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## **Regional Work Group – Meeting objectives**

- Shared understanding of the relevant and technical aspects of current research, field initiatives and projects in West Africa, and how they contribute to sustainable cotton production.
- Shared understanding about the goals of BCI, the role of the Working Groups, and the draft environmental social & economic global principles of Better Cotton, and their relevance to family agriculture
- Confirmation of the significance and applicability of the global principles within the Better Cotton Global Framework
- Comments received about the proposed criteria for each of the Principles
- Identification of current standard practices and recommended best practices for soil, water, pest and disease management
- Identification of current notable and effective practices in promoting producer organisation, access to equitable forms of finance and decent work
- Discussion and identification of what constitutes decent work in West African cotton cultivation
- Identification of constraints (financial and geographical) on the adoption of tools that exist to achieve the draft Better Cotton principles
- Identifying and gaining a better understanding of current initiatives working with smallholder cotton farmers – such as organic cotton and Fairtrade – to address socio-economic challenges, and identifying the potential relationship that could exist between these initiatives and Better Cotton

## **Summary of presentations to the Regional Working Group Meeting**

### **A. Introduction**

Within the framework of the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), the aim of setting up a Regional Working Group is to ensure that “Better Cotton” is developed in close collaboration with local organisations. It is also the aim of BCI to involve the cotton companies, the governments, the cotton growers' representatives, researchers, intergovernmental agencies and non-governmental organisations in the Regional Working Group.

The main objective of the Regional Working Group's meeting is therefore to start defining “Better Cotton” – in both its social and environmental aspects – in the six countries involved in the region in question: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Senegal and Togo. The participants in the meeting represent the major stakeholders concerned with regard to the economic, environmental and social sustainability of cotton cultivation.

To begin the task of defining “Better Cotton”, the participants drew inspiration from a series of presentations as well as group discussions.

### **B. The growers' viewpoint – presentation by AProCA**

Mr. François Traoré, President of AProCA, observed that a bilateral agreement of principle between AProCA and BCI has existed since the introductory workshop held in Bamako (July 2007)<sup>1</sup> regarding a regional partnership on joint objectives and provisional principles.

BCI is a global initiative with West and Central Africa<sup>2</sup> (including Cameroon) as one of its pilot regions. In this region, AProCA is the primary partner for the initiative, representing the cotton producer organisations (CGOs) in its member

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<sup>1</sup> In July 2007, a joint workshop was held with AProCA in order to introduce the Better Cotton Initiative and explain the thinking behind it to local producers. A Report of this meeting is available to download from : [www.bettercotton.org/site.php?8,37](http://www.bettercotton.org/site.php?8,37) and [www.aproca.net](http://www.aproca.net)

<sup>2</sup> The proposal to change the name of the Regional Working Group (RWG) to «West and Central Africa » has been submitted to and agreed by the BCI Steering Committee. The RWG will henceforth be called West and Central Africa RWG.

states; the initiative is consistent with AProCA's strategic objectives, and therefore provides an option / opportunity for its members.

One of the conclusions of the Bamako workshop was to share the results and to request the other stakeholders involved in the cotton chain to express their opinions in the framework of the Regional Working Group. This Regional Working Group is mandated<sup>3</sup> to convey their opinions and recommendations to BCI.

### **C. Introduction of the Better Cotton Initiative - presentation by BCI**

BCI is a collaborative project aimed at promoting significant improvements in the key social and environmental impacts related to cotton production.

In order to measure the impact of strategies and tools used at local level, and evaluate the global success of strategies implemented, BCI will use suitable indicators at a regional level.

#### **The vision**

To enable millions of farmers around the world to grow cotton in a way that is healthier for the farming community and the environment, and more economical.

#### **The mission**

BCI encourages the adoption of better management practices in cotton cultivation to achieve measurable reductions in key environmental impacts, while improving social and economic benefits for cotton farmers and their communities worldwide.

BCI is a multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at promoting best practice in the management of cotton growing throughout the world. The initiative promotes a measurable improvement of the principal social and environmental impacts related to the growing of cotton in the framework of a participative process. In order to achieve this objective, certain general principles and criteria of the "Better Cotton" concept are defined and accompanied by specific tools and strategies adapted to each region where the project is implemented.

The Better Cotton Initiative Steering Committee includes representatives of the following organisations: The United Nations' Environmental Programme (UNEP), the brands adidas, IKEA, H&M and Gap Inc., as well as the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF), ICCO, Pesticide Action Network-UK and Organic Exchange. Discussion with some cotton growers' organisations and international financial institutions are underway and it is hoped that the Steering Committee will soon include representatives of these sectors in its membership.

Even though "Better Cotton" is seeking to be a global concept, the BCI Steering Committee has taken a decision to concentrate its initial efforts in a restricted number of cotton-growing regions in order to evaluate the project's global feasibility. The regions in question are Brazil, India, Pakistan and West Africa. BCI's Regional Working Groups for Brazil and Pakistan have already met, and the Indian Regional Working Group is currently under construction. A decision was taken in conjunction with the Association des Producteurs de Coton Africains (AProCA) that the West African Regional task group would focus on the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Senegal and Togo.

BCI has set up a framework and a strategic agenda to enable it to achieve its mission. A list of its major accomplishments to date include:

- Setting up a management structure and definition of the roles of the steering committee and other stakeholder groups.
- Carrying out impact studies in initially planned regions (Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, India, Mali and Pakistan),

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<sup>3</sup> The role envisaged for the RWG was presented to participants.

- Holding the initial meeting of the Pakistan Regional Working Group,
- Holding the initial meeting of the Brazil Regional Working Group,
- Definition of the various stakeholder categories to enable all interested parties to participate in the BCI; and
- Development of a global framework to define “Better Cotton” including some of the general principles.

BCI considers that it is essential to work with the various stakeholders involved in the entire supply chain.

Furthermore, given that the initiative is centred on cotton cultivation, it is fundamental to work together with local cotton farmers and experts to define “Better Cotton” in order to ensure that the overall framework of BCI is compatible with local needs and specificities.

Other values to be taken into consideration by BCI are as follows:

- Recognise the diversity of themes related to the growing of cotton and the diversity of geographic zones involved. In order to carry out the work from a global perspective, BCI aims to concentrate its efforts on a few major cotton-growing-related problems, as expressed below in the draft list of principles.
- Recognise that the capacity to reduce the impacts related to cotton growing vary according to region and farming method.
- Seek to develop an open, participative and collaborative process, aimed at engaging the stakeholders in a constructive dialogue, with a view to defining, developing and supporting the implementation of “Better Cotton”.
- Take on board the desire of many governments to avoid the introduction of new standards, unless they result in significant benefits for the farmers.
- Focus on mass cotton production rather than creating a niche product.
- Favour capacity building with regard to policy development or means of monitoring / control.

### **The Better Cotton Principles (draft)**

Principle :	Broad goal which we hope to achieve (high level ‘what’)
Criteria :	Key elements that must be met to achieve principle (‘detailed what’)
Tools:	Tools that can be used by cotton growers to comply with the criteria
Implementation strategy:	How tools and/or resources will be provided to farmers
Indicators:	Measurements used to indicate whether criteria are met

### **Environmental Principles**

Better Cotton is produced by farmers who:

- Maintain the quality and availability of water
- Use pesticides safely and responsibly
- Care for the health of the soil
- Care for and preserve the quality of the fibre
- Preserve natural habitats

### **Socio-economic Principles**

Social principles:

- Better Cotton Initiative will facilitate producer organisation

- Better Cotton Initiative will respect and promote Decent Work

Economic principle:

- Better Cotton Initiative will facilitate access to equitable finance

## **Note as regards “Decent work”**

BCI is working in the context of the exchange between several countries and involves many different actors. The political, social, economic and cultural contexts vary from one region to another, as do the production constraints and capacities of growers. It is therefore important to provide a definition of decent work that takes the diversity of these situations into account.

### **Questions and answers regarding BCI's presentation:**

1. *How were the private members of BCI selected? What are the roles and commitments of the various actors of the initiative? Why is Oxfam no longer a member?*

A Steering Committee comprising multinational corporations, development institutions and technical and financial partners supports BCI. It also has private partners who are potential buyers of Better Cotton.

A consultative approach is used to formulate the concept (principles, criteria, tools, strategies, indicators) to ensure its implementation in the African context as well as in other pilot regions.

Oxfam was forced to withdraw from the Steering Committee due to a lack of human resources. BCI is however working towards their re-inclusion in the committee via the team based in Dakar.

2. *How can a standard be developed when there is no certification system? What use are criteria if there is no label?*

The focus is on achieving positive environmental, social and economic impacts for cotton farmers by sharing and realising tested best practice. For example, BCI takes a neutral position regarding all available technological options that produce positive results. BCI's position in the cotton sector is to promote Better Cotton within the mainstream of cotton cultivation. BCI aims to be complementary to other initiatives (organic cotton, Fairtrade cotton, Cotton made in Africa) while also potentially providing a springboard toward these initiatives.

3. *How do you develop a market without dealing with the question of commerce (French: “questions commerciales”)? At Bamako, it was mentioned that BCI would find / initiate markets? As regards the supply chain, it is necessary to have one to sell to before the goods are produced; how can goods be produced if there is no guaranteed market?*

BCI does not lobby on the basis of trade policies (e.g. WTO) or national policy reform. However, in as much as the market is concerned, there will also be a commercial involvement. There is something of a linguistic misunderstanding involved, in that the French term “commercial” is the translation of the English term “trade policy” (as in WTO policies, for example).

BCI is invited by the Regional Working Group to work with its partners, (cotton distribution companies, potential BCI cotton buyers), to enable them to be put in direct contact with cotton-producers' organisations in order to discuss questions such as quantity, price, certification and commercial strategies. The producer reference group will have the opportunity to engage in a phase of reflection with the companies during the up-coming global stakeholder's meeting in May. The same holds for the second meeting of the Regional Working Group, planned to take place in November 2008 in Ouagadougou, which will bring together the participants of the Regional Working Group and the representatives of private sector members (multinational corporations) who are part of the BCI Steering Committee.

BCI is involved in developing a market for Better Cotton through the participation of its four existing commercial members (multinationals), as well as by actively seeking commitments from new partners. In this regard, BCI has obtained assurance from one of its commercial members that it wants 100% of their cotton fibre needs, as of 2015, to be “Better Cotton”. The three other commercial members of BCI have publicly declared their intentions, but without committing to quantities, that they will source Better Cotton as soon as it becomes available.

4. *There is no objective as far as a label/certification is concerned: this is a grave issue if efforts are being made in the field without specific market recognition.*

BCI does not seek to deliver a label/certificate, as is the case in vertically-integrated supply chains aimed at niche markets. Better Cotton does not intend to develop a specific “label”, but neither will it prevent retailers from using

Better Cotton as a reference or even as a label in their marketing approach. BCI does not however have a direct mandate to do so directly.

A system of verification and control is planned for the supply chain in terms of hoped-for impacts on farming (it will be efficient, credible and simple). The companies that are members as well as other BCI partners and the Cotton Producers' Organisations can publicise the concept in their marketing strategy in order to raise consumer awareness.

5. *Concern was expressed about the designation « Better Cotton Initiative » West African region. It is necessary to take the whole region, including the Cameroon into consideration.*

The BCI team expressed their agreement to present a proposal to modify the name of the Working Group to the BCI Steering Committee. This proposal has since been accepted and the group shall now become known as the « West and Central African Regional Working Group ».

6. *How will the project be implemented? What are the plans in terms of the urgent needs expressed? Another point is to find an adequate balance between the ambitions expressed by BCI (in terms of standards to be reached) and the means required for a sustainable follow-up of producer's organisations and establishing a system for verification and control.*

The implementation strategy involves capacity building on small-holdings as well as within the producers' organisations (including on the subject of defending their own interests, and influencing policy-making). This is all with a view to respecting certain standards. Implementation will be carried out in partnership with other structures such as WWF in Pakistan.

BCI will continue to make information available and to share information on good agricultural practice. BCI has seed-money available to contribute to pilot schemes as of 2009. A strategy for mobilising resources is in progress.

7. *Questions related to the 'ownership' of BCI by producer organisations and the question of accountability were discussed. There was a request for clarification on the initial hypothesis for implementation / roadmap : what do the producers' organisations stand to gain compared with their current situation ? What are the interests of the different stakeholders?*

AProCA noted several aspects in its own strategy that are complementary to BCI's objectives: producers should benefit from all the different initiatives, including BCI, in terms of mutually advantageous aspects. AProCA is interested in learning general lessons from each initiative and in taking the positive points from each one on board. For example, the lessons learned and both directly and indirectly concerning cotton in Burkina Faso, where the length of the fibre was not a fact that was known on the American market.

8. *Why is there no mention made of financial premium? What about the fair price of products sold?*

BCI is trying to develop change within the mainstream of cotton cultivation. By working within the framework of a « traceable » chain (that is therefore fully vertically integrated) of the sort that is necessary to effect a premium payment, it would be difficult to influence the market in terms of volume. BCI is interested in those structures that strengthen economic capacities, and recognises that it would be difficult to promote standards without additional means. BCI believes that it is necessary to support capacity building. The question is therefore: How is it possible to reinforce capacities in the framework of structures involved in mainstream cultivation?

The first social principle is to enable producer organisation. On this question, AProCA is BCI's key partner. BCI is also aware that all the other actors in the chain need to become involved.

BCI considers that the potential benefits to African growers are as follows:

- Improved quality
- Improved crops, reduced overhead expenses and increased profits
- Strengthening of capacity of producer organisations (support in negotiation)
- Bringing together market offer and demand
- Facilitating access to finance

- Promoting sustainable long-term agriculture (soil fertility, healthy environment)
- Improved health of farmers / agricultural labourers and their families and communities
- Improved access to information (on price etc.)
- Promoting a participatory approach

9. *'Technology neutral': this expression is vague. Explain please.*

GMO technology: BCI does not wish to dictate to growers which technologies are best for them.

10. *One difficulty remains: what is the originality of BCI ? There are already systems set up that provided these benefits.*

The scale of the intervention (the participation of actors on a global scale) and its aims are the aspects that differentiate BCI from other projects. There are actors who co-ordinate resources at farm level. The limits of « organic cotton » and « Fairtrade cotton » are translated by the difficulty in meeting mass market demands. This explains why BCI is focusing on change at farm level. BCI presented the potential gains as listed above.

One of the participants, a producer, added that according to his understanding, the originality of the initiative also included:

- The focus on the improved quality and increased yield, which is not always the case with other initiatives
- A non-interventionist approach in national cotton sector policies: it is not a given that the results of policy changes are always advantageous to growers
- The scale of the initiative : BCI aims to improve the production of conventional cotton and develop mainstream production, not niche markets
- No certification : BCI wants to avoid heavy certification processes as practised today
- Exchange of information : BCI wants to develop and disseminate the results of research and practical tools for growers
- Participative approach: BCI and its stakeholders are committed to a « joint recipe » for Better Cotton.

11. *What are the financial levers that BCI intends activating?*

In terms of finance: For the moment BCI is in the process of recruiting someone to mobilise additional resources. BCI has not defined the budget that is currently available. BCI hopes to provide more specific information at the next meeting.

12. *As a result of reforms, the structural organisation of the cotton sector in the region varies significantly from one country to the next. Is BCI interested in the question of these reforms of our sector because the impact can only be evaluated at country level?*

The reform of the sector has created the structures and the context within which BCI is going to work. But BCI cannot become involved in the debate, even if BCI recognises the changing context is very important. BCI does not hold an institutional position on this question.

13. *How will the question of maintaining the fertility of soil be handled? (It is necessary to pay heed to the evaluation models already in use).*

By following up on the % results on soil. Initially it will be necessary to underline the importance of defining practice then in the following 3-4 years it will be possible to work on systems to measure the various practices.



## **D. Oral presentations by research scientists.**

These presentations are grouped according to overall themes as shown in the text that follows.

### ***Understanding the environmental aspects of cotton-growing***

#### **1. Soil management (problems/constraints and practical solutions for improving soil fertility and reducing erosion). M. Célestin Kaboré, FAO.**

The results of the best agricultural practice learned in farmers' field schools are satisfactory and should be taken into account by farmers. A programme of activities other than cotton-growing have been carried out at sub-regional level in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal. The objectives of the first phase being to:

- Re-inforce national systems of general agricultural education
- Promote existing expertise of farmers
- Improve the income of farmers with small holdings by sustainable agriculture that is more respectful of human and animal health and the environment.

The methodology was that of farmers' field-schools, a participative process involving a forum for exchanging experience and knowledge, a participative process, training throughout the growing season for 20-25 participants with shared interests, training once a week, comparative results of current practice and IPM (results proven by research), on plots managed by the trainees in the group.

Whereas the programme has recently been oriented towards cotton-growing, it is hoped to continue during the 2008-9 campaign and train 20 more trainers, as well as over 1000 farmers. The programme has been extended to the East and South-West of Burkina.

Questions on methodology followed Mr. Kaboré's presentation.

#### **2. Pesticide management. A general overview of the system and of possible improvements (imports, distribution, application, matters of hygiene and safety, destruction of used containers) Abou Thiam, PAN-Afrique.**

The presentation underlined the history of pesticides in the sector in the sub-region. With the current difficulties in the sector, efforts are being made to cut production costs. The sums allocated to research and innovation have also been considerably reduced, and growers are often offered pesticides of dubious quality. Yields have been stagnating for several decades. Phyto-sanitary protection represents 25-45% of overall costs in cotton growing. Loss due to pests runs at about 30% on average in spite of the means being used to prevent this.

The presenter recommended using more alternatives in order to reduce the quantities and to achieve a more rational approach to synthetic pesticides. Alternative methods to chemical products are all aimed at modifying the dynamics of pests by stopping their progression. The management of complex pest habitats is at the heart of the new phyto-sanitary approach. From PAN's point of view, and according to the principles of sustainable development, an agro-ecological approach to the management of agricultural systems should be favoured. It should take into account the fact that bio-diversity is the only means of guaranteeing the future of agricultural systems.

#### **3. Plant breeding (access to the best varieties of cotton, specific traits, potential role of GM cotton, threats and opportunities.) Dr. O Traoré, INERA**

The initial phase of experimentation with GMOs is finished, and there is an on-going follow-up of field experiments. Wider use in peasant agriculture could be envisaged.

The presentation concluded that the experiment in Burkina Faso on GMO (Bt) cotton is original for the following reasons:

- Burkina Faso is the first country in Africa (apart for South Africa) to try out this experiment.
- The gene has been inserted into local varieties, resulting in transformed local varieties.
- There is an integrated approach

Bt is not, however, a panacea from the research point of view. Research is continuing on: organic cotton (baculovirus), on conventional cotton (new insecticide molecules) and other genetically modified traits.

### ***Understanding work in the cotton sector***

#### **The role of growers' organisations and the needs of growers and their families (AProCA)**

This presentation underlined the fact that Producers' Organisations are essential actors in the development of the cotton sector. Towards the end of the 1980s, the Village Groups or Village Agricultural Groups move from the status of Producer Associations for collecting and commercialising cotton in certain countries, to becoming Cotton Producer Groups, the fundamental unit of cotton-growing. The essential mission of these organisations was the distribution of inputs to members as well as the initial collecting of seed cotton. Umbrella organisations took various forms depending on the country.

Over and above the main functions of the Producer Organisations already mentioned above, the key role of the umbrella groups in most countries was to represent grass-roots members. In this way various activities were implemented, depending on the degree of involvement and the power of the Producer Organisations in any given country. Some of them became involved in the management of the cotton companies as joint owners, with a correspondingly strong representation within the administrative and executive bodies of the branch, whereas others played a purely consultative role without exercising any real power.

There are four key challenges facing Cotton Producer Organisations today:

- At political, social and economic level: agricultural policies, management of the branch, guaranteeing income for farmers
- In terms of organisation by growers: structure and running of Producer Organisation and partnerships
- At production level: improving techniques, diversification and alternatives
- At environmental level: management of natural resources, soil protection etc.

### ***Understanding quality- and finance-related aspects of cotton growing in the region***

#### **1. The quality of cotton fibre: towards a cotton of undeniable quality (SODEFITEX)**

The implementation of a charter has enabled improved cotton to progress from 45-50% to 80%. It depends on the (BCI) content whether the charter meets BCI standards.

For SODEFITEX the factors of success in terms of quality cotton are as follows:

- Highly performing varieties
- Knowledge and correct application of technical requirements
- Early and careful manual harvest of cotton
- Conditioning of seed cotton in homogeneous lots
- Appropriate ginning based on results of sorting
- No polypropylene used during harvest, storage or transport of cotton seed, conditioning of fibre
- Quality approach shared by growers

## **2. Access to financial services (Jacques Sam, SNV Benin)**

An analysis of risks occurring during the production cycle was carried out in the case of Benin. Discussion covered productivity, financial and economic profitability of cotton, as well as the cotton-producing systems, the institutions and income management.

For the SNV, “equity in finance” should:

- Meet present needs without compromising the possibility for future generations to meet theirs (added value of the activity)
- Ensure that the most financially challenged receive their fair part of the resources produced (financial impacts of the activity)
- Implement change whereby the exploitation of resources, the choice of investments, the orientation of technical development as well as institutional change is decided on the basis of present and future needs (the need to save, to manage money in order to invest in other activities)

This presentation drew participants’ attention to financial variations and the situation of risk for growers at various levels: supplier loans for inputs, advance on sales (40%) payment of community work carried out in the fields, purchase of equipment and tools, sums paid to umbrella groups, the growing of other crops and other overheads.

### **E. Presentation of existing initiatives within the sector**

#### *1. Cotton Made in Africa (CmiA)*

This is an integrated approach to the sector with a public-private partnership, which has promoted a technological package aimed at improving income via the management of the Producers’ Organisations. The fact that CmiA and BCI are holding discussions with a view to establishing a partnership was noted.

#### *2. Fairtrade / FLO – Pascal Babin SNV*

The important support given to Producers’ Organisations in the Kita area has made it possible to meet FLO standards. It is possible to measure the impact in terms of increased farm incomes and community investments.

The presentation described the SNV-FLO partnership parameters in the cotton chain in Mali as follows:

- The project involved accompanying the Kita Producers’ Organisations (SCPC => UR-SCPC) on the basis of the complementary aspects of PBU (Producer Business Unit)-SNV-actors involved (CMDT)
- Key focus: go beyond information, approval and technical support and uphold a sustainable level in Producers’ Organisations
- Access to information: standards and consequences
- Systems of internal control
- Engagement with mainstream producer organisations and means of representation of fair trade producers
- Strengthening producer organisation

### 3. Comparative summary: BCI and other initiatives – Allan Williams and Alastair Usher

**Table 1 : Comparative summary of ‘sustainable cotton’ initiatives in the sub-region.**

<b>Agro-environmental aspects</b>	<b>Organic</b>	<b>Fairtrade</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>CmiA</b>	<b>Conv</b>
Pesticides, synthetic fertilizers?	N	FM <sup>4</sup>	FM	FM	—
GM cotton?	N	N	Y	?	Y
Water saving techniques?	N	Y	Y	Y	N
<b>Good agricultural practice</b>					
IPM	Y	Y	Y	Y	To be completed
Crop rotation	Y	Y	Y	Y	To be completed
Cover crops	Y	Y	Y	Y	To be completed
Soil erosion control	Y	Y	Y	Y	To be completed
Preservation of natural habitat	Y	Y	Y	Y	To be completed
<b>Socio-economic aspects</b>					
Premium?	Y	Y	N	N	N
Work standards?	?	Y	Y	Y	N
Alternative finance?	?	Y	Y	?	N
Producers' Organisations?	Y	Y	Y	?	To be completed
<b>Method &amp; quality aspects</b>					
Management of cotton-fibre quality	N	To be determined	Y	?	N
Verification at the farm?	Y	Y	To be determined	Y	N/A
Physical separation in the supply chain?	Y	Y	No but possible	?	No but possible
Garment/product label?	Y	Y	No but possible	Y	N/A

N.B. This overview is provided on a purely indicative basis, and needs to be completed.

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<sup>4</sup> Formal management

## What does Better Cotton mean for West Africa? A summary of replies made by the participants on the BCI Draft Principles.

The Regional Working Group was provided guidelines on the themes to be considered as well as on the other cotton-growing related impacts. The RWG was divided into 5 sub-groups, each working on a precise theme. The work of the various sub-groups is summarised in the following paragraphs. Initially each sub-group replied to a series of questions on environmental principles.

### Environmental principles

#### Group 1 : Water and soil management, and habitat preservation

1. Are the draft environmental principles applicable in your country? (If not, why?). Yes
2. Are the listed criteria relevant for this principle in your country? Yes
3. Are there any other important points that are not included in the criteria as defined? Yes
4. What is the best practice associated with each criterion? (see Table 2)

**Table 2 : Current and desirable practice in terms of criteria for water and soil management**

Criteria	Current practice	Proposals for BCI
Water management	<u>Irrigated crops</u> - bunds, - grass strips - drop by drop	Water and soil conservation techniques
	<u>Non irrigated</u> 'Boulis', dams, 'billons cloisonnés', 'demi lunes'	Management of contour lines to drain excess water
Drawing water	Various rules exist in each country regarding extraction of water	Strict compliance with the national and international rules governing water extraction
Management of erosion	Use of cover crops, stone, grass strips, ridges, pebble reaches	Use of cover crops, stone, grass strips, ridges, pebble reaches
Efficient management of fertilisers	Standard formulas do not always meet the needs of the plant	Study and propose extension formulas tailored to the soil agronomic zones, including use of animal manure
Habitats/ Ecosystems (improved bio-diversity)	Agroforestry, reforestation, introduction of wildlife, living hedges	Agroforestry, reforestation, (wind breaks and hedges), compliance with environmental laws, avoiding farming in the immediate vicinity of houses

5. What are the reasons for non-adoption of the recommended best practice? And what needs to be changed / done for farmers to do so?
  - Financial means and equipment
  - Make fertilizer and equipment available
  - Facilitate access to loans
6. Are there any practices associated with the criterion that you believe are essential to qualify for better cotton? No.

7. Are there any practices associated with the criterion that should disqualify as better cotton? (eg. use of particular pesticides) Yes

## **Group 2 Quality of fibre**

1. Is the draft environmental principle applicable in your country? Yes
2. Are the listed criteria relevant for this principle in your country? Yes
3. Are there any other important points that are not included in the criteria as defined? Yes, ginning, and storage and transport of fibre
4. What is the best practice associated with each criterion (see Table 3 below)?

**Table 3. Best practice according to criteria for the management of the quality of fibres.**

Criteria	Good practice
Agronomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agronomic research established</li> <li>- Respect of planned plantation</li> <li>- Sowed at correct date</li> <li>- Correct density</li> <li>- Quality seeds</li> <li>- Plots well maintained</li> <li>- Plots fertilised correctly and at correct time</li> <li>- Phytosanitary application when and where required</li> </ul>
Harvesting and storage of cotton seed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early harvest in several passes</li> <li>- No polypropylene bags</li> <li>- Sorted as picked</li> <li>- Clean storage (fields, concessions, collection points)</li> </ul>
Handling cotton seed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No polypropylene at market or during transport</li> <li>- Cleanliness of market</li> <li>- Purchase based on quality</li> <li>- Price differential based on quality</li> <li>- Different qualities sorted when loaded</li> </ul>
Ginning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cleanliness of area for storage (warehousing) of cotton seed</li> <li>- Cotton seed stored according to quality</li> <li>- Cotton seed ginned according to quality</li> <li>- Control of ginning speed</li> <li>- Well maintained equipment</li> <li>- Cleanliness of gin</li> <li>- Cotton bales wrapped in cotton</li> <li>- Use of galvanised steel or other quicklink that does not affect packaging</li> <li>- Reliable sampling and classification of fibre</li> </ul>
Storing and transport of fibre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cleanliness of storage areas</li> <li>- Covered storage areas</li> <li>- Covered transport</li> </ul>

5. What are the reasons for non-adoption of the recommended best practice? And what needs to be changed / done for farmers to do so?

Reasons for not adopting best practice:

- Constraints related to rainfall
- Lack of agricultural equipment
- No access to inputs at the required date (seed, fertiliser, phyto-sanitary products)
- No loans available
- High cost of inputs
- Late markets
- Late payment
- Price too low and not motivating to sort cotton

- No bags other than polypropylene available at time of harvest
- No quality charter in some countries
- Lack of training and information

Actions to be taken:

- Reinforce growers' capacities (training, information)
- Introduce a quality charter
- Make inputs, equipment, cotton or other non-polluting harvesting bags available to growers
- Establish quality-based bonuses according to classification of fibre
- Set up a follow-up committee for quality

6. Are there any practices associated with the criterion that you believe are essential to qualify for better cotton? No

The objective is to make Better Cotton into a mass-market product, all farmers need to be able to access it and to adopt the above-mentioned criteria.

7. Are there any practices associated with the criterion that should disqualify as better cotton? (e.g. use of particular pesticides) No.

### **Group 3 Safe and responsible use of pesticides**

#### **Adopt IPM (integrated pest management) criteria**

- Only use chemicals (synthetic or organic pesticides) after having tried all other means (agronomic, different varieties of plant etc.) to fight pests
- Reinforce growers' capacities in ability to recognise pests, the damage they cause and the level of infestation and the specific action of pesticides
- Use of pesticides in pest control should be determined by threshold of infestation and should take the stage of development of the crop into account at any given time
- If pesticides are used, it is necessary to select the most appropriate active substance: it needs to have an efficient impact on the target population, a low toxicological impact and few secondary effects on auxiliary fauna
- Only use pesticides if pests are at a stage of development that enables high impact

#### **Hygiene and safely**

- Never allow children to carry out protective work on crops (treat seeds, leaves, side dressing etc.)
- Ensure all people undertaking protective work are adults who have been trained and are aware of:
  - Authorised pesticides for planned operations (information on legislation for a given crop) as well as the norms for their use
  - The dangers of pesticides (prior to during and after their use) as well as the remedies for poisoning, even if slight (burning sensation etc.)
  - The need to always wear suitable protective clothing for application
- Manufacturers and salespeople should stock all pesticides in such a way as to avoid all possible risks to people
- Destroy all out-of-date pesticides
- Introduce measures to avoid reuse of objects: packaging of pesticides should be destroyed as a priority, as well as protective clothing and objects that have not been cleaned after use (eg buckets) that have come into contact with pesticides
- Avoid sowing crops where they increase the risk to the community and the environment (avoid growing them close to rivers, dwellings etc.)
- Apply pesticides at appropriate times of day (avoid the hottest hours or periods when the wind is changeable when using air-borne spraying methods).

## Selection and application criteria

- Only use authorised pesticides on cotton (in accordance with existing phyto-sanitary legislation), and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully; they are based on research.
- Labels and pictograms should be easily understood by all users
- It is recommended to use the least toxic and persistent as well as the least volatile pesticides
- Use the application technique that represents the least danger for the operator as well as the least contamination of the environment
- Only use appropriate or recommended equipment that is in good working order
- Pesticides included in the lists of the Stockholm or Rotterdam conventions should not be used

### Answers to questions:

1. Is the draft environmental principle applicable to your country?  
Yes, on condition that:
  - The specificities of each country are taken into account
  - There is capacity building (human, financial) in research and training
2. Are the criteria adapted to this principle in your country? Yes
3. Are there other important points for this principle that are not included in the criteria defined? Yes: reinforce communication between the various actors involved in phyto-sanitary protection
4. What is the best practice associated with each criterion?

#### *Criteria 1: Adopting IPM:*

- Threshold intervention
- Organic approach
- LEC
- Fairtrade approach
- Insect-trapping plants (not used very much)
- Early sowing (when applicable)
- Leaf follicles

#### *Criteria 2: Hygiene and safety*

There are very few examples of good practice as yet.

#### *Criteria 3: Choice and application*

A lot of good practices have been used, but in a partial and insufficient manner

5. What are the reasons for non-adoption of the recommended best practice? And what needs to be changed / done for farmers to do so?

Increased training, information and exchange between research, development actors and growers.

6. Are there any practices associated with the criterion that you believe are essential to qualify for better cotton?

#### *Criteria 1:*

Only treat crops when a threshold of pest presence has been reached and using the correct tools (choice of pesticides and methods of application).



## *Criteria 2:*

Only allow trained adults, aware of the risks, to treat crops

Introduce measures to avoid reuse of all objects: packaging of pesticides should be destroyed as a priority, as well as protective clothing and objects that have not been cleaned after use (eg buckets) that have come into contact with pesticides

## *Criteria 3:*

Only pesticides authorised for cotton growing (current phyto-sanitary legislation) can be used, and in accordance with the maker's instructions (which are based on recommendations and research)

7. Are there any practices associated with the criterion that should disqualify as better cotton? (e.g. use of particular pesticides)

Yes:

- The use of highly toxic unauthorised pesticides
- Not taking precautions as to the community and the environment when using pesticides

## **Socio-economic Principles.**

### **Group 4: Producers' organisations.**

For the West and Central Africa region, the following principle is applicable (as a means of progression for the BC initiative)

#### Principle

BCI will facilitate producer organisation.

#### Explanation of the principle

Empowerment means accompanying producers' organisations in their goals as far as their membership is concerned. This involves:

- Supporting the structuring and organisation of producers' organisations
- Supporting the development of negotiation, lobbying and advocacy skills
- Training technical teams of producers' organisations, as well as their leaders and elected representatives
- Supporting research and internal communication of information relevant to the branch
- Supporting the regular work of producers' organisations and logistics

Some examples of past support of programmes, projects at inter-professional and cotton company level are as follows:

- Management/accountancy/financial control of growers' organisations
- Internal control systems
- Joint management systems (growers' organisations and cotton companies) for training, internal communication, support in collective organisation
- Consultancy/advisory services for farming
- Technical advisory services
- Functional literacy support

Key aspects of good practice in reinforcing producers' organisations:

- Ensure that the working of statutory organs is carried out by the producers' organisations themselves in an independent manner
- Develop the producers' organisations' services in the interests of economy and with a perspective of their economic independence, which is in no way contradictory with the producers' organisations managing certain services operating on public funds in the framework of contractual objectives.
- The length and commitment of accompaniment should be compatible with the rhythm of organisational development (5, 10, 15 years)
- Capitalisation and follow-up evaluation of the accompaniment
- Co-ordination with the institutional bodies
- Reinforcement policies centred on the real preoccupations of the producers' organisations and participation by them in pilot schemes.

Criteria regarding the eligibility of producers' organisations

- The organisation has been mandated by its members to represent them, defend their interests, be their mouthpiece or support them in the framework of the economic activities of cotton-growing
- The producers' organisation operates on funds raised by the members' cotton-growing activities
- The producers' organisation is committed to respecting criteria of good, transparent and democratic governance

## **Group 5: Decent Work**

### **I. Definition of decent agricultural work**

Decent agricultural work is work that:

- Economically contributes to improving the income and overall living conditions of the farmer and his/her family
- Socially, enables the farmer and his/her family's well-being; there is a respect, dignity, fairness and morality; children can develop, and are able to go to school.
- From an environmental point of view, there is no damage to the health or safety of the farmer and/or his/her family, and the environment is respected

a) The criteria (demands) applicable to farming:

- No form of forced labour, including compulsory work or non-voluntary penitentiary labour is accepted
- Work that might prove harmful to health, safety or morality of young people may not be undertaken by anyone under the age of 18 years.
- Children may work in the context of their training, on condition that the work is not harmful to their health, their education or their well-being
- Women may work individually or collectively outside the family farm.
- Transparency in the management and redistribution of farm income should be respected

**Table 4: Recommended practice according to various stages of growth**

Phase	Recommendations	Hygiene and safety	Constraints
Ploughing	Respect optimal work conditions		- Climate - Problems of equipment - Feeding cattle
Sowing	Respect optimum conditions of humidity	Wash hands with soap after sowing treated seeds	- Climate - Lack of adequate equipment - Poor seed quality
Weed-killing	Respect norms and appropriate method for using all products	- Wash yourself after use - Destroy packaging	- Humidity - Poor quality products
Crop maintenance	Carry out all operations at optimal date		- Lack of equipment - Insufficient labour
Treatment	Respect dates and dose in accordance with method of treatment	- Avoid treatment by children, feeding mothers or pregnant women - Destroy packaging immediately after treatment - Avoid stocking products inside homes. Products should be stocked in specific buildings out of children's reach. - Wash hands with soap after treating crops	-Use of non-recommended products -Insufficient qualified labour
Harvest	- Harvest at the right time, using appropriate bags or material - Sorting of cotton at harvest - Store harvested cotton in a clean dry place - Avoid contaminating cotton - Avoid harvesting wet cotton		-Insufficient labour -Cost of harvesting machinery -Lack of equipment -Lack of suitable building for storing cotton

### **Group 6. Access to equitable finance (Fair access to financial services)**

#### **Explanations and principles**

“The introduction of financial products that meet the real expressed needs of members of the cotton-growing community (farmers and their families)”

Applicability of fairness in the access to financial services:

- Financial structures are established within the ‘cotton infrastructure’ but do not cover all the producer community’s financial needs
- Seasonal loans are available, but are strictly reserved for cotton growing
- Members of the cotton-grower’s groups have given up growing cotton due to lack of profitability or high level of debt
- Some farmers (women for example) are creditworthy, but have no access to financial services

#### **The most important financial needs of cotton growers**

- Loans for inputs (cotton and cereals)
- Loans to buy equipment
- Roll-over loans ([ege.g.](#) to pay school fees)
- Financial risk mitigation for the impacts of bad weather conditions
- Health and life insurance

## Where do the greatest risks reside for farmers during the financial cycle of cotton-growing?

- During the in-between periods (start of season, before the harvest, back-to-school)
- During the period when crops need to be maintained (e.g. need labour, pest infestation)
- When high quality labour is required for harvesting
- Early in the season, when crops are planted

## The most important financial institutions for the cotton sector

- Commercial banks (mills)
- Micro-finance institutions
- Co-operative savings and loan networks
- Money-lenders and local dignitaries
- Informal money-lending and savings' associations

## Positive progress in financing the cotton sector

- Supplier loans (e.g. loans on inputs)
- CUMA (Agricultural Machinery Co-ops)
- An increased presence of micro finance institutions

## List of financial needs:

### *Farming-related financial services (available):*

- Loans for cereal inputs
- Loans for cotton inputs
- Loans for the season
- Loans for machinery (CUMA)
- Loans for commercialisation
- Savings' accounts

### *Non-farming-related financial services (missing)*

- Roll-over loans (e.g. for personal needs)
- Agricultural insurance (against bad weather)
- Health and life insurance

**Provide support for joint and several guarantee groups** (e.g. help them to get organised, learn and implement the rules and regulations of associations as well as manage the associations)

**Respect the determining role of gender** in access to financial services and take women into account as actors in their own right.

## Conclusions and recommendations of the Regional Work Group

- The meeting of the RWG enabled mutual understanding between actors to develop
- Most of the global principles in the first draft principles are suitable, useful and applicable to the West and Central African Region
- By discussing the question of producer organisations and financial systems, rather than discussing principles, the work groups started to outline an approach.
- A new version of the draft principles will be available mid-2008 on-line on the Website. It will be up for discussion at the second meeting of the Work Group due to be held in the second week in November 2008. Version 2 will be shared by mid-2009.
- Progress was achieved in terms of expertise on potential standards
- BCI intends to clearly distinguish their approach to small and large scale farmers (capacity building)
- It is vital that at the next meeting the companies that are members of BCI be represented so that they themselves can explain their commercial strategies
- BCI intends hiring someone to create a focal point in the region to overcome language difficulties and increase visibility
- One of BCI's characteristics is the participation of large European and American firms. The RWG is trying to develop a better understanding of this participation
- The RWG also wishes to clarify the articulation between production and the market, while being aware that mass production and a fully traceable integrated chain is not feasible
- How can growers be convinced to adopt the BCI logic, which is based on providing tools relative to factors that growers can control, aimed at increased productivity, reduced production costs and increased income? BCI recognises that the question of survival is now a key issue for farmers. It is obvious that "Better Cotton" will not be better if it does not allow farmers to have improved living conditions. For this reason, questions linked to increased income and impact on sales are unavoidable, even if social and environmental aspects should not be neglected
- As far as the Working Group is concerned, the fact of having started with six pilot countries does not exclude extension to other West or Central African countries; this is in fact a necessity for BCI, whose aims are global
- It was noted that concerning the question of cotton fibre quality, that the questions of ginning, transport etc are also of importance. The Brazilian group also noted the importance of these aspects. BCI does however intend to address farm-production-related issues as their priority.
- On the question of best practice, CABI (an international scientific organisation) has received the mandate to carry out a research project on best practice. It would be helpful if they could consult with the actors present at this meeting, and if the resource people to be involved in this survey could be selected in consultation with AProCA
- A point was raised concerning field trials scheduled for the 2009 season, as to their content, dates and conditions of implementation. This involves a great deal of preparation. BCI recognised the amount of work involved in setting up the field trials. BCI noted that they will work in partnership with organisations whose programmes are in phase with BCI, such as UNEP in West Africa
- The evaluation of the workshop showed that objectives 1 to 8 were reached, but as far as objective 9 was concerned, i.e. the identification of links with other initiatives, there needs to be more in-depth consultation and examination of what aspects need to be learned, retained, borrowed from these other initiatives in order to incorporate them to the advantage of "Better Cotton".

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