



Better
Cotton
Initiative



Section 2/E Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

www.bettercotton.org

Orientation

The document explains how BCI's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning provides the framework to measure progress and changes brought about through implementing the Better Cotton System.

Contents

Introduction	2
Purpose	2
Approach	2
Theory of Change	2
What will be measured?	3
Monitoring and Analysis	4
Evaluation	5
Learning	5
Reporting	5



Introduction

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) provides the framework for how the BCI measures progress and the changes brought about through implementing the Better Cotton System, and how the BCI ensures that the Better Cotton system has the intended impacts on its direct beneficiaries. It also considers the operation of the BCI itself, as a membership association. BCI takes a holistic approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning, including all aspects of the operation of the BCI.

The focus of the BCI is on continuous improvement (getting 'better'), and it is vital therefore to have a means of showing progress over time. This relies on the collection of data that is robustly measured and provides useful information for farmers, all BCI members, funders, consumers, partners, and BCI to evaluate success. That is, to know, if the existence of the BCI makes global cotton production better for the people who produce it, better for the environment it grows in and better for the sector's future.

MEL describes how this is done. Of equal importance is to know if progress is not being made, or if there are unintended consequences arising from the implementation of the Better Cotton System, and the reasons for this. MEL also includes mechanisms to ensure that this information is made available, so that the BCI understands why progress may not be being made, and what can be done to adjust the Better Cotton System.

The BCI approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning is based on aligning with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assessing the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standards Systems (the Impacts Code).

The main components of BCI's approach to MEL, following the broad arrangement of the draft ISEAL Impacts Code, are described below.

Purpose

The purposes of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) for BCI are:

- To provide the framework for how the BCI will measure and demonstrate the change brought about through implementing the Better Cotton System: How effective has the BCI been in

achieving its goals and objectives, and what has been the impact of working with the Better Cotton System?

- To ensure accountability of the BCI to its beneficiaries, donors and members
- To inform strategy and help the BCI improve both the Better Cotton System and the way the BCI operates
- To help the BCI earn credibility, through being open about the impacts — whether positive or negative — that the Better Cotton System has contributed to
- To build capacity, by learning from experience and sharing this with both BCI members and stakeholders in general
- To enhance societal learning, through providing the results into the broader standards systems landscape to understand the cumulative impacts of such systems.

Approach

As the BCI is seeking to align with the ISEAL Impacts Code, the approach of the BCI is based on the draft Impacts Code¹. It requires the BCI to develop an impact assessment plan with a number of defined components: its purpose, how the activities of the BCI link to its Long Term Objectives and 2012 Goals (what is BCI's 'Theory of Change' – see below), what will be measured, how it will be monitored, evaluated and reported, and how the BCI will learn and improve the way it operates based on the results of its monitoring.

Theory of Change

In line with the draft Impacts Code, the BCI has a Theory of Change that details how the specific activities of the BCI are intended to bring about the desired impacts sought by working with the Better Cotton System. For example, it details what assumptions underpin the link between an activity and the intended outcomes. In this way, the Theory of Change links field activities to the 2012 Goals to the Long Term Objectives, and how those activities will eventuate in the desired impacts.

¹ Committee Draft 2009/10/28



Figure 1: Relationships between BCI intentions, activities, results and impact.



The Theory of Change also helps identify what needs to be measured (indicators) to assess the progress and change brought about.

As information and data is collected and analysed while working with the Better Cotton System, the Theory of Change is regularly refined based on the learning derived from the information collected, reviewed and analysed. This may result in new and different indicators being monitored by the BCI.

What will be measured?

The BCI seeks to have social, environmental and economic impacts. To help determine whether the Better Cotton System contributes to impact in these 3 areas, the BCI monitors both farm level activities and the activities of the BCI Association (including Secretariat and members). In this way, the BCI measures both the progress towards its 2012 Goals and Long Term Objectives as well as the effectiveness of a key strategic element of the Better Cotton System: developing demand for Better Cotton.

In particular, to help determine if growing Better Cotton has inherent benefits for farmers, such as an increase in the financial profitability of cotton farming, improved working conditions, improved health or improved fibre quality, the BCI is collecting the following Results Indicators at the farm level:

Results Indicators (Farm Level)

1. Total cotton production area (hectares harvested)
2. Total cotton production (kilograms of lint grown)
3. Pesticide use and type (kg / hectare / season for each active ingredient)
4. Water use for irrigation (m³ / season / hectare)
5. Fertiliser use and type (kg / hectare / season)
6. Use of health and safety precautions
7. Quality of fibre (classification)
8. Working conditions
9. Child labour
10. Forced labour
11. Profitability of cotton production (net income / hectare / season)

To help determine the effectiveness of the operation of the BCI Association and its members, and the strategy for developing demand for Better Cotton, the BCI is also collecting the following Results Indicators focussed on the operation of the BCI:



Other Results Indicators (BCI Association)

1. Total cotton usage of BCI brand/retailer members (metric tonnes of cotton lint)
2. Total Better Cotton usage of BCI brand/retailer members (metric tonnes of cotton lint)
3. Total global Better Cotton production (metric tonnes of cotton lint)
4. Countries of Better Cotton production (list of countries)
5. Level of publicly accessible information
6. Number of BCI Farmers
7. Number of users accessing knowledge exchange platform
8. Total income from membership fees

The BCI collects all Results Indicators annually and - importantly for the Farm Level Results Indicators - at the outset so there is a baseline from which changes over time can be monitored and analysed.

Monitoring will be conducted via a range of methodologies, depending upon the issue being monitored, and both quantitative and qualitative information will be gathered. The methodologies include collection of quantitative data (for example on water use), and qualitative data from interviews with people involved in the Better Cotton System, and the various reports provided to the BCI.

Monitoring and Analysis

The BCI collects specific data on a regular basis through the Producer Unit Report, the Results Indicators Report (for farm level only) and the BCI Member Annual Report. To ensure that the data is collected and reported in a consistent manner, the BCI provides guidance on how to calculate Farm Level Results Indicators, as well as templates for the Producer Unit Report, the Results Indicators and the BCI Member Annual Report.

As there are two types of Results Indicators— Farm Level Results Indicators and BCI Association Results Indicators, they are collected differently. The Farm Level are collected annually, as either qualitative or quantitative data, depending on the nature of the Results Indicator.

A baseline for the Farm Level Results Indicators is taken as soon as possible after an Implementing Partner starts working with farmers, or after farmers start working with the Better Cotton System.

As well as collecting a set of baseline data for the Farm Level Results Indicators so that trends can be identified, the BCI also asks Implementing Partners to collect control data (i.e. from farmers not working with the Better Cotton System) so that the relative performance of farmers working with the Better Cotton System can also be assessed.

The BCI Association Results Indicators are collected through internal BCI monitoring, and from collating information received in individual BCI Member Annual Reports.

Analysis of all the Results Indicators takes place annually, and is reported to members to enable communication by them, in accordance with the BCI Communications Rules. For quantitative data, the analysis allows trends to be seen, and any changes from the baseline to be identified. Data is stored in a way that allows for common issues to be compared both across and within countries and regions.

While an initial list of all the Results Indicators provides the focus for the data that will be collected, BCI regularly reviews the type of data to be collected, in line with the monitoring of the actual progress being made.

Data and information is collected through the following sources:

- The Producer Unit Report provided to the BCI Regional Coordinator prior to harvest. These reports are based on the information supplied by the Learning Groups to the Producer Unit, and make recommendations about compliance of farmers in the Producer Unit with the requirements of growing Better Cotton. Please see Section C - Farm Assessment for more details.
- The Producer Unit also submits, at the completion of each growing and harvesting season, the Results Indicators Report, which summarises the Farm Level Results Indicators for all producers in the Producer Unit
- The National Report prepared by the BCI Regional Coordinator is provided to the National Stakeholder Council and the BCI



Secretariat. This is based on all the Producer Unit Reports received, as well as information gathered by the Regional Coordinator over the course of the season.

- Reports provided by Implementing Partners to the BCI on the progress of working with the Better Cotton System.
- The BCI Member Annual Report, provided by members to the BCI and which reports on the activities undertaken by the member relevant for assessing the progress of the BCI towards its 2012 Goals.
- Information gained from 2nd party credibility checks and 3rd party verification instigated by the BCI.

Beyond these time bound reports, the BCI also reports informally and continuously throughout the year to enable refinement and adaptation of activities. This is done through regular exchanges with members, workshops, and Secretariat learning histories.

Evaluation

By 'Evaluation' BCI means an external evaluation of the progress made by the BCI towards its Long Term Objectives and Goals.

The entire Better Cotton System will be externally evaluated at the end of 2012 to determine whether it has delivered the desired results and impacts. Progress towards the 2012 Goals and the Long term Objectives will both be evaluated, as will the effectiveness of the strategies employed to meet them, particularly the Better Cotton System. The BCI wants to learn from 3 years of doing to be able to make any necessary adjustments to improve both the Better Cotton System, and the way the BCI Association operates. The findings of the evaluation will be reported to BCI members, and a summary made publicly available.

Learning

The learning derived from monitoring and evaluating is important for both BCI's internal operations as well as for sharing with other interested stakeholders, such as members and other standard systems and agricultural initiatives.

MEL provides the framework for learning what is working, and what needs to be changed. While there will be an evaluation conducted at the end of 2012 to learn from specifically, the BCI also undertakes a continuous improvement approach, and any learning from the results of on-going monitoring that identify a need to adapt how the Better Cotton System works is incorporated by the BCI into its plans and activities.

In particular, the BCI:

- Organises annual stakeholder workshops for BCI members
- Holds Council meetings at least twice per year
- Will undertake an internal review in the middle of 2011 that will involve a workshop with Implementing Partners and other key stakeholders.

Reporting

The BCI reports formally every year on progress made towards the BCI Long Term Objectives and 2012 Goals. This reporting is through a publicly available BCI Annual Report.

The BCI Annual Report contains information on:

- BCI Secretariat activities in the year
- Regional / National activities
- Farm Level and BCI Association Results Indicators.
- Overview of finances
- Current BCI members