

part 6

organizations advancing cotton



# n sustainability



photos: (top-left) Fairtrade International; (bottom-left) Mecilla, China; (top-right) Chetna, India; (bottom-right) Solidaridad, Tanzania

# CottonConnect

(written by Rosanne Grey)

company  
with  
a  
social  
purpose

CottonConnect was created in 2009 through collaboration a between Textile Exchange, C&A, and the Shell Foundation. Together, these organizations saw the need to create a company with a social purpose that works directly with retailers and brands on their cotton sourcing strategies. CottonConnect works across many cotton sustainability initiatives and standards with a team of farm experts on the ground in India and China. CottonConnect provides tailored support and tools (such as their new REEL Cotton program) for brands and retailers to progress towards more transparent and sustainable supply chains.

providing  
solutions  
to  
become  
more  
sustainable

CottonConnect is a pioneering company with a social purpose, delivering business benefits to retailers and brands by creating more sustainable cotton supply chains in South Asia and China.

Their approach involves tracing cotton supply chains from garment back to farm and creating tailor-made farmer training programs that mainstream sustainability into brands' conventional cotton supply chains.

In the 2013-14 cotton season CottonConnect is:

- Engaging the supply chains of over 25 international brands and retailers
- Implementing farmer training with over 90,000 farmers
- Impacting over 450,000 livelihoods
- Increasing the land under more sustainable cotton cultivation by 345,000 acres (139,617 ha)
- Addressing issues such as water, pesticides and decent work
- Scaling up in India and China
- Starting working in Pakistan and South America

Key focus areas

- Defining Sustainable Strategies:
  - Building the business case for sustainability and creating implementation strategies
  - Value Chain Mapping – analyzing volumes from garment to farmer, creating more transparency
  - Delivering employee and supply chain engagement workshops
- Increasing the supply of more sustainable fiber:
  - Tailoring scalable farmer training programs across all standards and initiatives
  - Focusing on water and pesticide efficiency, soil health, livelihood enhancement and decent work
  - Monitoring and evaluating impacts – enabling the telling of stories
- Connecting the supply chain:
  - Providing procurement support – connecting the fiber into supply chains
  - Convening with stakeholders across the supply chain
  - Creating more transparency and engagement



photos: CottonConnect

## organic

CottonConnect works with its customers to develop long term, committed relationships with organic farm groups both in South Asia and China. Areas of focus include:

- In-field training and support
- Increasing yield and profitability
- Building the numbers of organic farmers
- Supporting large-scale organic cotton seed program
- Enhancing internal control systems
- Coordinating GMO testing

## implementing the Better Cotton Initiative

As a member and implementation partner of BCI, CottonConnect is working to grow Better Cotton in India and China.

CottonConnect works with BCI member brands, developing opportunities to invest in creating BCI fiber at farm level in a number of ways:

- Better Cotton Fast Track Fund Programme (BCFTF) – in India since 2011
- BCFTF program plus ginner investment – created a BCFTF project in India with investment partnership from a ginner
- Creating BCI ‘Umbrella of brands’ projects – allowing BCI member brands to join a group and invest in scaling up BCI projects at farm level

## REEL cotton program

The REEL (Responsible Environment Enhanced Livelihoods) Cotton program is a tailor made, location specific program for each Brand/ Retailer. In the 2013-14 season, CottonConnect is working with over 14,000 farmers in India, China and Pakistan, specifically focusing on:

- Increasing productivity of farmers
- Improving water efficiencies, including drip irrigation
- Reducing pesticide and synthetic fertilizer use
- Improving work practices and conditions
- Raising awareness of child labor, working towards eliminating child labor as defined in ILO convention 138 and 182
- Increasing awareness about education for all children
- Increasing awareness of health and safety at the farm level

## FiBL – Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (written by Monika Messmer)

development starts with research



photos: FiBL

The Research Institute for Organic Agriculture (FiBL) is an independent, non-profit, research institute with offices in Switzerland, Austria and Germany. FiBL aims to advance cutting-edge science in the field of organic agriculture. FiBL's research team works together with farmers to develop innovative and cost-effective solutions to boost agricultural productivity while never losing sight of environmental, health and socio-economic impacts.

FiBL has long been committed to the international development of organic agriculture. It works closely with the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and other international organizations. FiBL has a highly competent staff with expertise in organic soil management, plant production, holistic animal health, animal ethology and organic animal breeding. FiBL staff also has expertise in socioeconomics, in comprehensive analysis of the organic market, and in organic food processing and production. Along with practical research, FiBL places a high priority on knowledge transfer into agricultural practice through advisory work, training courses and expert reports through many means of dissemination, including magazines, technical leaflets, reference books, video and internet. Numerous FiBL projects in Eastern Europe, India, Latin America and Africa promote the development of organic research services as well as advisory and certification services.

FiBL has initiated several projects on organic cotton for sustainable agriculture systems with local partners:

- **SYSCOM:** Longterm system comparison trial to compare organic, biodynamic, conventional and Bt cotton cultivation practice in central India in cooperation with bioRe Association funded by the Coop Sustainability Fund, Biovision Foundation, Liechtenstein Development Service (LED), and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).
- **SYPROBIO:** Organic cotton research project in Bénin, Burkina Faso and Mali fostering the development of climate change adaption by diversified organic cotton systems leading to increased food security in West Africa in close cooperation with HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and local organizations. The project will foster system building and more resilient food, agriculture and rural development processes in the three countries. SYPROBIO is funded by EuropAid.
- **CCE:** Participatory Cotton Cultivar Evaluation (CCE), carried out on research plots and on farms, aimed at establishing seed supply chains in central India, for locally adapted GMO-free cotton seeds. Working in close cooperation with bioRe Association and funded by Corymbo Foundation, bioRe Foundation, Coop Sustainability Fund.
- **Green Cotton Project:** Decentralized participatory cotton breeding for the needs of organic and low-input farming in cooperation with the Indian organic cotton and organizations bioRe India, Chetna Organic and the Agricultural University Dharwad to enhance the seed sovereignty of organic cotton farmers in India funded by Mercator Foundation Switzerland.
- The integration of organic cotton in locally adapted and resilient production systems at farm or field level, as well as its use for system building in economy, society, science, education and environment is targeted. Comparative research between organic, conventional and GMO is done in order to provide decision-makers with more evidence-based information. This research-for-development approach is designed and implemented with all actors and based on principles of partnership.

## HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (written by Frank Eyhorn)

### building local capacity



photos: Helvetas

[HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation](#) supports smallholders in disadvantaged regions to engage in sustainable value chains. Farmers and their organizations receive technical assistance to improve their production system and their market linkages. In addition, they receive support to diversify their production base (rotation crops and associated crops like pulses, sesame, shea, vegetables, fruits) as well as markets (local, domestic and export markets). As confirmed by impact studies conducted by an independent university institute, this helps them to strengthen their livelihoods – more food security, increased income and reduced vulnerability. At the same time it enables them to use their natural resources in a more sustainable way, and to better cope with climate change.

Based on this strategy, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation has been supporting organic and fairtrade cotton projects since 2002, with funding from donors such as the Swiss State Secretariat of Economic Affairs (SECO), the Dutch Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO) and the French Development Agency (AFD).

The organic cotton portfolio includes projects in Africa (Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Madagascar) and Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). Overall, these projects involve almost 20,000 cotton farmers and their families.

Main partners of the program are local producer organizations that are built up and strengthened in their organizational and management capacities. The organic cotton program is managed by local project coordinators in the six countries, and receives technical assistance by the Organic & Fairtrade Competence Center based at head office in Zurich, Switzerland.

In collaboration with Textile Exchange, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation facilitates the exchange of knowledge through the [Global Organic Cotton Community Platform](#). In order to support more sustainable cotton production and trade at an international level, HELVETAS organizes conferences and participates in platforms such as the International Cotton Advisory Council.

## Louis Bolk Institute

(written by Edith Lammerts van Bueren & Bo van Elzakker)

a champion for seed



photo: LBI

Louis Bolk Institute (LBI) began working in organic cotton in 1989 in Turkey. LBI was active in assisting farmers in the conversion of dried fruits and nuts to organic for various European importers such as Rapunzel and the Good Food Foundation who also had an interest in arable crops like chickpeas, lentils and wheat for bulgur. In the Izmir area those crops were grown in a rotation with cotton. Two smaller projects were started to see whether organic could solve the pest problems that caused conventional farmers to spray such enormous amounts of pesticides. That was successful and soon the demand for organic cotton superseded the demand for wheat and legumes and LBI went eastwards in Turkey to look for cotton dominated farming systems. These were found in Kahramanmaraş where large scale, furrow irrigated organic cotton was grown that allowed the formation of the Bo Weevil company. A milestone was the Katharine Hamnett t-shirt “Green Cotton NOW” made from the in-conversion cotton in 1990.

In 1995 a start was made with growing organic cotton in North Uganda, Africa, with Lango Union that later became Lango Organic Farmers Promotion. In 1997 work started

with OBEPAB in Benin, to develop production in the south and later in the north. In 1998-02 a second project was started in Uganda that focused on sesame as well, with Outspan. In 2006-07 LBI supported an organic cotton project in Tanzania, with BioSustain. Those projects included support on the ground with farmer organizations, training of trainers, developing internal systems for group certification, and assistance in marketing.

Another activity was a study undertaken for UNCTAD in 1996-97, to look into the differences in cost prices for conventional versus organic cotton. This brought LBI to Egypt where SEKEM was having a great impact with its more natural pest and disease management systems. The rusting spraying airplanes were still visible on the ground in the oasis. As it happened, other farmers benefitted from this ‘alternative’ approach. Included in the study were also India and Peru who were at that time the main sources of organic cotton fiber.

LBI collaborated with the Pesticides Trust, now PAN-UK on writing the book ‘Organic Cotton; from field to final product’ published in 1998. It was the first book of its kind, giving confidence to a then sceptical public that it was possible to produce good cotton without pesticides and nice textiles without harmful chemicals.

In 2009 LBI started to test organic fertilizers in cotton in Uganda. While observing the plants’ reaction to the different fertilizers, they noted quite a bit of variation in the plants in the field. There were large and small plants, lots of (or less) branches, with few (or many) bolls, with little correlation. That triggered LBI to ask farmers to select the best producing plants and to sow those seeds again the next year. That brought them into participatory breeding. In 2010, LBI started a low budget project, using university students to work with farmers and breeders on observing the traits of different mother lines in the research station but also in an on-farm situation. While the breeders were looking at producing seed for growing medium-high input cotton, the farmers provided information on low-input cotton growing which is the situation in most of the country. Uganda is a landlocked country and fertilizers are not economical for cotton growers. Also it is a country subject to climate change (flooding and droughts) which prevents farmers from investing in inputs when they are not sure of a harvest. The interaction in the farmer’s field may actually result in a cotton variety that is better suited for a low-input and climate change prone, rainfed cotton farming system; which is a situation most organic cotton growers find themselves in. LBI wants to expand this work to other countries in Africa and cooperate with others in the same field to make sure that organic and other low-input cotton farmers have access to good seed material in the future.

# OrganiMark

(written by Heinrich Schultz)

## driver of cotton and leather sustainability in southern africa



photos: OrganiMark

**OrganiMark** is a privately owned supply chain engineering and category management company based in South Africa. OrganiMark develops and maintains fair trade opportunities to meet the increasing demands of ethically conscious consumers for organic products.

### values

- **Environmental Responsibility** - Strives to sustain the health of soils, ecosystems and people through climate smart production and distribution.
- **Social Responsibility** - Committed to social upliftment through job creation, education and training, poverty alleviation and community development.
- **Economic Responsibility** - Dedicated to the sound economic principles of commercially viable and sustainable business through fair and ethical trade practices.
- **Brand Integrity** - Committed to protecting the integrity of business through a unique supply chain management and traceability system, designed to accommodate any set of standards to govern a specific offering.

### cluster development

OrganiMark recognises the importance of supply chain integration and is using a regionalised cluster approach to building entire value chains from farm to retail. The University of Delaware in the USA will support progress through research and benchmarking.

### objectives

Organic cotton and the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) objectives to be achieved by 2018:

- Organic fiber production, Mozambique (2,000 mt of lint per year)
- BCI fiber production, South Africa (30,000 mt of lint per year)
- Local Cotton Seed Programme – Cultivar selection and seed multiplication (adapted to local conditions)
- Training and Extension Program – Organic and BCI
- Supply Chain Traceability System
- The instillation of world class HVI fiber testing technology that conforms to international standards for instrument testing to determine the accurate market value of cotton fiber and to prevent the exploitation of small scale farmers.

### ECO and organic leather tannery

A Sustainable Leather Integrated Supply Chain Program to be located in South Africa. Leather tanning sustainability criteria to include full organic certification; GOTS Social Justice Standards; ISO 14001 management system; water, energy, and waste considerations and reduced product miles.

OrganiMark is currently refining the criteria and are ambitiously determined to deliver a profitable tannery that generates its own energy, recycles 99.99 percent of its own water, has virtually no waste, and returns a realistic profit to its investors and shareholders. At the same time providing employment for around 200 people at or above average wages.

## Solidaridad (written by Therese Albers)

offering different paths to sustainability



photos: Solidaridad

**Solidaridad** is an international organization dedicated to responsible food production to feed the growing world population and to provide the world with an alternative to fossil fuels like oil and gas. Solidaridad focuses on the production chains that matter worldwide and where changes have great impact.

The majority of the world's cotton farmers are smallholders; between them, they supply less than 50 percent of the world's cotton. Low, unstable incomes prevent them from paying off the debts they incur to make investments in seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. With support from Solidaridad and partners, they can adopt more sustainable practices that will bring real personal and environmental improvements. By providing access to an organized market, these practices also bring the cash that provides farmers and their families with a dignified living.

Solidaridad embraces different routes to sustainability and is a pioneer in organic and Fairtrade cotton. Solidaridad is a member of the Council of the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) to improve environmental and social conditions in the cotton sector and is one of the first implementing partners to support farmers in cultivating Better Cotton. Solidaridad cooperates with brands like Levi Strauss & Co, H&M and Adidas to include Better Cotton in their supply chains. Solidaridad also works with the Rabobank Foundation in the ProCotton program to improve the incomes of small cotton producers in developing countries.

From cotton to finished garment, the textile supply chain is characterized by various social and environmental challenges. By training workers and helping factories implement structural improvements, Solidaridad and its partners work to improve labor conditions, reduce pollution and improve efficiency. And by encouraging fashion brands to buy more sustainably produced textiles or actively engage with their existing suppliers on making improvements, they also help improve conditions.

With the expansion of the ProCotton program into Uganda and the BCI program in Mozambique in 2013, Solidaridad is now active in ten different countries on cotton. The current programs focus on India, China, Mali, Senegal, Tanzania, Zambia, Peru and Brazil. For the textiles program the focus lies mainly in India, China and Bangladesh.

Solidaridad support projects on Fairtrade, organic and Better Cotton, mainly in Asia, West and East Africa and Latin America. IDH (the Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative) and the Rabobank Foundation are key partners in the BCI Better Cotton Fast Track Programme, a special fund that matches private-partner investments up to 100 percent. The BCI farm projects are also supported by the Farmer Support Programme, a four-year public-private partnership that will run until 2015. Solidaridad's ProCotton activities in East Africa are supported by the Common Fund for Commodities.

Solidaridad partners with brands and retailers, local stakeholders and governments as well as other organizations and initiatives, such as the BCI, Fairtrade, Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC), and the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI).

## Introducing the Organic Content Standard (OCS)



The OCS will replace the existing OE standards over the next year, giving certification bodies and currently certified sites time to transition during their regular certification cycle. The new OCS will now accept any organically grown material as an input, no longer limited to organic cotton. The OCS is a single standard with two labeling options; products with at least 95 percent organically grown content may use the OCS 100 logo and products with at least 5 percent organically grown content may use the OCS Blended logo. The chain of custody requirements are detailed separately in the Content Claim Standard. For more information about the OCS and other TE-owned standards, visit [Textile Exchange](#).

### The importance of certification

Integrity is the linchpin for the sustainability efforts of the textile industry; it is essential in maintaining the trust of farmers, processors, sellers and consumers, and in ensuring that the targeted social and environmental benefits are actually achieved. It encompasses good intentions, strong standards, cooperation, diligence and transparency.

Certification to standards is one of the strongest ways to ensure that your product claims are accurate and able to be verified. Companies that implement the standards by creating linkages to their suppliers and supporting them through the process are the most successful.

A strong certification system is marked by an established policy, clear goals for suppliers, support and training, and rewards for success through the process.

### Going beyond certification

What will your supply chain look like in ten years? How will you adapt to the ever-increasing information available to you and your customers about the content and impact of your products?

The foundation of certification affords the opportunity to engage with suppliers and work together towards a tangible goal. It also provides a tool to communicate with your customers about the work you are doing to improve the final product and the level of trustworthy information about those products. Building more dynamic partnerships provides everyone with the ability to successfully adapt to any future changes.