



# PRODUCING BETTER COTTON IN PAKISTAN

**Locations** Pakistan

**Dates** 01/04/2014 - 31/03/2025

## Summary

Cotton is Pakistan's largest industrial sector. However, the industry is losing around 10-15% of its value through poor traditional agricultural practices. Using the Better Cotton Standard System, we are encouraging farmers to implement better cotton production principles and criteria and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) by providing participatory training to thousands of small, medium and large-sized farmers and their farm workers.

## The problem

Pakistan is the fifth-largest producer of cotton in the world. It also has the third-largest cotton spinning capacity in Asia (after China and India) making cotton Pakistan's largest industrial sector. Cotton plays an important role in the economic development of the country and has remained a key livelihood source for thousands of farmers.

However, 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.

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## **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 (BCI). This highly successful programme is a global investment vehicle aiming 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 project 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.

Additionally, the project wants 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 is produced. The project aims to extend its work in existing areas to achieve ‘saturation’ and to expand the concept in Sindh.

Success will be achieved when governments, trade associations or other national scale entities adopt the BCI 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 BCI projects. We also want to identify and try different methods of service delivery and farmer outreach models which engage with national and provincial extension services or provide alternative services to mature farmers, for example.

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## **Results so far**

So far, CABI has enhanced the capacity of 31,534 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 88,777 hectares, where they are producing 78,940 metric tonnes of better cotton lint.

The capacity of 54,801 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.

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**Donors**

Better Cotton Growth & Innovation Fund (BC GIF)

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**CABI Project Manager**

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