PRODUCING BETTER COTTON IN PAKISTAN

Locations  
Pakistan

Dates  
01/04/2017 - 31/12/2022

Summary  
Cotton is Pakistan’s largest industrial sector. In total though, the industry is losing around 10-15% through poor traditional practices. Using the Better Cotton Standard System, we are encouraging farmers to implement Better Cotton production principles and criteria, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) by providing participatory training to 32,493 small, medium and large-sized farmers and their 75,476 farm workers in ‘Learning Groups’ and medium farmer’s fields.

The problem  
Cotton is Pakistan’s largest industrial sector. It has played an important role in the economic development of the country and has remained a key livelihood source for thousands of farmers.

In Pakistan, the industry is losing around 10–15% of its value (around US$350m a year) through poor production, transport and storage practices.

Sustainable production and improved quality are essential to achieve more income from the cotton crop but the misuse of pesticides and water, inappropriate addition of chemical fertilizers, transportation and storage problems as well as gaps in knowledge and skills reduce productivity and quality.

To protect producers and the environment, farmers need to be made aware of these problems and trained on the Better Cotton Standard System and Good Agricultural Practices. This will enable them to conserve limited resources and produce better cotton as a sustainable mainstream commodity.
What we are doing

‘Better Cotton’ is a scalable model for cotton that transforms markets and creates tangible impacts at scale; it reduces pesticide and water use, improves yields and ultimately the livelihoods of farmers.

This project is part of ongoing engagement with the Better Cotton Initiative. This highly successful programme is a global investment vehicle which aims to catalyse the transformation of cotton production worldwide through investments in capacity building programmes.

CABI is working with a number of implementing partners to achieve this. Together, we will need to produce Better Cotton that takes social, environmental and economic criteria into account. The CABI team is looking at ways to integrate soil management, adopt modern water conservation technologies and practices, and manage natural habitats. While instilling proper cotton picking to avoid contamination, better storage and transportation to markets and ginning mills where they process it, and enabling farmers to adopt a decent work strategy.

We also want to achieve greater impact and expand better cotton in relation to the number of farmers trained and licensed, the number of hectares licensed and the number of metric tonnes of licensed better cotton that's produced. We aim to extend our work in existing areas to achieve ‘saturation’ and to expand our work in Sindh.

Success will be achieved when governments, trade associations or other national scale entities adopt the Better Cotton Initiative methodology and take lead on implementation in a country.

In Pakistan, this means expanding the programme and reaching 100,000 farmers. We want to increase participation in the Better Cotton supply chain, and secure domestic funding for the implementation of Better Cotton Initiative projects. We also want to identify and try out different methods of service delivery and farmer outreach models which for instance engage with national/provincial extension services or provide alternative services to mature farmers etc.
Results so far

So far, CABI has enhanced the capacity of 32,493 Better Cotton farmers to implement the Better Cotton Standard System. The main focus of the training addressed the field issues and capacity to protect the cotton crop from harmful insect pests and diseases.

Training topics included increasing soil fertility using compost, undertaking soil analysis, ‘nutrient scouting’ to provide the right soil nutrients and biological control through ‘Natural Enemy Field Reservoirs.’ Farmers were also advised on how to make better use of available water resources by ridge sowing and water sourcing. By encouraging farmers to conserve the natural habitats on farms, which totalled 115,206 hectares, 122,930 metric tonnes of Better Cotton lint was produced.

The capacity of 56,796 female workers have also been enhanced where they were trained on proper cotton picking, health and safety, female empowerment, prevention of child labour.

The team trained farmers in the biology of pests and their ecological management and on-site mass production of natural enemies and their conservation. The training also covered the disadvantages of pesticides, crop maintenance, conservation of natural resources such as proper irrigation and soil fertility, decency in work, contamination-free picking, packing, storage and final transportation to ginners.

Going forwards, CABI will train the 52,956 farmers and their 105,248 farm workers on 167,690 hectares to produce 178,931 metric tonnes of Better Cotton lint through the implementation of the Better Cotton Standard System.

Donors
Sustainable Trade Initiative IDH (BCFT Fund) Better Cotton Growth & Innovation Fund (BCI GIF) Managed by: Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH)

Partners
Department of Agriculture Research, Sindh

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https://www.cabi.org/what-we-do/cabi-projects/