Program Officers - USA
Post Announcement

Starting date: as soon as possible

Contract: Consultancy Contract, home based. Two avail

Location: Dallas or other Cotton Belt locations are preferred.

Closing date: Midnight 10 February GMT

Number of positions: 2 positions available

Background

Cotton is one of the most important and widely grown crops in the world, and the USA plays a key role in terms of production volumes, innovation within the industry and the ability to strongly influence other cotton producers.

The Better Cotton Initiative is a global, non-profit membership association headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, with satellite offices in London, New Delhi, Shanghai and Lahore, and additional contract personnel in Turkey, Mozambique, and the United States. Together, they comprise the BCI Secretariat, which oversees the global implementation of the Better Cotton Standard System.

BCI's USA program has been growing very rapidly since launching in 2014, and BCI currently works with over 650 licensed US farmers, who together grow upwards of 8% of the country's cotton production.

BCI operates a unique model in the US, in which farmers are organized into groups based on region, and a network of Group Managers who are responsible for coordinating BCI activities, supporting farmers through training and capacity building, and ensuring all farmers comply with minimum requirements in BCI's Standard.

Position Description

The main focus of this role will be to support the successful, rapidly expanding Better Cotton program in the United States. The Program Officers will help to coordinate and execute training and farm-level verification activities. These include helping to administer an online self-assessment for participating farmers, scheduling and carrying out second-party credibility checks on farmers (to ensure compliance with the BCI standard) and ongoing support to BCI's network of Group Managers, who organize and support participating farmers. The Program Officers will manage online databases, monitor the activities of Implementing Partners (IPs), and support the evaluation of projects.

The Program Officers may also play an important role in helping to coordinate BCI programs in Brazil, Australia and/or Israel, where BCI operates through strategic partners. Applicants with Portugese language abilities are strongly preferred for the Brazil coordination functions.

Once filled, these two new positions will complete a team of three Program Officers whose work will be managed by the Program Coordinator. Brazil coordination will be overseen by the Americas Operations Manager, while Australia and Israel will be overseen by the Head of Large Farms and Field Performance.

This is an exciting and challenging role that will involve regular travel to the field to verify sustainable practices and collaborate with farmers to identify improvement opportunities.

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Responsibilities

Monitoring and Evaluation
The Program Officers will be a primary US contact for data management, providing support to BCI teams and US Group Managers, and ensuring that country-level BCI data is available to support results and impact claims. The Program Officers will:

» Ensure that BCI's contact database is maintained up to date, in collaboration with other users of the system;

» Ensure the timely, accurate collection of data from Group Managers and individual farms to ensure BCI requirements and deadlines are met

» Contribute to improving the quality of result indicator data

» Collect, review and organize national guidance material, stories from the field and best practices developed by Group Managers and farmers, to support best practice sharing

» Share the results of data analysis to facilitate and inform continuous improvement among participating farmers and producer groups

Assurance (farm-level verification)
The Program Officers will support the operation of the Better Cotton Assurance program in the following ways:

» Assist with planning a schedule for farm-level verification and managing deadlines for internal BCI teams, Group Managers, and 3rd-party verifiers

» Support Group Managers and 3rd-party verifiers to carry out their verification functions

» Schedule and carry out 2nd-party checks on a sample of US farms to verify compliance with the BCI Standard and identify improvement opportunities

» Review 2nd- and 3rd-party verification reports for accuracy and completeness

» Provide support on communications, training and implementation of the Better Cotton standard;

Capacity building
» Support Group Managers' and farmers' efforts to identify and implement improvements in sustainable farming practices

» Contribute to development of communications material for members and partners, strengthening the story of Better Cotton

» Review the performance of BCI's Group Managers, propose corrective action plans for problems identified, and support Group Managers in improving performance

Partnership Coordination & Admin
» Schedule, host and coordinate regular calls and other communication with partner representatives

» Work with partners to create and monitor annual plans for program implementation, assurance, and date reporting

» Liaise with relevant BCI team members for issues related to membership, assurance or monitoring and evaluation

Benchmark Programme (Brazil, Australia, Israel)
» Support partner initiatives to benchmark new BCI requirements against other national standards

» Liaise with external consultants and/or contractors (i.e. verification agencies), including coordination of the contracting and invoicing phases.

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Profile
Successful candidates for the Program Officers role will have the following attributes:

Experience
Essential
At least 2 years' experience managing project data, databases
Successful member of multifunctional team
Interest in agriculture and farming
Desirable
Experience in monitoring and evaluation and/or 3rd party certification systems
Agricultural experience/background
Experience conducting farm-level interviews or audits
Cotton production and/or supply chains

Skills, knowledge, credentials
Essential
Bachelor's degree or equivalent professional experience
Demonstrated interest in sustainability and agriculture
Excellent analytical and problem-solving skills, with a proactive approach to finding and proposing solutions to challenges within clearly defined boundaries
Fluent in English, w/ demonstrated ability to communicate clearly, concisely and confidently
Ability to command respect and gather essential management information from farmers
IT literacy, to include: Word, Excel, PowerPoint
Self-motivated, highly organized and able to manage multiple competing priorities
Ability to undertake multi-day travel
Fluency in Portuguese (for one of the 2 positions)
Desirable
Fluency in Spanish (to support future Latin America program development)
Academic training in agriculture, environmental science and/or sustainability
Training in statistics

Working arrangements
The contract is for a consultancy-based role estimated to require approximately 40 hours per week, initially home-based in the USA. BCI seeks to open a US office in future, and Dallas or Memphis are preferred locations. BCI is currently unable to provide sponsorship for work permits, and candidates need to have a pre-existing right to work in the US.

Annual fee (paid monthly) $51,480. All reasonable, business-related expenses will be reimbursed by BCI (per BCI Travel Policies).

The consultancy contract will be for an initial one-year term, with a conditional renewal clause, and include a 3-month initial trial period. As a contractor, the PO is responsible for all related payroll taxes and other costs.

The Program Officer will be expected to attend some events in the evenings or on weekends, and some multi-day travel will be required. The Program Officer will travel to US cotton production areas, for up to a week at a time, most commonly around August through October.

Applications
Interested applicants with the required attributes are asked to send a CV (2 pages maximum) and a motivational letter (2 pages maximum), in English, by email to: recruitment@bettercotton.org with subject: "Application Program Officer, US" by 10 February. Shortlisted candidates will be requested to complete an online test early February. We thank all applicants for their interest; however only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

The BCI is an equal opportunity organization and is committed to good practice and transparency in the management of natural, human and financial resources.