water stewardship vision into on-the-ground action, supporting 11,000 Better Cotton Farmers in the area.

Implemented through the WAPRO project, the CSPC team taught water-saving practices to farmers, including drip and sprinkler irrigation technologies that direct smaller, more exact amounts of water to crops. CSPC also promoted

irrigating alternate furrows (small trenches). With this technique, farmers plant crops on ridges and only need to irrigate every other furrow in between. On the community level, CSPC played a game with around 6,500 children at local schools that taught key messages about sustainable water use.



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Growth and Innovation Fund – Investing in Impact

Funding is essential to support Better Cotton Farmers on the ground. Since it was launched in 2010, the Better Cotton Growth and Innovation Fund (GIF), which began as the Fast Track Programme, has played an integral role in making this happen and working towards our goals.

The Fund is overseen by the Better Cotton Council, in partnership with Better Cotton Retailer and Brand Members, Civil Society Members and donors. IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative, is the official Fund Manager and an important funder.

In the 2019-20 cotton season, the Growth and Innovation Fund provided funds for Implementing Partners (IPs) for farmer capacity building in six countries – India, Pakistan, China, Mozambique, Mali and Turkey. The Fund worked with 1.8 million cotton farmers across these countries.

The Fund directly invested €9.4 million from Better Cotton Retailer and Brand Members, public donors (DFAT and Laudes Foundation) and IDH.

It mobilised an additional €4.2 million in co-funding from IPs and supply chain partners (social enterprises, ginners, spinning mills and garment manufacturers), creating a total portfolio value of €13.6 million.



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Growth and Innovation Fund – Investing in Impact

2019-20 funding by country

India:

- 17 IPs on 26 projects.
- Fund Investment: €5,393,407
- Participating Farmers: 1,019,252
- Better Cotton Production: 1,194,210 MT
- Area Covered: 1,596,166 ha

Pakistan:

- 8 IPs and 17 projects
- Fund Investment: €3,639,124
- Participating Farmers: 495,558
- Better Cotton Production: 1,202,318 MT
- Area Covered: 1,400,292 ha

China:

- 5 IPs and 5 projects
- Fund Investment: €532,894
- Participating Farmers: 116,224
- Better Cotton Production: 311,350 MT
- Area Covered: 173,968 ha

Mali:

- 1 IP
- Fund Investment: €99,137
- Participating Farmers: 87,287
- Better Cotton Production: 297,000 ha
- Area Covered: 320,760 MT

Mozambique:

- 2 IPs
- Fund Investment: €90,948
- Participating Farmers: 85,000
- Better Cotton Production: 26,398 MT
- Area Covered: 66,250 ha

Turkey:

- 2 IPs on 2 projects
- Fund Investment: €230,129
- Participating Farmers: 3,600
- Better Cotton Production: 61,476 MT
- Area Covered: 27,807 ha

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Growth and Innovation Fund – Investing in Impact



Funding highlight

Driving Innovation: Skill Development for Field Facilitators in India

In 2019, the Fund launched an online skill-development tool for Field Facilitators in India.

The learning platform enables facilitators to undertake personalised and self-directed learning with a view to ensure a consistent skill set across IPs. The pilot was conducted in Maharashtra and Gujarat with six partners. As many as 504 facilitators participated in the initial roll-out, followed by an additional 134.

All facilitators used the learning modules, including a standardised assessment tool enabling users to identify gaps in skills and then suggest a personalised learning path.

Looking forward: Supporting the 2030 Strategy

In our the previous strategic period, from 2010-2021, the Fund was fundamental to our progress in achieving scale and laying the foundations for achieving impact. Thanks to the Fund, farmers around the world have been able to start their sustainability journey through the access to capacity building and learning.

With Better Cotton entering a new strategic phase from 2021, with bolder ambitions, the Fund will be more important than ever. We are examining how changes can be made to support the new strategy, in particular five impact target areas, which we'll publish as part of our 2030 Strategy in December.

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#4 Continuous Improvement for impact

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Continuous Improvement for impact

A core tenet of Better Cotton is continuous improvement – the idea that sustainability is not an end point that can be reached, but a journey. This is built into our farm-level standard – the Principles and Criteria – as producers are encouraged to develop further by striving to meet improvement indicators. But we also aim to continuously improve the systems and services that make up Better Cotton, such as the standard itself, our chain of custody model or the way we monitor and evaluate our programmes.

As we enter a new strategic phase, there are a number of areas in which we are looking to make changes, which are summarised in the rest of this chapter.



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Improvement over time: Reorienting Better Cotton's Results Indicator analysis

To create a positive impact for the cotton sector as we expand globally, it is vital that we evolve the way we monitor our performance. This is fundamental to continuously improving our programmes.

One way that we explore this is through our annual Farmer Results. So far, we have analysed Better Cotton Farmers' results each season in relation to farmers not participating in the Better Cotton Programme ('Comparison Farmers'). This enables us to establish the extent to which our programmes contribute to results on the ground. We consider this in relation to issues like pesticide and fertiliser use, water consumption and yields and profits. This approach has allowed us to measure and report positive results consistently since we launched, and although outcomes and results are not the same as impact, the data we have confirm that participating farmers benefit from the programme.

In 2022, we will build on this by adopting a different way of measuring progress – by following and reporting Better Cotton Farmers' performance over time. We believe this will deliver greater insights into how well we're fulfilling our ambitions to help farming communities survive and thrive while protecting and restoring the environment – in line with our 2030 aims and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Ultimately, it will help us understand the part we're playing in the shift to more sustainable agriculture.

Understanding why we're changing the way we measure progress

The approach we have used up to now - measuring Better Cotton Farmers' progress in relation to Comparison Farmers each season - has been a useful tool. It's a shared way for participants in Better Cotton producing countries to measure positive change, and a common methodology for research like this.

However, there are some drawbacks of this system.

Firstly, on a practical level, Better Cotton is an inclusive standard, and we want more and more farmers to become involved in our programme. In 2020, Better Cotton and equivalent programmes already represent 20% of global cotton production. And in the future, as sustainable practices in cotton farming become the norm, there won't be enough Comparison Farmers available to make a robust comparison.

Secondly, Comparison Farmers in a given community or region may sometimes learn good practices from Better Cotton Farmers, in which case we can't say for sure whether they're still using conventional ways of farming. Similarly, Comparison Farmers might not always face exactly the same challenges in terms of pests or weather conditions, for example, as Better Cotton Farmers, particularly in large countries like India, China and the United States.

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Improvement over time: Reorienting Better Cotton's Results Indicator analysis

Analysing results over time

As we strengthen the way we measure the impact of our work, measuring Better Cotton Farmers' results over time – a 'longitudinal analysis' - will enable us to link our programme activities on the ground with a tangible outcome such as water conservation, biodiversity protection, improved yields, or better conditions for workers. We'll also continue to invest in improving the way we evaluate our impact by partnering with externally funded expert researchers.

This new approach may pose different challenges, and we'll be ready to address them. For example, a particular Better Cotton Farmer might leave the programme after a few years, or stop cultivating cotton temporarily to grow other crops. To overcome this, we will consider how best to measure the progress of 'cohorts' – an approach called 'longitudinal cohort analysis'. A cohort is a group of people who share a defining characteristic, typically a group that has experienced the same conditions within the same time period.

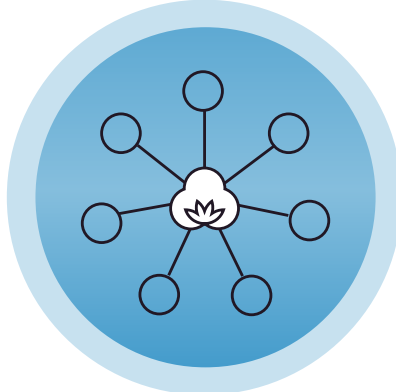
Farmers within a cohort might have:

- 🌱 Joined the Better Cotton programme in the same season
- 🌱 Live in the same geographical area (e.g. Gujarat state, India)
- 🌱 Access the same type of training and other programme activities.

We are still working on the details of how this approach will be implemented for Better Cotton and our partners, and we will share more details in the coming year.

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Revising our standard



Principles and Criteria

At Better Cotton, we believe in continuous improvement – both for Better Cotton Farmers, and for our teams. So, we regularly review our farm-level standard, the Better Cotton Principles & Criteria (P&C), in line with codes of good practices for voluntary sustainability standards and the latest scientific and technological research.

First published in 2010 with six key principles, the P&C represent one of the key elements of the **Better Cotton Standard System**, a holistic approach to cotton production designed to help create a more sustainable future for the cotton sector.

We and our partners monitor how well the P&C are implemented at farm level, finding opportunities for improvement and exploring innovative agricultural and social practices to ensure we're addressing evolving challenges as effectively as possible. By integrating this continuous learning within our core ways of working, we can ensure that our P&C are fit for purpose. This enables us to better support people and organisations on the ground – partners, farmers and farm workers - to improve their practices.

In 2021, Better Cotton launched an ambitious revision of the Better Cotton Principles & Criteria, building on lessons learned through evaluating earlier versions of the Standard, and the previous formal revision in 2017. The result will be a stronger set of principles and criteria that meet current best practice, are effective and locally relevant, and will help us deliver Better Cotton's 2030 Strategy.

Importantly, Better Cotton is compliant with the **ISEAL Standard Setting Code of Good Practice**.

As an ISEAL Full Member, Better Cotton follows the ISEAL Code for Setting Social and Environmental Standards, ensuring that its Principles and Criteria are reviewed regularly and following recognised good practices.

As part of this evaluation process, Better Cotton is assessed against the code by an independent evaluator.

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Principles and Criteria Revision



**Strengthening the standard:
Our focus areas**

Over the past five years, climate change, degraded areas, soil health and decent work have all become increasing areas of focus for sustainable agriculture. Revising the P&C provides an opportunity to optimise the Better Cotton



decent work

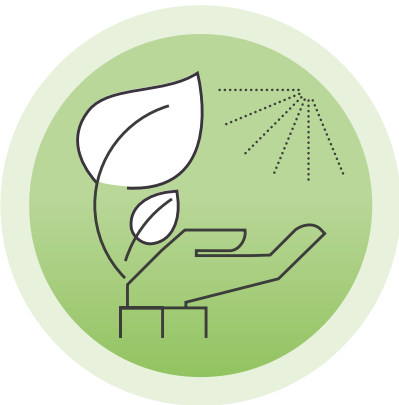
Decent work and gender

To better support and protect farm workers producing Better Cotton, we will be strengthening expectations under Better Cotton Principle Six: Decent Work. Through capacity building and leveraging collective partnerships to drive change, we aim to ensure that Better Cotton Farmers are treating their workers in line with internationally respected labour standards, offering fair employment opportunities and decent working conditions. Gender equality and women's empowerment will be a key focus throughout, as we seek to improve the position of women within the cotton sector.

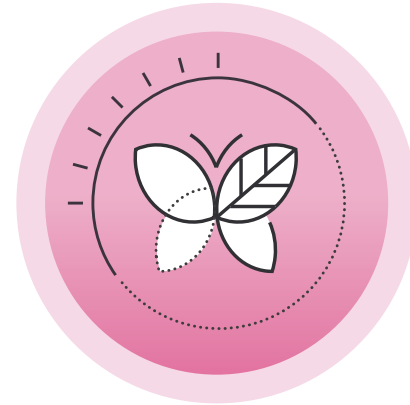
With support from a Decent Work & Gender Working Group, our work will encompass every major area of labour rights, from forced labour and child

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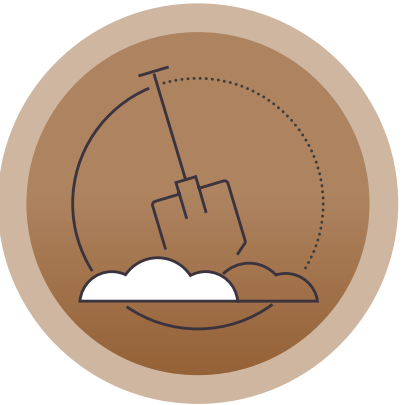
Principles and Criteria Revision



crop protection



biodiversity



soil health



water

labour to health and safety, non-discrimination, best practice in recruitment and employment, working conditions and ensuring workers are able to engage in social dialogue.

Crop protection

To help protect human health and conserve the environment, we are continuously reviewing how Better Cotton Farmers can use fewer synthetic pesticides to protect their crops. This is included under Better Cotton Principle 1. We know that the use of these pesticides is still widespread in cotton production and will require farmers to be willing and able to invest in changing their ways and understand the benefits of more sustainable alternatives.

We approach crop protection in two ways. Firstly, we encourage Better Cotton Farmers to adopt Integrated Pest Management practices and to follow alternative pest control techniques, such as the use of beneficial insects or biological substances, rather than synthetic pesticides. We also support farmers in switching from conventional, preventative pesticide applications (e.g. spraying every week, month or season) to a regime that monitors pest numbers or crop damage and applies pesticides only when and where it is needed. Secondly,

we focus on practices that minimise the potential harmful effects of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs). Importantly, we also promote the safe handling and use of pesticides to help protect the health of Better Cotton Farmers and their families.

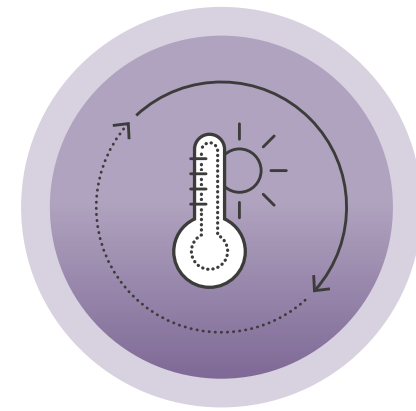
Natural resource management

Protecting natural resources is vital to cultivating health cotton crops and improving farmers' livelihoods. However, in the face of climate change, water scarcity and pollution, it has never been more important to help farmers conserve their natural environment and the precious resources it provides. A dedicated thematic working group will consider water stewardship, soil health and biodiversity and land use reflecting Principles 2, 3 and 4 of the current P&C. These three principles encourage Better Cotton Farmers to define and implement management plans improving the quality and quantity of natural resources.

We are increasingly taking a holistic approach to these three dimensions, in order to ensure that the practices we recommend are complementary and promote positive change across the spectrum. We will consider everything from effective irrigation practices to collective action on water challenges to soil analysis and

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Principles and Criteria Revision



climate change mitigation

improving soil fertility to restoring degraded land and protecting areas of high conservation value and promoting climate-smart farming practices.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation

With world leaders exploring pathways to protect our climate at COP26, and understanding the importance of both improving the carbon footprint of agriculture and building climate resilience among farmers, Better Cotton will publish its 2030 Strategy with a focused climate change approach as well as a specific impact target area focusing on climate change mitigation in December 2021. This will be a comprehensive integrated strategy and will influence our revision of the Principles and Criteria.

Timeline for revisions

The revision process will include extensive consultation and engagement from directly and indirectly affected stakeholders, including producers and worker representatives, technical experts, other cotton initiatives, and retailers and brands. The revision process is expected to run from October 2021 to early 2023.



management system

Management systems and continuous improvement

plans

Management systems and continuous improvement Effective management systems are the backbone that enables Better Cotton Farmers to achieve the P&C. In the current version, Principle 7: Management seeks to ensure that Better Cotton Farmers establish a framework of policies, processes and procedures. It also aims to ensure they can fulfil all the tasks required to meet the P&C, and to enable continuous improvement in farming practices. Here, our focus will be exploring how this works on the ground for farmers, while also considering the resources we have available to support farmers in making changes.

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Principles and Criteria Revision

“ At Better Cotton, we believe in continuous improvement – not only for Better Cotton Farmers, but for ourselves as well. In line with codes of good practices for voluntary standards, we periodically review the Better Cotton Principles & Criteria. This helps to ensure we keep up with innovative agricultural and social practices, and the latest scientific and technological research.

Chelsea Reinhardt
Director of Standards and Assurance



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Strengthening our work with partners

So that farmers have the opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge they need to adopt the practices embedded in the Principles and Criteria of the Better Cotton Standard System, a network of nearly 70 Strategic and Implementing Partners (IPs) worldwide provide dedicated training. These partnerships are highly valuable and critical to delivering impact.

Our Implementing Partners can be organisations from NGOs to supply chain actors to government bodies. We build their capacity to deliver training to groups of farmers and farm workers, so they can in turn provide high quality training within cotton farming communities. It's this ongoing cascade of training that enables us to operate at scale.

As we continue to grow, and as part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we want to make sure that that we're working with the best possible partners and supporting them to overcome evolving challenges. So, we're revising and enhancing the way in which we endorse partners

We also aim to help our existing partners explore opportunities for improvement and leverage the resources and training at their disposal in the most productive way.

That's why we're working on a new due diligence process to be launched by the end of 2021. The process covers topics such as financial stability and environmental, social and governance considerations. Through the application of the process, both Better Cotton and our partners will benefit from gaining greater

insights into the best ways to make progress - taking their and our performance to the next level.

Overall, the benefits will be

- 🌱 Ensuring that we work with the best Implementing Partners
- 🌱 Taking a more consistent approach to endorsing new partners
- 🌱 Clarifying our requirements through a due diligence framework
- 🌱 Enabling our field teams to deliver more focused support
- 🌱 Strengthening the credibility and impact of Better Cotton.

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Measurement Projects

Collaboration is central to driving impact at scale and making a real difference for Better Cotton farmers. That's why we work closely on projects with stakeholders across sustainability standards and commodities to innovate towards new and improved approaches. These projects build on our work to support farmers in the field, and we're already delivering on our ambitions, deepening our impact and paving the way for future improvements.

Here are three of our projects for change.

Delta Project: Standardised Reporting for Sustainability Progress

Through the Delta Project, we are supporting the creation of a shared approach to measuring and communicating sustainability progress – the Delta Framework. This three-year project is essential to promoting both a common understanding and uptake of responsible agricultural practices. It will strengthen the efforts of multiple sustainability initiatives to address the social and environmental challenges of agriculture, protect workers' rights and improve farmers' livelihoods. It will also enable clear, transparent reporting towards the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Since our last update in the [Better Cotton Annual Report](#), we have completed pilot testing in India and finalised indicators on gender, land use change, child labour and forced labour. Better Cotton also shared progress on the Delta Project with the textile and apparel industry as part of a panel at the [Textile Exchange Conference](#). The project will be finalised in March 2022.

[Learn more.](#)

GHG emissions study: Understanding traceability and field-level impact

We are taking a strategic approach to helping farmers act on their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This starts with measuring our current GHG impact. On 15 October 2021, we released the first GHG footprint for Better Cotton, working with global sustainability consultancy Anthesis and using the [Cool Farm Tool](#).

This study identified how well Better Cotton compares to conventional cotton on GHG emissions in some countries and a baseline from which we can measure our impact. Importantly, we were able to identify hotspots to inform next steps. We want to share the information we learn with our stakeholders, including with

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Measurement Projects

our Gold Standard project partners, as we continue to refine our work in this area. It's all part of our broader efforts to improve traceability and deliver real impact on the ground by 2030.

[Learn more.](#)

Gold Standard: Innovation for measuring and reporting climate benefits across commodities

More people around the world are seeking sustainable, climate-friendly products and services, from cotton to palm oil to coffee and sugar. So, we're collaborating with other ISEAL sustainability standard members and the **Gold Standard** to define shared practices to calculate GHG reductions. To ensure the best outcome, we're also seeking expert advice from the **Science Based Targets Initiative** and the **GHG Protocol**. Overall, this will allow us all to measure and report our efforts to reduce carbon emissions in the same way, delivering greater clarity on progress across sectors and to all our stakeholders. Ultimately, we'll be able to provide certified commodities, science-based information and products with improved climate impact.

[Learn more.](#)



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Traceability

Today, there is more demand than ever for traceable fibres – to understand the whole story behind a product, including where it’s from and made. Tracing Better Cotton from those who produced it to products sold in stores worldwide will help the industry identify and address social and environmental risks across the supply chain and deliver the transparency our stakeholders want to see. In particular, brands and retailers will be able to credibly demonstrate the sustainability impacts of the Better Cotton they source.

In 2021, we began exploring ways to explore traceability for Better Cotton and embed this within the Better Cotton Standard System. This is a multi-year project and builds on our existing efforts to connect supply and demand through mass balance. Mass balance is accessible and affordable to supply chain actors and has allowed Better Cotton to scale rapidly, and we are looking to introduce traceability as a parallel offering to deepen the impact of our system.

Importantly, we must ensure that we remain true to our mission – to help farmers survive and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment. This means creating new mechanisms and strengthening existing work to channel investment and drive change on the ground.

So how can we achieve this in practice?

Increasing support for sustainable cotton farming

We already have an effective mechanism in place - the volume-based fee. This is a fee that our Retailer and Brand Members pay based on the volume of Better Cotton they source. Most of this fee is directed to helping Better Cotton Farmers improve their practices on the ground (some of it also goes to assurance activities). Given the growing demand for traceable fibres, we anticipate that our strong focus on traceability will encourage more members to join our community. Meanwhile, existing members are likely to source greater volumes of Better Cotton. The combined effect will be more funds to support farmers.

Traceable Better Cotton will also likely be accompanied by additional fees, which will in turn increase the funding available for our existing capacity building programmes, and investments through our Growth and Innovation Fund.

Exploring new mechanisms

Introducing digital traceability at the start of the supply chain can result in a number of benefits to farmers. Greater visibility over practices in the supply chain can lead to suppliers entering into longer-term purchasing contracts with producers, assuring future revenue and creating further investment for farmer capacity building.

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Traceability

The evidence we'll need to gather and record for supply chain traceability is often the same information needed to access financial services and credit. By building a record of financial transactions, we are hoping to be able to help farmers gain access to the finance they need to invest in better equipment and more sustainable inputs. This will support our ambition to empower farmers to improve their living conditions. In some regions, this evidence trail can also support farmers' legal rights to farm the land their families have farmed for centuries.

Prompting investment in carbon reduction

Traceability can also prompt new investment on the ground through carbon insetting. Unlike offsetting, insetting refers to carbon-saving efforts conducted by companies within their own value chains. With visibility over where their cotton comes from and the route it took to market, companies will be able to take targeted action to reduce their supply chain emissions. For example, they might choose to invest in regenerative agriculture, or ways to capture carbon such as reforestation and afforestation (when trees are planted where there weren't any before).

More visibility on the downstream use and pricing of their cotton

There are potential benefits to traceability in transparency and empowerment of farming communities. These benefits are harder to predict and quantify, but if mechanisms for farmers to understand the value transformation of their cotton and their market position it may empower them to make new choices – whether to plant different varieties or a more informed bargaining position when they take their cotton to market. The journey around this potential benefit is one where there is need for engagement and training around accessing this information. There is likely need to tailor information access to producer group use cases.

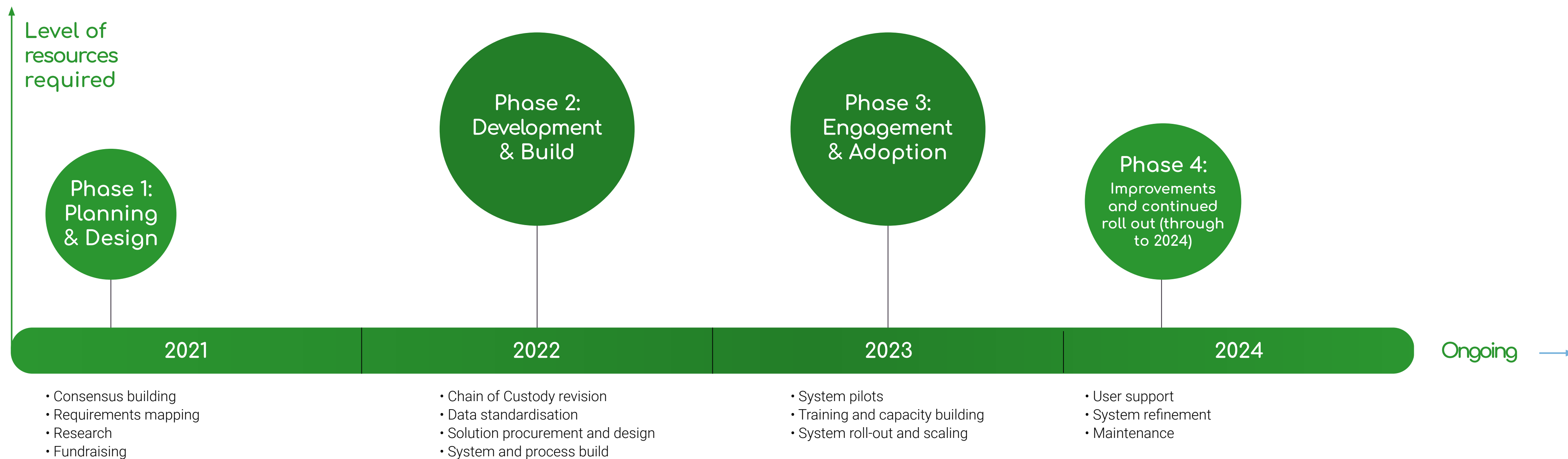
Strengthening our existing work

In importing regions such as the European Union and the United States, companies are increasingly required to prove their adherence to ever more rigorous human rights and environmental regulations. An effective system to trace Better Cotton system will enable businesses to better comply with relevant laws, while also reducing risk and building resilience. They can also be confident in continuing to source from vulnerable smallholder farmers, whose location and practices have traditionally been hard to trace. This is vital in ensuring that smallholders retain access to global markets and improve their livelihoods.

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Traceability

Better Cotton traceability timeline



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Core Indicators

Core Indicators are a subset of the Better Cotton P&C – v 2.1, which define a globally consistent baseline for more sustainable cotton production. Core Indicators provide the critical first steps in reducing the environmental impact of cotton and improving livelihoods among cotton farming communities. To receive a licence to sell Better Cotton, a Producer must meet all Core Indicators.

Field Facilitator (FF)

Field Facilitators are field-based staff (typically employed by the IP or Local Partner) who engage directly with farmers in Producer Units. Field Facilitators work closely with farmers to assess baseline practices and deliver training, awareness-raising activities, and other interventions (i.e. demo plots). Field Facilitators also assist with collecting farm-level data and monitoring farmer awareness and practice adoption.

Implementing Partner (IP)

Better Cotton's Implementing Partners are organisations with local expertise who oversee the set-up and management of Producer Units under Better Cotton's assurance model. Implementing Partners assume full responsibility for project delivery at the field level, including establishing the management structure of Producer Units, recruiting and training Producer Unit Managers/Field Facilitators, and providing Producer Units with ongoing oversight and support, including regular field-level engagement.

Smallholders (SH)

Farmers who are not structurally dependent on permanent hired labour, and whose farm size does not exceed 20 ha of cotton.

Large Farms (LF)

Farmers who have a farm size above 200 ha of cotton, and either have mechanised production, or are structurally dependent on permanent hired labour

Medium Farms (MF):

Farmers who are structurally dependent on permanent hired labour, and whose farm size is between 20 to 200 ha of cotton.

Producer

The term Producer in the context of the Better Cotton Standard System refers to either an individual Large Farm or a Producer Unit (group) of Smallholders or Medium Farms. Licences to sell Better Cotton are administered at the Producer level.

Producer Unit (PU)

A Producer Unit is a group of Smallholders or Medium Farms who participate in the Better Cotton programme through a group assurance model. Each PU is overseen by a dedicated PU Manager, who is responsible for implementing an internal management system to support, train, and monitor farmers across the PU. The size of a PU depends on local circumstances, although the optimal size is between 3,500 to 4,000 farmers for Smallholders and around 100 farmers for a Medium Farm PU. Farmers in a Smallholder PU are further divided into Learning Groups (LGs)



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