SUSTAINABLE COTTONS

By Simon Ferrigno[8], freelance researcher on sustainable cotton, author of An Insider's Guide to Cotton & Sustainability (2012)

As recently as 2005 there were no sustainable standards or verification systems outside of organic (late 1980s) and the Sustainable Cotton Project (late 1990s). With the entry of Fairtrade, the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) and Cotton made in Africa (CmiA) it seems as if the world is awash with sustainable cotton – just counting programs with some kind of 'verified' status and promoter. These programs are predicated on addressing some or all of various issues such as high or unnecessary levels of input use, poor attention to environmental impacts, declining cotton prices, declining farmer livelihoods, child labor, and subsidies.

What is the role and impact of sustainable cottons? Do they improve the performance and image of cotton, or detract from investment in the sustainability of the whole industry? Some of these issues were discussed in relation to organic cotton at the ICAC's 70th Plenary meeting in Buenos Aires in 2011, but many are equally relevant to Fairtrade, CmiA and BCI.

Ethical concerns in cotton are nothing new: as early as the 18th Century, thinkers such as Edmund Burke and Adam Smith railed against the British East India Company, among other reasons over its actions with regards to Indian cotton and textiles, while the 19th Century saw the Ladies' Free Grown cotton movement campaign for the use of cotton grown by 'free' farmers rather than slaves. While much has improved in cotton, notably with reduced use of pesticides, many problems remain, particularly in poorer countries and among the very smallest – and so most vulnerable – farmers. There are hurdles ahead as resources get tighter and the risk of climate volatility grows. Alternative production systems offer hope for more sustainable production and improved livelihoods for farmers.

However, sustainability can have many definitions. While the 1987 Brundtland definition of sustainable development is most quoted ('*development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*'), sustainable cotton first needs farmers able to stay in business and make a living. Sustainable cotton also needs profitable service providers - it is however hard for them to sustain themselves, let alone support others in sustainability when markets are volatile and unpredictable. Without more stability in orders and financial support (loans, credit, crop finance as well as donor funds) then sustainable production is going to be difficult.

Of the various sustainable cotton initiatives, some are certified, some verified and some not. Some are labeled at point of sale, some are not. It is difficult to say any one system is better, although there may be cases when a system may be inappropriate for a given context. There is no baseline, framework or common understanding for assessing sustainability in cotton let alone comparing standards. This may not be feasible, let alone relevant given the many variables (climate, soils, farmers, and infrastructure) within and without a given growing area.

Organic cotton has grown fast over the past two decades, but the last 4-5 years have seen questions over prices, integrity, benefits to farmers and the very different ways organic cotton is implemented in the field. The recent drop in reported organic cotton production is perhaps a sign of rationality returning to this sector, an opportunity to re-establish good governance and address weaknesses notably in research, farmer support, productivity, and responsible trading. Yet for all the over-hyping that may have happened in recent years there are many productive farmers growing organic cotton and achieving good yields and returns. Well supported, organic can also help small and resource poor farmers continue to benefit from their only cash crop option when other forms of production become too expensive or risky. Organic cotton is sometimes criticized for low yields, but where true the reasons are poorly understood. Lack of investment, lack of research, and the fact organic programs may be working with very marginal farmers are sometimes factors, although limited data available suggest the yield gap between organic and conventional production is higher in irrigated cotton. There are potential yield improvements in organic cotton with more systematic application of research and good practice, but the organic industry needs to find ways to fund improvements and farmer support. Given how long it takes for farmers to become certified (2-3 years) and the length of time usually needed for the farm system to function at its best, organic cotton also requires investment for the long term. While much of this can be funded from commercial activity, it still requires stability of orders and prices and premiums to reflect the investments made. Organic standards have fallen behind newer initiatives in putting criteria and requirements on trading and supply chain relations. Not only does more need to be done on good business practices, there is also the question of integrity. Organic cotton came under fire in recent years for poor business practices and rumors of fraud, although the Indian government has implemented changes that should improve the situation by launching its *Tracenet* traceability system.

Organic cotton is the elder statesman of sustainable cotton initiatives but needs to evolve alongside its newer counterparts. Having said all of this, similar risks and challenges to the above may well confront the newer systems in years to come.

8) The author can be reached by email at <simon@sustainableorganicfarmsystems.co.uk>.

Fairtrade cotton places its emphasis on social issues, with high minimum prices along with social premiums. Fairtrade cotton is expensive but popular with many retailers as the Fairtrade mark is well recognized by consumers, with around a third of Fairtrade cotton jointly certified organic. Fairtrade also addresses farmer organizational development but like organic is challenged by the arrival of BCI and CmiA and will have to work hard to maintain its position and identity. Fairtrade is not an integrated pest management (IPM) system, but does have regulations on pesticides, banning those listed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as Classes Ia and Ib as well as the Pesticide Action Network (PAN) 'Dirty Dozen' and those registered under the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) conventions (the Rotterdam Convention and the Stockholm Convention, respectively)

BCI begins with '*minimizing the harmful impact of crop protection practices*' and aims to be a '*mainstream commodity*'. The FAO definition of IPM is the basis of the system, and BCI puts a strong emphasis on capacity building and reducing costs to farmers, improving their profitability through better management practices. Labeling is a major difference between BCI and CmiA, as CmiA is labeled. Like BCI, CmiA is predicated on a continuous improvement process and good agricultural practices, but is applicable only to African cotton. CmiA also encourages a community of practice between programs and producers to promote sustainable cotton production. All initiatives could do well to share more information on production practices.

Cotton produced under the sustainable initiatives cannot only be produced by implementing changes and verification in the field. It needs to be traded responsibly to support sustainability, reduce volatility and costs and improve transparency and trust. Sustainable business requires that attention is paid to the impact of decisions: for example, farmers start their activities long before the cotton is turned into product, and late changes in buying volumes or criteria can have serious financial impacts further down the chain. While the word responsible may soon become as over-used and under-defined as sustainability, it is an essential behavior to all good sustainable business practice.

At its most basic, sustainable cotton production equates to the sustaining of trade, marrying commercial success, social responsibility and environmental protection. The future of sustainable cotton depends on putting these basic elements in place; however, a major limitation is that sustainable systems generally remain dependent on donors or premiums and despite the size of the retail markets, not enough money is returning to invest in production, productivity and improved sustainability or better seed supply.

An often heard criticism of standards and certification systems is that they are purely marketing tools, more useful to the retailers and brands than to farmers and the environment. It is true that certification is not necessary to produce in a sustainable way and it is also true that certification and verification do not guarantee sustainability: the cost of a fully verified system is enormous and so most systems only allow for partial control and the use of documentation and/or self-assessment.

So do we need sustainable initiatives? The answer is that we do. The relationship between so-called 'conventional' farming and advocates of sustainability is sometimes fraught and difficult, but the raising of issues and the quest for more ethical and less damaging production is one that moves the debate – and the reality on the ground – forward. Scrutiny provides an impetus for change just as dialogue does. Sustainability programs are not enough by themselves to address all the issues or to change the whole cotton sector, but they quite literally set a standard for everyone.

The various sustainability initiatives together with continued action on IPM, Best Practices and international regulation have not always been perfect and are not always complete, but they are a step in the right direction.

ORGANIC COTTON: A PRODUCTION SYSTEM

By M. Rafiq Chaudhry, ICAC, and Ms. Liesl Truscott, Textile Exchange[9]

According to the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), *"Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved."* Organic agriculture is based on the principles of agroecology and replaces synthetic agrochemicals with natural methods and botanical products to improve soil fertility, water quality, and pest control. Organic cotton means certified organic cotton. If the production and processing systems are not certified, it is illegal to claim the results as organic. Certification of organic cotton requires three years of 'transition' from conventional practices and land use to

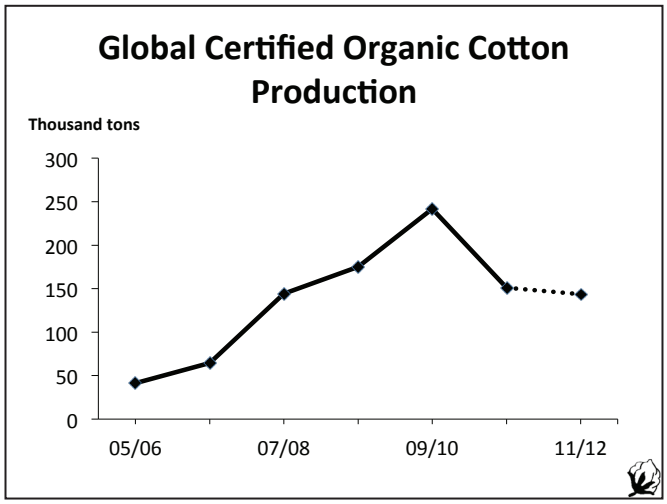
9) The authors can be reached by email at <Rafiq@icac.org> and <liesl@TextileExchange.org>.

organic practices and processes. In terms of social standards, organic certification cannot be achieved if the International Labor Organization standards are breached. Organic production relies upon the holistic nature of the organic system to meet the IFOAM principles of social and economic fairness. Economic sustainability through improved terms and conditions of trade to ensure farmers' livelihoods will also deliver socio-economic benefits to their wider community. Organic certification must be obtained at the farm level to achieve organic status of the raw material, and must be tracked through the supply chain to ensure the organic status of the final product and for consumer labelling. Additional standards and certification can be obtained during the processing and manufacturing stages to enhance the environmental and social benefits for the entire product.

Organic cotton production as a system worked successfully for the last two decades and carries a strong potential to continue to prevail in the future. The organic cotton production system satisfies all the three components of sustainability: economic, social and environmental.

Major Trends in 2010/11

- Global organic cotton production in 2010/11 dropped by 37% to 151,079 tons.
- India, Syria, China, Turkey, and the United States were the top five producers in 2010/11.
- Production in India fell by 48% from 195,412 tons to 102,452 tons due to stringent regulatory control by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) which means improving integrity and better chances for capturing the market in the future.
- Twelve out of 20 countries increased production (most significantly Benin, Brazil, Mali, Nicaragua, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan).
- Kyrgyzstan is one of the top 10 producers for the first time.



Organic Cotton Yields

Organic cotton was cultivated on 324,577 ha in 2010/11 compared to 460,973 ha in 2009/10. The drop in production and the forecast for 2011/12 are based on continued decline in area devoted to organic cotton. The stringent requirements from the Indian government to follow organic standards is ultimately going to benefit organic cotton area. The motivation that is driving some conventional producers to shift to organic production has not been affected or reduced. While social and environmental variables are important pillars of the organic movement, only the economic viability of a system can assure its survival. The average conventional yield of the current 20 organic cotton producing countries was 780 kg/ha in 2009/10, compared to an average organic yield of 525 kg/ha. The same 20 countries had average yields of 783 Kg/ha and 466 kg/ha in 2010/11 under conventional and organic production conditions, respectively. The jump in the share of India in global cotton area lowered the world average organic yield and widened the gap between the two production systems. In this group of countries, the average yield under organic conditions in 2007/08 was 6% higher than under conventional conditions. However since 2008/09 the average organic yield in the same group has been lower than the average conventional yield.

Lower yields under organic conditions cannot be directly attributed to imperfect control of insects or lack of proper nourishment of the cotton plant. It is obvious that organic production has lower costs of production due to savings in expensive insecticides and conventional fertilizer costs. The long term benefits of safe technologies are always rewarding. So, an organic cotton producer will weigh in his net return like a conventional grower. The negative effects on yields of unexpected weather or pest events may or may not be similar under the two production systems. Moreover, a possible reason for the lower calculated average yields under the organic system could be that the certified organic cotton area figures reported by the Textile Exchange are in some cases likely to be used for all organic crops, not only cotton. Moreover, some producers sometimes sell part of their organic cotton production as conventional (in particular when conventional cotton prices are high).

Prospects for 2011/12

The number of countries that produce organic cotton is not expected to decrease. However, organic cotton area will decline further in 2011/12, mainly in India. The effects of APEDA regulations will dissipate and the situation is expected to return to normal at the end of 2011/12. The sharp decline in production that took place in 2010/11 for the first time in 10 years will not likely be repeated in the next few years. Organic cotton production is expected to reach 143,600 tons in 2011/12. At this stage it is hoped that production will start gaining momentum from 2012/13 onwards.

FAIRTRADE COTTON – 2011/12 UPDATE

By Damien Sanfilippo, Global Product Manager Cotton, Fairtrade International [10]

Fairtrade Cotton Production

Certified Fairtrade (FT) cotton production was launched in West and Central Africa (Cameroon and Burkina Faso) during 2004-05, and reached the shelves of fashion stores in Europe in March 2005. FT cotton has been grown ever since and is now also produced in India, Mali, Senegal, Brazil, Kirghizstan, and Egypt, with new producers from Uganda also gaining certification in 2011/12. Certified FT cotton production has grown by 22% in 2011/12 to 24,500 tons of lint (63,000 tons of seedcotton), over 60% being also certified organic.

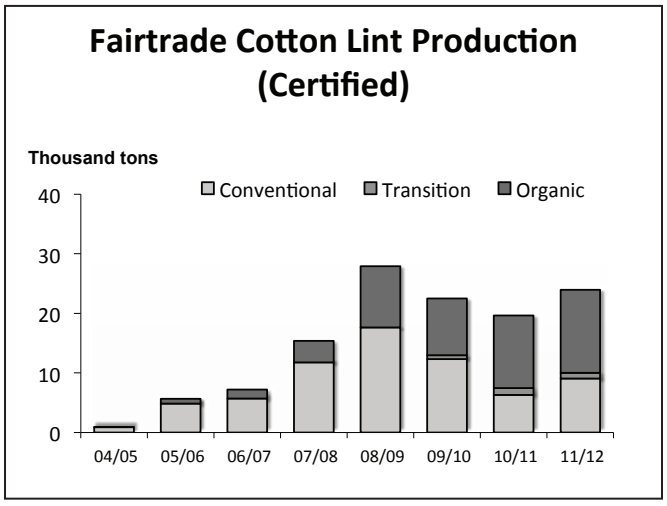
Fairtrade in 2011: Major Evolutions

In 2011, the Fairtrade Labelling Organization (FLO), the umbrella organisation for all Fairtrade Labelling initiatives throughout the world, adopted the name Fairtrade International. All the former Certification Marks in various countries have been replaced by the harmonised international Fairtrade Certification Mark with the exception of the United States where Fairtrade International's member (namely Transfair USA) maintained its historic label. Following the resignation of Transfair USA from its international membership as of January 2012, the international Fairtrade "certified cotton" Mark (It is called the Fairtrade Mark or Fairtrade Certification Mark with its "certified cotton" variation, it is a registered mark, certification is 3rd party and ios65 accredited, this is different from the Fairtrade brand,) is now also available in the US market. A comprehensive global study of 17,000 consumers in 24 countries carried out by the international research consultant GlobeScan[11] in 2011 confirmed that Fairtrade is the most widely recognized ethical label globally. Nearly six in ten consumers, across 24 surveyed countries, now recognize the Fairtrade Certification Mark, in constant augmentation. Recognition even reaches 80 to 90 percent of consumers in countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, Switzerland, Netherlands, Austria or Finland. More importantly, nine in ten consumers who recognize the Fairtrade Certification Mark regard it as a trusted label.

The 2011 Fairtrade market report[12] showed that while the global market for FT cotton has remained broadly stable, 2010 was a year of impressive growth for Fairtrade across all product categories. Shoppers spent more than US$5.7 billion on FT products, up by 27 percent over 2009, an extremely encouraging indicator showing that sustainable and ethical production and consumption shows resilience despite the global recession. 25 million items bearing the Fairtrade "certified cotton" Mark were sold in 2010, down from 29 million in 2009. Figures for 2011 are not yet available. Leading markets for FT cotton continue to be the United Kingdom ahead of France, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Finland.

The 2011 monitoring report[13] published in December 2011 highlighted that FT producers globally and across all products reported a 22% increase in Fairtrade Premium returns and a 24% increase in FT sales value. An estimated 1.15 million farmers and workers (24% women) benefited from Fairtrade in 2010 and we expect this to have exceeded 1.2 million in 2011. In cotton production, women account for 18% of certified farmers. With Fairtrade, women receive their own income from cotton directly and no longer through their male relatives. In addition to the increased financial independence this gives to women, it also benefits communities as women tend to invest more within the household, on children's education for example. The report also highlights that small producer organizations are increasingly investing in the development of their businesses, for example through processing, productivity, quality improvements, and sustainable resource management. Cotton farmers in India are increasingly choosing to invest their FT premium in drip irrigation. Farmers in West Africa often invest in soil management or soil erosion control projects.

Perhaps the most significant milestone reached in 2011 is the achievement of Fairtrade's vision of producers becoming half-owners of the certification and labeling scheme, making Fairtrade's ownership model unique. Fairtrade Producer



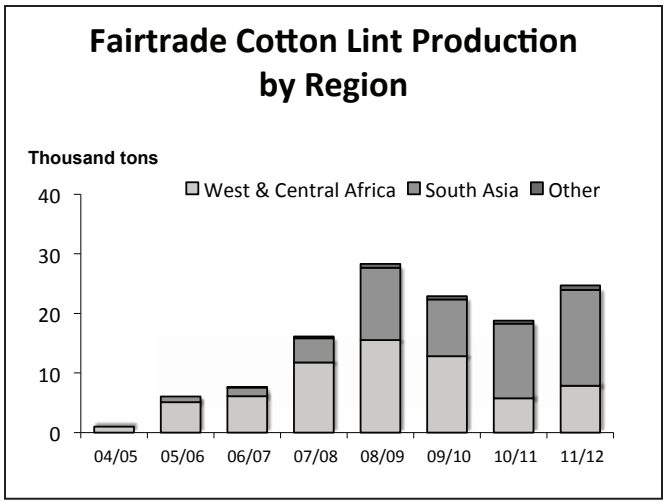
10) The author can be reached by email at <d.sanfilippo@fairtrade.net>.
11) Fairtrade International and GlobeScan, Media Release 11 Oct 2011.
12) Fairtrade International Annual Financials Sales 2010.
13) Fairtrade International, Monitoring the Scope and Benefits of Fairtrade, Third Edition 2011. All documents and more available on www.fairtrade.net.

Networks, representing the 1.15 million certified producers and workers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (60,000 of which are cotton farmers), now account for 50% of all delegates on the System's general assembly. Producers own half of Fairtrade International, the standards, and the Fairtrade Mark. This ground-breaking approach illustrates the paramount importance within Fairtrade's vision of having producers' voice at the heart of any ethical and sustainable certification scheme.

Fairtrade Cotton in 2012: a New Model Fit for Growth

Since March 2011, Fairtrade has engaged in a complete assessment and revision of the FT cotton model. The initial 5-year development phase has demonstrated a significant positive impact thanks to a perfect fit between the main FT concepts and the needs of smallholder cotton farmers for a more sustainable and fair cotton production. The FT minimum price is a vital tool ensuring farmers the ability to cover their costs and basic needs, and hence allowing them to invest their efforts in cotton farming from a long-term perspective. The FT Premium has proved to be a very effective tool, making it possible for producers to provide for collective needs, according to their own priorities: first, organizational strengthening, second, their own farming business (tools, organic conversion, training, investment in drip irrigation, etc.), and third, the community (health, education). Finally the Fairtrade focus on farmers' democratic participation and general empowerment, offering cotton farmers a much-needed voice, is often seen by farmers as the greatest value of the system.

However, the initial model, "from farm to consumers," needs to be fine tuned toward the specificities of the notably complex, and price sensitive textile industry. Fairtrade is therefore developing a cotton model to fit its ambition:



significant growth into large mainstream markets. Several measures were progressively introduced in 2011, all designed to minimize costs and complexities through the supply chain, while strengthening the added value of FT certified cotton. FT Minimum Prices as well as many trading rules were revised in 2011 in close consultation with stakeholders to make them more relevant to market realities while taking into account rising input costs since 2008. Cost amplification through the supply chain has been minimized, partly through direct partnership building between retailers and farmers. Unnecessary processing restrictions are being progressively lifted. A supply chain management and support service has been created within Fairtrade International, which will progressively facilitate the creation and strengthening of committed and cost-effective supply chains. Research and consultation on the cost of production of lint in mid-2012 will allow stronger transparency in lint costing. Many more measures will progressively come into force in 2012 and 2013, including strengthened support for producers (micro-financing, technical and business training, etc).

Table 1. Fairtrade Minimum Prices and Premium for Seedcotton

Regions		2008-2011	FTMP (€/kg) from 2011-12	*Change*	FT Premium (€/kg) (unchanged)
South and Central America	*G. barbadense*	0.45	0.49	*+ 9%*	0.05
	G. barbadense organic	0.54	0.59	*+ 9%*	0.05
	G. hirsutum	0.41	0.41	-	0.05
	G. hirsutum organic	0.49	0.49	-	0.05
Eastern Africa	*G. hirsutum*	0.36	0.40	*+ 11%*	0.05
	G. hirsutum organic	0.43	0.48	*+ 12%*	0.05
Kyrgystan	*G. hirsutum*	0.46	0.46	-	0.05
	G. hirsutum organic	0.55	0.55	-	0.05
West and Central Africa	*G. hirsutum*	0.42	0.42	-	0.05
	G. hirsutum organic	0.50	0.50	-	0.05
North Africa	*G. barbadense*	0.43	0.48	*+ 12%*	0.05
	G. barbadense organic	0.52	0.58	*+ 12%*	0.05
	G. hirsutum	0.39	0.40	*+ 3%*	0.05
	G. hirsutum organic	0.47	0.48	*+ 2%*	0.05
South Asia	*G. barbadense*	0.45	0.53	*+ 18%*	0.05
	G. barbadense organic	0.54	0.64	*+ 19%*	0.05
	G. hirsutum > 25 mm	0.38	0.44	*+ 16%*	0.05
	G. hirsutum < 24.5 mm	0.38	0.39	*+ 3%*	0.05
	G. hirsutum organic > 25 mm	0.46	0.53	*+ 15%*	0.05
	G. hirsutum organic < 24.5 mm	0.46	0.47	*+ 2%*	0.05

FTMP: Fairtrade Minimum Price
FT Premium: Fairtrade Premium

COTTON MADE IN AFRICA – AN UPDATE

By Christoph Kaut, Managing Director, Aid by Trade Foundation[14]

Update on Developments Since May 2011

Cotton made in Africa (CmiA) is a multi-stakeholder initiative driven by the Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF), aiming at improving the socioeconomic and environmental living conditions (livelihoods) of smallholder cotton farmers in sub-Saharan African cotton production. CmiA promotes:

- Higher income through higher productivity and improved cotton quality and better access to sales markets;
- Better working conditions through decent work on farms and in ginneries;
- Better environmental performance through optimum application of pesticides, reduction of greenhouse gases, and sound water management.

AbTF looks back at a successful 2011 and beginning 2012. CmiA is now produced by close to half a million farmers and eight cotton companies in three West African and four Southern African countries, with Cargill / Zimbabwe being the latest company to join. During the past year production more than doubled to close to 200,000 tons of lint, roughly split 50/50 between Western and Southern Africa.

The inclusion of additional cotton smallholders and cotton companies was accompanied by extended CmiA / Compaci[15] support to training and access to finance to farmers via partnering cotton companies. Between the beginning of 2009 and the beginning of 2012, about 250,000 cotton farmers were trained in basic agricultural technologies, another 250,000 in Integrated Pest Management, Good Agricultural Practices, conservation farming or harvesting technologies, and 200,000 in the proper use and storage of pesticides.

In 2011, the yearly CmiA/Compaci stakeholder workshop took place in Livingstone / Zambia. This annual event brings together all CmiA partners, from farmers unions and cotton companies to textile manufacturers and retailers. One central topic was the update of CmiA's verification matrix and the introduction of an additional standard under the AbTF: the GMO neutral Smallholder Cotton Standard (SCS). CmiA's verification standard vol. 2 provides stricter criteria for pesticides and water use, excludes biotech cotton indefinitely, and measures the success of farmer training. Beyond producing a strong sustainability claim, the new CmiA verification standard provides an excellent tool for cotton companies to monitor the impact of their training measures in the field. The new criteria vol. 2 and the verification governance are available online (www.cottonmadeinafrica.org). The new SCS is based on the CmiA verification criteria and governance, but it is GMO neutral. The SCS is not yet available online.

The second round of the CmiA third party verification by the verification companies EcoCert and AfriCert took place from November 2011 to January 2012 in West Africa and from February 2012 to April 2012 in Southern Africa[16]. All CmiA entities (cotton companies, ginneries and contracted smallholder cotton farmers) passed the verification and updated their management plans. These plans are the main tool for continuous improvements along the CmiA sustainability criteria. A consolidated verification report will be available on our web page shortly.

A systematic, independent and comparative study of the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) and CmiA has led to the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between AbTF and BCI on the way to a full partnership agreement between the two sustainability standards. The main aim is to harmonize systems and procedures and make CmiA cotton available to BCI manufacturers and retailers as early as mid-2012.

One main achievement and key activity of AbTF is its support to manufacturers and retailers in sourcing CmiA and SCS in the value chain. This hands-on service proved its critical importance in supporting match making between supply and demand during the recent high-price period of cotton. Price information on lint cotton and yarn as well as sourcing support provided by AbTF to manufacturers and retailers significantly reduced unrealistic expectations about mark ups and windfall profits in the textile value chain.

Table 1: Cotton made in Africa – Production Figures

Key Production Figures	2010/2011	2011/2012*
Area (ha)	312,159	645,141
Number of producers	235,658	471,222
Number of direct dependents	1,642,412	3,095,881
Production of cotton lint (tons)	89,266	190,307

*Projection

14) The author can be reached by email at <christoph.kaut@abt-foundation.org>.

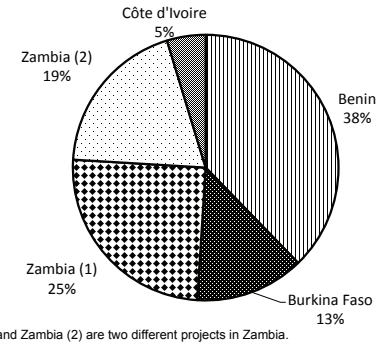
15) Compaci (Competitive African Cotton Initiative) provides financial and technical support to cotton smallholders through cotton companies partnering with AbTF/CmiA. Compaci is managed by DEG GIZ and AbTF and financed by the German Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

16) The CmiA verification takes place every two years.

Sales Development

Besides farmer training and cooperation with cotton companies, CmiA's second pillar is the "demand alliance" of textiles retailers and brands that buy and integrate the sustainably produced cotton into their global supply chains, offer sustainable products to their customers and pay back a license fee to the Aid by Trade Foundation. Currently the initiative works with 20 retailers and brands such as Puma, Otto Group, C&A, s.Oliver, Rewe, and Metro Group. Most of CmiA's partners are headquartered in Germany, which can easily be explained by the fact that AbTF and its initiative CmiA have German roots and still a German identity. Nevertheless, the initiative also focuses on international markets, especially North America and the United Kingdom. Both regions have great potential for CmiA with a large number of mass market retailers and – this holds especially true for the United Kingdom- awareness of sustainable products among large consumer groups. Initial contacts have been made and a handful of retailers in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom have already joined the initiative and started working with the CmiA cotton. As the level of awareness of CmiA among consumers (and retailers) is a crucial success factor, the initiative aims to cooperate with its retail partners in their marketing activities. For example, in the United Kingdom the first product will be launched under the patronage of Sir Steve Red-grave (most successful rower of all times) at the start of the Olympic Games in London.

Overview of Expenditures in AbTF Community Projects
(by Country, with Share of Total)



Note: Zambia (1) and Zambia (2) are two different projects in Zambia.

Besides supporting smallholder training, AbTF is increasingly mobilizing its own funds and funds from retailers and development organizations to supplement investments of cotton companies into projects for the farming community. Projects include health, education and women empowerment. Since 2009, AbTF has mobilized over euro 2.1 million and is actively supporting five community projects in four CmiA countries.

BCI – LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR EXPANSION

By Lise Melvin, Executive Director, BCI[17]

The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) is a multi-stakeholder initiative that brings together producers, ginners, mills, traders, manufacturers, retailers, brands and civil society organizations in a unique partnership to transform cotton production, enabling it to be increasingly sustainable and thereby securing the future of the sector.

It is a global approach that aims to continually improve the mainstream cotton industry, while balancing the very different needs of its stakeholders. Firmly committed to improving the working, social and economic environments of the most vulnerable actors in the cotton supply chain – the smallholder farmer – BCI simultaneously aims to enlist sufficient large producers to ensure a sufficient and growing supply of Better Cotton (BC).

BCI's mission is to transform cotton production so that it is better for the people who produce it, better for the environment it grows in and better for the sector's future.

Table 1: 2010/11 Results

	Number of BC producers	Hectares under BC cultivation	BC Lint Yield (Kg/ha)	Cotton Lint qualified as BC (tons)
Brazil	49	28,000	*NA*	42,000
India	13,000	16,000	625	10,000
Mali	4,000	10,000	300	3,000
Pakistan	12,000	39,000	538	21,000
TOTALS	**29,049**	**93,000**	**828**	**77,000**

17) The author can be reached by email at <lise.melvin@bettercotton.org>.

Table 2: 2011/12 Preliminary Results

All numbers are rounded up to the nearest thousand.

	Number of BC producers	Hectares under BC cultivation	BC Lint Yield (Kg/ha)	Cotton qualified as BC[18]
Brazil*	*Not available yet*	*Not available yet*	*NA*	*Not available yet*
India	36,000	52,000	731	38,000
Mali	11,000	31,000	452	14,000
Pakistan	45,000	150,000	867	130,000
TOTAL	**92,000**	**215,000**	**847**	**182,000**

** The 2011/12 cotton season in Brazil is still underway.*

Table 3: 2012/13 Projections

All numbers are currently estimates.

Country	Number of collaborating producers	Hectares Covered
Brazil	*Not available yet*	*Not available yet*
India	113,000	233,000
Mali	21,000	64,000
Pakistan	68,000	327,000
China	10,000	16,000
TOTALS	**212,000**	**640,000**

Note: the numbers above represent the total number of farmers and hectares involved in BCI projects; "BC cotton" figures are only relevant once producers have qualified (currently done on a yearly basis).

A cornerstone of BCI's strategy is to efficiently connect supply with demand. BCI regional and global staff work closely with ginners, manufacturers and retailers to facilitate the uptake of BC into supply chains.

In our first year of production (2010/11), BCI launched an online system (the BTS) which allows members to identify BC bales and verify the authenticity of bought bales. BCI has worked intensely with ginners and implementing partners to increase the amount of BC purchased by ginners (known as the Gin Uptake Ratio, or GUR). Efforts are paying off as the GUR showed a significant increase over the past year. In Mali, almost 80% of BC seedcotton was purchased by ginners, with numbers for India and Pakistan more than tripling, to 58% and 25% respectively.

2013 Plans and Beyond

In 2012, BCI expanded the number of farmers it works with in all of its focus regions, and began projects in China, with BC expected from the 2012 harvest onwards. Additionally, interest in BC continues to be expressed by different organizations in Central Asia, Southern and Eastern Africa, Turkey and the USA. BCI is keen to expand as rapidly as possible, provided expansion does not come at the cost of BCI's ability to service existing projects, or the credibility of BC.

BCI Members

To generate wide-spread support and involvement in growing BC, BCI collaborates with organizations that have an interest in the cotton supply chain and who support BCI's mission. Since 2010, the BCI membership has expanded from 23 to over 185 members, including retailers, civil society, and all levels of the supply chain. BCI also actively engages with governmental institutions and other relevant organizations outside of membership.

18) These figures represent the lint equivalent to licensed volumes of seedcotton.