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 22,024 small, medium and large-sized farmers and their 38,000 farm workers in ‘Learning Groups’ and medium farmer’s fields.

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 amount 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 230,000 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 840 medium-sized 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 pest and diseases. We also need to promote biological control through ‘Natural Enemy Field Reservoirs’, as well as increasing the fertility of soil by using compost and undertaking soil analysis and ‘nutrient scouting’ to provide the right nutrients. We also trained these farmers to make better use of available water resources by ridge sowing and water sourcing. We also encouraged farmers to conserve the natural habitats on the farms which totalled 31,767 hectares where from they are producing 33,897 metric tonnes of better cotton lint.

More than 6,500 female workers have also been 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 on-site mass production of natural enemies and their conservation. The training also covered the disadvantages of pesticides, crop maintenance, conservation of natural resources like proper irrigation and soil fertility, decency in work, contamination-free picking, packing, storage and final transportation to ginner care.

Going forwards, CABI will train the 22,024 farmers and their 38,000 farm workers on 92,220 hectares to produce the 98,402 metric tonnes of cotton lint through the implementing of 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/