

# BETTER COTTON ASSURANCE PROGRAM CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TEMPLATE FOR MEDIUM FARMS

APPLICABLE FROM 2014 HARVEST SEASON

ORIENTATION	<i>The Better Cotton Performance Scale for Medium Farms includes as Minimum Requirements the following (under Management Criteria): 'Continuous improvement plan available at PU level and reviewed by PU on annual basis'. This document supports Producer Unit in preparing their plan for each BCI Criteria.</i>
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BCI Production Criteria	Content of the Continuous Improvement Plan
<p>1.1 An Integrated Pest Management Programme is adopted that includes the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) growing of a healthy crop; and</li> <li>ii) prevention of build-up of pest populations and of the spread of disease;</li> <li>iii) preservation and enhancement of populations of beneficial organisms; and</li> <li>iv) regular field observations of the crop's health and key pest and beneficial insects; and</li> <li>v) management of resistance.</li> </ul>	<p>The Producer Unit has a locally adapted and time-bound plan based on agro-ecosystem analysis that provides the specific practices to implement the 5 principles of IPM.</p>
<p>1.2 Only pesticides that are: (i) registered nationally for the crop being treated; and (ii) correctly labelled in the national language, are used.</p>	<p>Planning is undertaken for the use of alternative pesticides to any non-registered or incorrectly labelled pesticides that may have been used - information on the legally-available alternative pesticides and on alternative methods.</p>
<p>1.3 Pesticides listed in Annex A and B of the Stockholm Convention are not used</p>	<p>Planning is undertaken for the use of alternative pesticides to any Stockholm-listed pesticides that may have been used - information on the legally-available alternative pesticides and on alternative methods.</p>
<p>1.4 Pesticides are prepared and applied by persons who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) healthy; and</li> <li>(ii) skilled and trained in the application of pesticides; and</li> <li>(iii) 18 or older; and</li> <li>(iv) not pregnant or nursing</li> </ul>	<p>Instances where pesticides are not applied in accordance with the criterion are identified. Details included on how the Producer Unit will ensure that unhealthy people, people without training, people below the age of 18 and pregnant or nursing women do not prepare and apply pesticides with specific reference to who is allowed to prepare and spray pesticides. Producer Unit has a system in place to document worker age and tasks</p>
<p>1.5 Use of pesticides in any of the following categories: (i) WHO list of hazardous pesticides Class 1a and 1b, (ii) those listed in Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention,</p> <p>is phased out, with the timeline based on the availability of better alternatives and ability for the risk to be properly managed</p>	<p>If pesticides listed in the Criterion are being used, details on how to use alternative pesticides and alternative methods – phasing out plan in place with clear timelines.</p>

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1.6 Pesticides are always prepared and applied by persons who correctly use appropriate protective and safety equipment	<p>Details on how to correctly use appropriate protective and safety equipment when preparing and applying pesticides, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use of appropriate PPE in accordance with the pesticide being used and its label requirements</li> <li>• label instructions are followed</li> <li>• proper maintenance and cleaning of PPE</li> <li>• use of appropriate preparation and application methods</li> <li>• applicators have access to appropriate facilities for washing themselves after handling/applying pesticides</li> </ul>
1.7 Pesticide application equipment and containers are stored, handled and cleaned so as to avoid environmental harm and human exposure	<p>Details on the development of appropriate storage, handling and cleaning facilities / techniques. The plan includes specific actions to be undertaken for safe storage, handling and cleaning, and the timeframes for their implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pesticides should be stored and transported safely in their original transport containers and kept in designated safe areas out of reach of children.</li> <li>• Pesticide containers should not be re-used for any purposes.</li> <li>• Empty pesticides containers should be stored, labelled and handled appropriately and securely until they are collected /disposed of.</li> <li>• Spills cannot seep into water supplies</li> </ul> <p>Plan also includes how to maintain up-to date manifest of pesticides stored and movements in stock. Storage area should be secure, appropriately located and signed in accordance with legislative /regulatory requirements. A dedicated area should be use for preparing pesticides / cleaning equipment and containers that is appropriately located and equipped to handle spills (away from water course/other sensitive areas, absorbent material, clean-up equipment on hand). There should be access to running water and a suitably equipped first aid kit. A basic emergency plan should be established that details how to respond to spills/leaks/poisoning.</p>
1.8 Pesticides are applied in appropriate weather conditions, according to label directions and or manufacturer's directions, with appropriate and well-maintained equipment	<p>Details on how pesticide applications are to be carried out, taking into account the need to apply them in appropriate weather conditions, in accordance with label directions and using appropriate and well-maintained equipment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applications should be made taking into account the potential effects on surrounding areas.</li> <li>• Re-entry periods should be adhered to.</li> <li>• Equipment should be used only if good condition.</li> <li>• Weather conditions should be monitored (and records kept) before pesticides are applied and during the application</li> <li>• Records should be maintained and stop/go parameters abided by.</li> </ul>
1.9 Used pesticide containers are collected by a recycling programme, or disposed of safely	<p>Details how the proper storage / disposal / recycling of empty pesticide containers will be undertaken safely, including time-frame</p>

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2.1 Rain fed cotton: Water management practices are adopted that optimise water use	Details on the management practices to capture rain fall / store and conserve moisture in the soil to be implemented. For rain-fed farms, optimising the use of water revolves around ensuring that water that falls on the farm can be captured on the farm and used by the crop. Use of cover crops, adopting a conservation tillage farming system, retaining crop stubble where possible, slowing the speed at which water flows across the farm (which will also help control erosion) and opportunity cropping are examples of ways to optimise water use.
2.1 Irrigated: Water management practices are adopted that optimise water use	<p>Details on how irrigation system is to be managed and monitored, including the irrigation scheduling programme (how irrigation timing is to be determined so as to optimise water use), and for pressurised systems, the system maintenance programme and schedule. For irrigation farms, optimising the use of water requires consideration of the range of issues noted above for rain-fed cotton farming, as well as the consideration of every stage of water movement, from the initial extraction of the water, to its application and use by the crop, to the recycling of any water that runs off the crop. Thus optimisation of water use includes good management of storage and delivery systems, as well as of the irrigation of the crop itself.</p> <p>Irrigation should be based on crop need and appropriate soil water monitoring tools should be used. Pressurised irrigation system should be maintained regularly and records maintained on irrigation timing (date of irrigation) and water applied for each field.</p>
2.2 Management practices are adopted to ensure that water extraction does not cause adverse effects on groundwater or water bodies	Potential impacts are identified. Details on the management practices to minimise adverse effects on groundwater or water bodies to be implemented. Details of how ground-water extraction impacts will be monitored. Record of the volume of water extracted should be maintained.
3.1 Soil management practices are adopted that maintain and enhance the structure and fertility of the soil	<p>Soil structure problems are identified. Details on the management practices to maintain and enhance soil structure and to increase soil organic matter content to be implemented (e.g. zero tillage, cover crops, crop residue maintenance and use of crop/legume rotations, choice of tillage equipment, etc.)</p> <p>Identified soil structural problems should be addressed through appropriate management practices.</p>
3.2 Nutrients are applied on the basis of crop and soil needs. Timing, placement and quantity applied are all optimised.	<p>Details on how soil and crop monitoring is conducted to determine nutrient application types, rates and timing;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nutrients should be applied on the basis of identified crop and soil need. Application should be appropriate to the type of nutrient being applied and the growth stages of the crop.</li> </ul> <p>Details on the use of nutrient budget that takes into account leaf / soil tests and nutrient availability from previous crops (nutrient removal / fixing) and fertiliser applications (i.e. field history). The nutrient budget should be used to inform nutrient applications and long-term nutrition</p>

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	trends monitored.
3.3 Management practices are adopted that minimise erosion, so that soil movement is minimised and water courses, drinking water sources and other bodies of water are protected from farm run-off.	Details on the management practices to be adopted that will help control water flows and erosion, and to repair any serious existing erosion problems (gullies). Regular monitoring of areas that are at risk of eroding and of areas with an existing erosion problem should be conducted. Areas with visual signs of erosion should be actively managed with appropriate control practices.
4.1 Practices are adopted that enhance biodiversity on and surrounding the farm	Details of the practices to enhance biodiversity on and surrounding the farm, and to control invasive species to be implemented. To lessen their impact on biodiversity, cotton farmers can conserve or restore areas of natural habitat on their land. The protection of riparian land – the land surrounding water bodies – is particularly important, as it is often the most fertile and productive part of the landscape. It is important that riparian land is protected from farm run-off and that it is not cleared of vegetation. Removal of riparian vegetation can lead to the destabilisation of stream and river banks, and increased erosion. Management practices adopted to help achieve other Criteria, such as IPM, pesticide choice (using the least disruptive option), soil fertility, and erosion control, will all contribute to enhancing biodiversity both on and off the farm. Opportunities to provide or enhance off-farm biodiversity through local/national producer collaboration may be possible, and should be explored
4.2 The use and conversion of land to grow cotton conforms with national legislation related to agricultural land use.	Details of the specific legislative requirements to ensure that use of the land and any planned conversion complies with national legislation; How to ensure that any changes in the legislation become known and incorporated in the plan to respect national legislation. Cotton should be grown only on legally used and converted land.
5.1 Management practices are adopted that maximise the fibre quality	Details of the identified management practices for maximising fibre quality (such as varietal selection, planting date, harvest date, water, weed and nutrition management). Varieties appropriate for the region should be planted in the recommended planting time period.
5.2 Seed cotton is harvested, managed, and stored to minimise trash, contamination and damage	<p>Operations that pose a risk of contaminating seed cotton are identified. Details of the practices for harvesting, storing and transporting seed cotton so as to avoid contamination, including written procedures for machinery management programme (e.g. protocols for machinery set-up, maintenance and hygiene) focused on minimising contamination. Cotton should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harvested using appropriate management practices especially regarding the use of non-contaminating harvest bags,</li> <li>• Stored using appropriate management practices especially regarding the use of clean storage areas, and segregation according to quality;</li> <li>• Transported so as to prevent contamination.</li> <li>• Machinery management programme is followed</li> </ul>

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6.1 Smallholders (including tenants, share-croppers and other categories) have the right, on a voluntary basis, to establish and develop organisations representing their interests	Details on how to ensure that smallholders (including tenants, share-croppers and other categories) can establish and develop or join organisations representing their interests.
6.2 Access to potable and washing water is provided.	Details on how to provide potable and washing water in an appropriate manner over a defined timeframe. Drinking and washing water facilities should be placed within reasonable proximity to the workplace and accessible to all.
6.3 There is no child labour, in accordance with ILO Convention 138.(See ILO Convention 138)	<p>Instances where child labour does or is likely to occur are identified. Details on how to proactively prevent children below the national minimum age to working on the farm, including a procedure for checking age of workers and/or requiring age documentation for employees as a condition of employment and keeping documentation on record.</p> <p>Details on how existing child labour will be removed in an appropriate manner (corrective actions avoid harming children or their families; children are transferred to education, the income of the family is compensated by either employing the parent of the child labourers or by other means) with a specified timeframe for completion.</p>
6.4 For hazardous work, the minimum age is 18 years of age	In accordance with national legislation activities in the cotton cultivation cycle which are deemed to constitute hazardous labour are identified. Details on how persons below the age of 18 shall not carry out hazardous work (any work which is likely to jeopardise children' physical, mental or moral health, safety or morals) with specific reference to who is allowed to prepare and spray pesticides. Procedure should be in place to document worker age and tasks.
6.5 Employment is freely chosen: no forced or compulsory labour, including bonded or trafficked labour	Details on how to ensure that employment is freely chosen. All workers should be employed on a voluntary basis on terms that respects local laws. Producers shall not bind workers to employment as a condition of fulfilling terms of a debt to a third party or to the producer. Any wage advances given to the workers in order to secure employment should be interest free, of reasonable value, documented and should not contribute to bonded labour. Workers shall retain possession or control of their identity cards, identity papers, travel documents, or any other personal documents such as land deeds or house mortgage. Producers shall not retain any such documents or restrict workers' access to them for any reason whatsoever, including in order to ensure that workers shall remain in employment in the farm.
6.6 There is no discrimination (distinction, exclusion, or preference) practised that denies or impairs equality of opportunity, conditions, or treatment based on individual characteristics and group membership or association.	The most common forms of discrimination and the minority and majority groups are identified. Forms of discrimination may include but are not limited to gender based wage discrimination, ethnicity/caste/gender based work allocation, access to facilities and any kind of harassment including sexual harassment. Details on how to improve the position of the disadvantaged groups in an appropriate manner with a specified timeframe for completion.

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6.7 All workers and employers have the right to set up and join organisations of their own choosing, and to draw up their constitutions and rules, to elect their representatives and to formulate their programmes	Details on how to ensure that employers do not interfere in the matters of workers organisations and respect all laws, rules and procedures governing freedom of association under the ILO conventions. If no active and recognised organisations is able to work in the area, it is recommended that employers encourage the workers to democratically elect a worker's organisation which represents them and which negotiates with the employer to defend their rights and interests. Employers should recognise in writing and practice the right of workers to set up and join organisations of their own choosing without prior authorisation.
6.8 Workers and employers have the right to bargain collectively	Details on how employer will promote and facilitate the establishment of collective bargaining agreement if the workers and employer mutually agree to do so. Commitment to recognising in writing and practice the rights of workers and employers to bargain collectively.
6.9 Workers have the right to belong to a trade union and carry out lawful union activities without any fear of anti-union discrimination	<p>Details on how to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The workers are not under any pressure to join or not to join a particular organisation / committee</li> <li>• The workers will not be harassed or discriminated against should they choose to join a workers' organisation of their own choice.</li> </ul> <p>Employers should refrain from any acts of interference with worker's right to belong to a trade union. There should not be disciplinary action taken against union activities.</p>
6.10 Employers should provide access and reasonable facilities for workers' representatives	Details on how to ensure access and reasonable facilities for worker's representatives. Employers need to provide appropriate facilities upon request for representative's meetings with workers and for representatives to effectively carry out their function. Employers should allow trade unions not based at the farm to meet and share information with the workforce at an agreed time and place without interference.
6.11 Workers receive regular health and safety training appropriate to the work that they perform	Details on how employers will provide health and safety training to workers, specifying frequency and the scope.
6.12 Employers meet their workers' basic requirements, as specified above, including a clean place to eat and access to adequate medical care at no charge	Details on how employers provide workers' basic requirements. Employers should provide potable drinking water, clean toilets, a clean place to eat and access to adequate medical care for workers and their immediate families. Employers should also ensure that workers receive regular medical examination at the employer's expense. In case workers reside on the farms, the employers will ensure that living quarters are adequate, safe and do not pose any risks to the workers or their families.
6.13 Employers identify work hazards, inform workers on safe work practices and adopt preventive measures to minimise hazards in the workplace. Employers maintain records of any accidents and occupational diseases	Details on how to provide a safe working environment to workers. How to adopt and monitor preventive measures to minimize hazards in the workplace. How to ensure that danger areas, activities and substances are well marked. How and when to inform workers on safe work practices. How to ensure that record of any accidents and occupational diseases in the work place are complete and up to date.
6.14 Employers ensure that measures are in place to deal with accidents and emergencies, including first aid and access to appropriate transportation to medical facilities	Details of the procedures for first aid and how appropriate transportation to medical facilities will be undertaken if required. Adequate first aid supplies and trained first aid personnel should be available on farms. How to reach medically competent personnel in case of emergencies.

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6.15 Waged workers are paid wages at least equivalent to the applicable legal national minimum wage or regional norm, whichever is higher	Details on how employer ensures waged workers are paid in accordance with the criterion, with a defined timeframe. Details of how any negotiating process between employers and workers' representatives will be initiated.
6.16 Where workers are paid at a piece-rate, this rate permits the worker to earn the applicable national minimum wage or regional norm (whichever is higher) during normal working hours and under normal operating conditions	Details on how employer ensures piece-rate workers are paid in accordance with the criterion over a defined timeframe. Details of how any negotiating process between employers and workers' representatives on piece-rate payment will be initiated. Piece rate workers should receive the negotiated price for piece-rate work and this rate permits the worker to earn the applicable national minimum wage or regional norm whichever is higher.
6.17 Workers are paid regularly in cash, or in a form that is convenient to them	Details on how to ensure that payment are made regularly, in a timely manner and in form previously agreed by workers. Receipt of in-kind payment should be voluntary and all payments properly documented.
6.18 The principle of equal pay for work of equal value is observed	Details on how to ensure equal pay for work of equal value. Remuneration for the work performed should be documented and signed by the recipient.
6.19 The worker's consent is obtained in advance as regards all working conditions	Details on how to ensure that all workers are aware of their rights and duties, responsibilities, salaries, starting date, hiring period, and work schedules. Employers should obtain in advance worker's consent on all working conditions through written contracts. Where legislation does not require written contracts, worker's consent on all working conditions may be obtained verbally.
6.20 Workers are employed under legally binding (preferably written) contracts of employment	Details on how to ensure that legally binding contracts of employment are given to workers. All workers should have written contracts unless where national legislation states that employment contracts for relevant form of work (permanent, fixed term, seasonal) may be verbal.
6.21 Adequate records are kept in accordance with national law, but in any event sufficient to enable monitoring	<p>Details on how to ensure that correct employment records are available on farm. The records shall be kept in accordance with national law.</p> <p>At a minimum records should include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on wages (including form of payment),</li> <li>• Date of birth (age),</li> <li>• Gender,</li> <li>• Working times (working hours and overtime),</li> <li>• Date of entry and period of employment; and</li> <li>• Number of permanent/seasonal workers.</li> </ul>
6.22 Temporary, seasonal and (sub-) contracted workers receive equivalent benefits and employment conditions to permanent workers in relation to their period of employment	Details on how employer provides equivalent benefits and employment conditions to all workers in relation to their period of employment over a defined timeframe.
6.23 Working hours comply with national laws or relevant collective agreements, whichever is more favourable to the worker	Details on how employer ensures that a sufficient labour force is in place to do the work within working hours with limited need for overtime. How agreement between workers and employers on overtime work will be reached.
6.24 Overtime work is voluntary and remunerated in accordance with the law or applicable collective agreements	Details on how employer ensures that a sufficient labour force is in place to do the work within working hours with limited need for overtime. How agreement between workers and employers on overtime work will be reached.



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6.25 Employers do not engage in or tolerate the use of corporal punishment, mental or physical coercion, sexual or other harassment or physical or verbal abuse of any kind.	Details on how employer ensures basic treatment of workers. The workplace should be free from any type of punishment, coercion, harassment and abuse.
6.26 There is a transparent and clear policy and system for disciplinary measures and this is communicated to workers. The system includes fair warning principles and any disciplinary actions are proportionate to the conduct in question.	Details on how to communicate to workers a transparent and clear policy for disciplinary measures. The policy provides a clear statement of what constitutes acceptable behaviour in the workplace and establish a fair and transparent framework to follow where there are allegations of misconduct. Workers should have a clear understanding of what behaviours lead to disciplinary action and what those disciplinary actions will be. The disciplinary actions should be progressive in nature (from verbal warning –written warning – notice termination). The employer should have an appeal mechanism in the farms with the involvement of credible local organisations. Fairness and transparency in disciplinary practices is observed by the employer in accordance with national laws and collective agreements.