

The ICAC's 80th Plenary Meeting



Report of the Chairman of the Standing Committee

DRIVING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH
INNOVATION AND LEADERSHIP

29 November – 1st December 2022



Honourable Delegates and Guests,

It is my pleasure to address you from Washington, DC during this 80th Plenary Meeting of the International Cotton Advisory Committee. The ICAC has a deep history dating from 1939 with its origins here in Washington DC. At that time ten cotton producing countries came together to discuss the problems in the global cotton economy of that era. Out of this meeting the ICAC was formed, and the organization has been working to foster cooperation in addressing challenges faced by cotton producing and consuming countries for the past 83 years.

While our plenary meeting is virtual this year, the ICAC has returned to more normal operations and the ICAC Secretariat has been on the ground in a number of member countries as it works to execute the ICAC mission. The challenges facing the cotton community have certainly evolved since the founding of the ICAC many decades ago and the ICAC is evolving to meet the new challenges.

The most pressing challenge facing mankind today is climate change as it threatens our very existence and every aspect of our lives. Agriculture is at the center of the climate issue given the necessity of food, feed and fiber, the use of natural resources in production and the opportunity to help mitigate climate effects through more sustainable practices as well as through carbon sequestration.

The ICAC has continued its important work to advance the environmental and economic sustainability of cotton while continuing to broadcast the truth about cotton and dispelling common myths that hurt cotton's reputation.

To have the most resilient and sustainable cotton sector we must take advantage of technology to help the most vulnerable people in our industry – smallholder cotton farmers in least-developed countries. The ICAC has developed a dynamic, voice-based Soil and Plant Health app designed specifically for illiterate farmers. The app uses voice commands, images and animations to help the farmer learn global best practices for cotton cultivation. Currently, the app is being upgraded to allow the farmer to upload a photo of any insect or potentially diseased plant in his field, at which time artificial intelligence will identify the insect or disease and instruct the farmer on what to do next.

Another innovation ICAC has advanced this year, the Virtual Reality Cotton Training Programme, creates a virtual world around the user to assist trainers in the knowledge transfer of best practices.

Both of these innovations are incorporated into ICAC's Four Simple Steps to Sustainable High Yields methodology which was created to help farmers improve their yields making cotton farming more environmentally and economically sustainable for small holder farmers in many developing ICAC member countries.

I am happy to report that I was able to highlight some of ICAC's accomplishments at the 4th annual World Cotton Day celebration at the Food and Agricultural Organization in Rome, Italy. The FAO



Director General QU Dongyu provided the keynote address for a program that was webcasted around the world. Indeed, World Cotton Day continues to be a success in highlighting the virtues and importance of cotton to the livelihoods of millions of people around the world.

The ICAC continues its work to gather and publish data, statistics and forecasts to inform stakeholders in the global cotton supply chain. However, to take this foundational work to the next level the ICAC has developed and recently released a new dynamic data portal that offers powerful tools to query, visualize and understand the data and hence provide greater insights into the global cotton situation for member governments and other stakeholders.

Finally, to help ensure its work continues to be focused on the most pressing issues facing the cotton community the ICAC created the Private Sector Advisory Council. With the PSAC in place the ICAC can hear from a single group that has representation from every sector of the supply chain.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to my colleagues in ICAC Standing Committee for their active participation in the functioning of the organisation. I would also like to thank the ICAC Secretariat for all of their efforts and hard work to help advance the interest of members around the world.