



MINUTES

FIRST BREAKOUT SESSION Gearing Towards Sustainable Farming SUNDAY, 3 DECEMBER, 11:00 TO 12:30

Chair, Mr. Lalit Mahajan, Senior Vice-President, Cotton & Yarn Procurement, Welspun Group

Co-Chair, Mr. Mahesh Sharda, Past President, Indian Cotton Association Ltd

Mr Navdeep Sodhi, Gherzi Textil Organisation, provided a presentation on the 'Approaches to enhance circularity in the cotton chain'. Mr. Sodhi highlighted that sustainability and circular practices are now essential in the textile industry, influenced by consumer awareness, brand commitments, and legislation. He noted that textile recycling is becoming more integrated into the industry. It's expected that recycled textile fibres, mostly from cotton waste, will increase from under 1% to around 5% in five years. Advancements in mechanical recycling and other technologies are enhancing recycled fibre use. However, the textile industry's fragmented nature and inconsistent feedstock supply are significant challenges.

Mr Banda Sunduzwayo, CEO, Cotton Board of Zambia, provided a presentation on 'Sustainable production practices in small farms for high yields'. His presentation explored sustainable agricultural practices for small-scale farmers in Zambia and Africa. He emphasised the environmental and social benefits of these practices. He noted that adopting environmentally friendly practices can boost profitability, lower input costs, and boost agricultural yields, resulting in increased financial stability and long-term sustainability. Furthermore, certain standards, such as organic and Fair-Trade certifications, might open up new market prospects, resulting in greater pricing for agricultural products. In his remarks, Mr Banda highlighted that implementing sustainable farming practices encourages environmental conservation, biodiversity enhancement, climate change mitigation, and equitable food systems, boosting livelihoods and contributing to a more sustainable agricultural sector.

Dr Sali Bourou, CEO of MINRESI/IRAD in Cameroon, delivered a presentation titled "Current State of Cotton Production in Cameroon: Conventional Systems versus Opportunities in Organic Cotton". Dr Bourou detailed the significance of cotton in African economies, with a focus on Cameroon. He indicated that Cameroon has approximately 150,000 to 200,000 cotton farmers, 20% of whom are women. Cotton is a vital source of employment and income, sustaining millions of smallholder farmers and their families. A

major challenge identified by Dr Bourou is the exclusion of certain population segments from the cotton production process, particularly due to limited access to land and input credit. This issue is especially prevalent among young people and women. He proposed the promotion of organic cotton as a strategy to involve these underrepresented groups more actively.

The fourth speaker, Mr Marco Mtunga, Director General of the Tanzania Cotton Board, provided a presentation of the 'Overcoming challenges for sustainable development of Organic Cotton'. He mentioned that organic cotton production faces a number of challenges, including low yields; higher costs; limited knowledge of organic doctrine and principles by extension service providers; problematic availability of organic seeds in some countries; inadequate research on bio-pesticide efficacy to diversify their supply; limited availability of organic cotton in the market; and a historically unstable organic market. Mr Mtunga emphasised that sustainable organic cotton production is achievable by addressing these bottlenecks. Proposed mitigation strategies, such as providing comprehensive training to farmers to enhance soil fertility, water retention, and boll retention, which are expected to result in higher yields; diversifying the availability of bio-pesticides, thereby reducing their cost and encouraging widespread adoption by farmers; developing independent systems for organic cotton research and seed multiplication; encouraging direct engagement between brands, retailers, and farmers to ensure market stability; and stimulating consistent demand by targeting health-conscious consumers.

The Q&A session focused on improving farming practices through cost reduction and resource sharing, emphasising the importance of accurate input cost modelling and resource aggregation. It also discussed the benefits of forming farmer clusters for greater market power and efficiency, and highlighted the need for strategic organisation and collaboration among farmers to strengthen their market position and dealings with larger industry players. These points collectively underscored the importance of cooperative strategies and efficient management in advancing sustainable agriculture.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 hrs.

Summary Paragraph

Advancements in mechanical recycling and other technologies are enhancing recycled fibre use, but the textile industry's fragmented nature and inconsistent feedstock supply are significant challenges. Implementing sustainable farming practices encourages environmental conservation, biodiversity enhancement, climate change mitigation, and equitable food systems, while the promotion of organic cotton production can help the industry engage with underrepresented populations like women and children. Organic production faces multiple challenges, however, including low yields, higher costs, and an unstable market. Accurate input cost modelling and resource aggregation could help with reducing costs and sharing resources efficiently and equitably.