# Better Cotton Readiness Check for Producer Units

For use with the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria (v2.1)

Smallholder Farms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Version** | 1.1 |
| **Date** | 1 March 2022 |

### **Introduction to the Readiness Check**

The Readiness Check is required for all new Producer Units joining the Better Cotton Initiative Programme before being recommended for licensing by Implementing Partners (IPs) for their initial Licensing Assessment.

The objectives of the Readiness Check are to:

1. Assess whether a new PU fully meets the Core Indicators
2. Identify any gaps against Core Indicators and develop corrective actions (together with the PU Manager); monitor the PU to ensure these corrective actions are implemented and effective
3. Evaluate the strength of the PU’s capacity building programme and identify improvement areas (e.g. related to quality of training, knowledge of PU Manager, etc.)

Together, the outcome of these points will inform the IP’s decision on whether a PU is prepared for Licensing Assessment and therefore ‘ready for licensing.’ **More information on the Readiness Check can be found in the can be** **found in the Assurance Manual available on the** [***Assurance* page of the Better Cotton website**](https://bettercotton.org/better-cotton-standard-system/assurance-program/)**.**

**Disclaimer:** This report and process is intended to assist with identifying whether a Producer is ready for licensing. When the Producer is put forward as a result of being determined ‘ready’ from the Readiness Check, there is still the chance of licence denial during the initial Licensing Assessment visits conducted. If clarity is required on a certain subject or you would like to provide feedback on the process, please contact Better Cotton at [assurance@bettercotton.org](mailto:assurance@bettercotton.org)

## Guidance

The Readiness Check helps to evaluate a PU’s compliance with the Better Cotton P&Cs and identify where the Producer needs to make improvements to operations and systems before the initial licensing assessment. Once a PU has established its internal management system, trained field staff and farmers, and has made progress to comply with all Core Indicators, the IP is to carry out a field-based Readiness Check. If the IP determines that the PU is fully compliant with all Core Indicators, the IP can recommend the PU to be assessed for licensing. If more work is needed to close gaps against Core Indicators, the IP is responsible for following up with the PU Manager to ensure appropriate corrective actions are put in place before recommending the PU for licensing.

Please focus on honest answers rather than compliance so the Readiness Check can be a useful learning tool. Better Cotton has developed an optional [Assessment Checklist](https://bettercotton.org/better-cotton-standard-system/assurance-program/) which may also be used to help guide the process and record notes in the field. The Conformity Indicator Level Guidance and [Better Cotton Principles and Criteria](https://bettercotton.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Better-Cotton-Principles-Criteria-V2.1.pdf) may also be useful reference material during the visit.

## Appropriate IP Representative

Readiness Checks can be conducted by an experienced member of the IP organisation who has completed relevant training. The job title of the specific individual(s) within an IP organisation who meet these requirements may vary. Better Cotton provides training to IP representatives on how to conduct the Readiness Check on an annual basis. IP representatives who have completed the annual training requirements are qualified to conduct internal training to other IP staff members in order to build up a pool of eligible assessors within the IP organisation.

**Please note:** Readiness Checks cannot be conducted by the PU Manager (or another staff member) of the same PU that is being assessed.

## Format and Timings

Readiness Checks are field-based visits, in which the IP Representative spends significant time visiting farmers and observing the Field Facilitators and PU Manager in their daily roles. Readiness Checks should typically last at least two full days for a smallholder PU and 1.5 days for a Medium Farm. The Readiness Checks can be carried out anytime from sowing to harvest during the initial set-up season (first season in the programme) or anytime during the sowing period of the PU’s second season.

Readiness Checks are to include the following elements:

* A meeting with the PU Manager and Field Facilitators to understand progress and identify key challenges and action plans;
* Individual interviews with at least 5 farmers from 3 different Learning Groups for Smallholders (15 farmers minimum) or a minimum of 3 farmers for Medium Farms;
* Field observations at individual farms (minimum of 5 farms, but more farm visits are recommended);
* Worker interviews (whenever possible);
* Observing the PU Manager and Field Facilitators in their daily roles; for example, watching training sessions, farmer focus groups, or shadowing Field Facilitators on individual farmer visits;
* Individual interviews with the PU Manager and Field Facilitators to understand knowledge strengths and areas for improvement;
* A review of essential PU documents, including internal assessments, management plans, the continuous improvement plan, and training schedules and materials (for PU staff and LGs/farmers); and
* A closing meeting with the PU Manager and Field Facilitators to discuss findings, corrective actions, and any next steps.

## Outcome of the Readiness Check and Next Steps

1. The findings of the Readiness Check are documented and shared back to the PU Manager in the Readiness Check report (this document).

* If the PU does not yet fully meet all Core Indicators, the IP Representative (together with the PU Manager) completes a Corrective Action Plan (which is part of this template)
* The Readiness Check report (with Corrective Action Plan, if applicable) are to be shared with the PU Manager within 3 weeks of the visit taking place

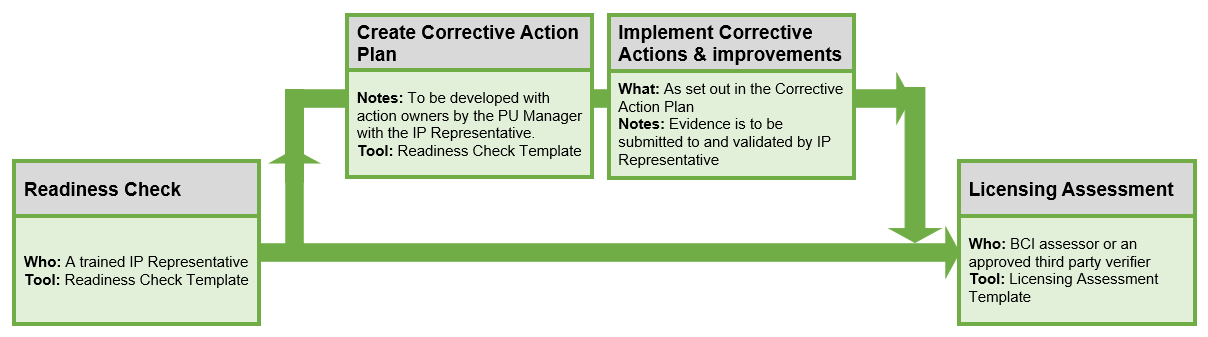
1. The IP is responsible for monitoring progress and verifying implementation of corrective actions if applicable.

* This is ideally completed through an additional Readiness Check, or if necessary, through the remote verification of evidence. Evidence supporting non-conformity closure does not need to be submitted to Better Cotton but should be available at IP level and may be requested as part of external assessment activities.

1. Based on the outcome of the Readiness Check and any follow-up monitoring activities, the IP determines whether the PU is ready to be assessed for licensing.
2. By the end of sowing deadline, the IP is required to submit a list of all new PUs which are ‘recommended for licensing’ to the Better Cotton Country Team.

* The Readiness Check reports for all PUs recommended for licensing can be submitted to Better Cotton on a rolling basis, with all reports received by the end of sowing deadline. It is the responsibility of the IP to ensure the quality and completeness of Readiness Check reports before they are submitted to Better Cotton.
* Better Cotton Country Teams may request improvements or additional information if Readiness Check reports lack enough detail to assess PU performance.

1. If the IP determines that a PU is not ready for licensing by the end of sowing deadline, the PU can spend the season in set-up phase and will not receive a Licensing Assessment that season.[[1]](#footnote-2)



## Advice on navigating this document

Please turn on the ‘Navigation Pane’ (under ‘View’ menu) to allow easy referencing of report sections.

**Note**: Once you have completed the entire form, please save as PDF using the Reference Number as the file name. The Reference Number is *PU code\_Implementing Partner\_Readiness Check\_Month-Year, e.g.* ***AUWA23\_Cotton Company\_Readiness Check\_09-2020***

# 1 Summary Information (Producer Unit and Visit)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Producer Unit Name** |  | **Producer Unit Code** | |  |
| **Implementing Partner** |  | **Local Partner (if applicable**) | |  |
| **First season participating in the BCI Programme** |  | | | |
| **Location** | Town/ village: | | | |
| State and Country: | | | |
| **Visit conducted by** | Name: | | | |
| Organisation/ Role: | | | |
| **Start date of visit** | Start date (dd/mm/yyyy): | | Start time: | |
| **End date of visit** | End date (dd/mm/yyyy): | | End time: | |

# 2 Producer Unit Staffing

The Producer Unit (PU) staff (PU Manager and Field Facilitators) play an integral role in the implementation of the Better Cotton Initiative Programme.

## 2.1 Producer Unit Manager (PUM)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of PU Manager** |  |
| **How long has the Producer Unit Manager been in place *(specifically in this PU)*?** | 0-3 months  4-6 months  7-12 months  More than a year  N/A – no PU Manager in place |

## 2.2 Field Facilitators (FF)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Are all the Field Facilitators in place?** | Yes  No | **If no, how many are still required?** |  |

| **Field Facilitator Name** | **Gender (M/F)** | **Number of LGs** | **How long has the FF been in post for?** | **Qualification and/or type of experience** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| FF1: |  |  |  |  |
| FF2: |  |  |  |  |
| FF3: |  |  |  |  |
| FF4: |  |  |  |  |
| FF5: |  |  |  |  |
| FF6: |  |  |  |  |
| FF7: |  |  |  |  |
| FF8: |  |  |  |  |
| FF9: |  |  |  |  |
| FF10: |  |  |  |  |
| FF11: |  |  |  |  |
| FF12: |  |  |  |  |
| FF13: |  |  |  |  |
| FF14: |  |  |  |  |

# 3 Producer Unit Staff Capacity

This section is to gain an overall understanding of the current awareness and knowledge levels of the PU staff and to also identify training and support opportunities to strengthen the Producer Unit.

## 3.1 Producer Unit Manager

The Producer Unit Manager operates the Internal Management System which includes developing plans, implementing initiatives, identifying risks and opportunities and leading a team of Field Facilitators. *Please complete the table based on your assessment of the PU Manager’s knowledge. You will find guidance below the table to support with the selection choice.*

In [**Section 3.3**](#_3.3._Recommendations_for)**,** include specific areas where the PU staff could benefit from additional training/ support.

| Principle / Topic | Understanding levels | Principle/ Topic | Understanding levels |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Crop Protection | Strong  Average  More training needed | Fibre Quality | Strong  Average  More training needed |
| **Water Stewardship** | Strong  Average  More training needed | **Decent Work** | Strong  Average  More training needed |
| **Soil Health** | Strong  Average  More training needed | **Continuous Improvement Plan** | Strong  Average  More training needed |
| **Biodiversity** | Strong  Average  More training needed | **Data Management** (including quality, accuracy and completeness) | Strong  Average  More training needed |

* ***Strong:*** *the PU Manager has an impressive level of knowledge relating to the principle in question. He/she is also very familiar with local key sustainability concerns or challenges associated with this principle.*
* ***Average:*** *the PU Manager is knowledgeable about high priority areas but there are a few gaps in understanding.*
* ***More training needed:*** *the PU Manager lacks knowledge on the entire principle or key components of the principle i.e. no understanding of pest scouting techniques or the benefits of restoring on-farm biodiversity levels.*

## 3.2 Field Facilitators

Field Facilitators (FFs) are a key component of the cascade model – their competence and solid knowledge is integral for the effective implementation of interventions and increased performance at the field level. *Please complete the table based on your assessment of the collective knowledge of the FFs. You will find guidance below the table to support with the selection choice.*

In [**Section 3.3**](#_3.3._Recommendations_for)**,** include specific areas where the PU staff could benefit from additional training/ support.

| **Principle / Topic** | **Understanding levels** | **Principle/ Topic** | **Understanding levels** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Crop Protection** | Strong  Average  More training needed | **Fibre Quality** | Strong  Average  More training needed |
| **Water Stewardship** | Strong  Average  More training needed | **Decent Work** | Strong  Average  More training needed |
| **Soil Health** | Strong  Average  More training needed | **Continuous Improvement Plan** | Strong  Average  More training needed |
| **Biodiversity** | Strong  Average  More training needed | **Data Management** *(including quality, accuracy and completeness)* | Strong  Average  More training needed |

* ***Strong:*** *Most or all FFs have impressive knowledge relating to the principle in question. They are also very familiar with local key sustainability concerns associated with the different principles.*
* ***Average:*** *Some FFs have strong knowledge and others have a more basic understanding on the topic. Or as a collective, the FFs are knowledgeable about high priority areas but there are a few gaps in understanding.*
* ***More training needed:*** *Most FFs have key gaps in understanding;**lacking knowledge on the entire principle or key components of the principle i.e. no understanding of pest scouting, techniques or the benefits cover cropping.*

## 3.3. Recommendations for additional support / training

List the top three areas where the PU Staff need additional expertise, training or support in the table below. This section is **mandatory** to be completed.

| **Principle or focus area** | **Describe the specific gap or areas where more support is needed** | **Improvement Action: What needs to be done / what changes need to be made?** | **Action Owner** | **Timeline** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***[Example]***  *FF knowledge and confidence with soil management practices* | *6 out of 9 FFs interviewed did not have strong awareness of the benefit of cover cropping and crop rotation. Having this knowledge will support FFs changing behaviours at the field level.* | *PU Manager to conduct refresher training with IP Coordinator on soil management techniques and provide details on the benefits.* | *PU Manager and IP Coordinator* | *Over the next month (complete by March 2020)* |
| ***[PU Manager]***  Skills/ knowledge building for PU Manager  *Note here the specific areas where further training or support would be useful (e.g. presentation skills, knowledge of beneficial insects)* |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| ***[Field Facilitators]***  Skills/ knowledge building for FFs  *Note here the specific areas where further training or support would be useful (e.g. presentation skills, knowledge of pest scouting techniques)* |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

# 4 Farmers and Workers

## 4.1 Farmers

The assessor is to select a representative sample of Learning Groups (LGs) for interviewing. This sample should take into account the variations within the Producer Unit. Factors that can be considered may include gender split of farmers within the LG; irrigation type; variations in landholding size; year of LG formation; location spread; villages with the largest number of LGs in the PU; Field Facilitators with the largest/smallest number of LGs under their charge etc. Please do not select based on ease of access.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **LG 1 CODE:**  **Field Facilitator Name:** | | **LG 2 CODE:**  **Field Facilitator Name:** | | **LG 3 CODE:**  **Field Facilitator Name:** | |
| Farmer Name | Gender (M/F) | Farmer Name | Gender (M/F) | Farmer Name | Gender (M/F) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Does this Learning Group have access to demonstration plot(s):**  Yes  No | | **Does this Learning Group have access to demonstration plot(s):**  Yes  No | | **Does this Learning Group have access to demonstration plot(s):**  Yes  No | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Training Records** | **Are the training records accurate and complete in line with details provided by farmers interviewed? (***This includes organised training events, home visits from FFs, demonstration plot visits etc.)*  Yes  No  Partially |
| **Capacity Building** | **Based on the interviews with farmers, what is their overall level of participation in BCI activities?** *(this includes training, LG meetings, home visits from FFs, demonstration plot visits etc)*  High – most farmers attend numerous PU activities or trainings each season  Medium - some farmers attend regular activities, others may only participate in one or two activities per season  Low – most farmers are not very engaged with the PU |

## 4.2 Workers

A representative sample of workers from all production areas (where possible) should be selected for interviewing. Use this section to record details of workers interviewed. The assessor is to select the workers to interview.

**Note:** worker names can be excluded if necessary due to confidentiality; in this case please provide a description of the worker’s role instead.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name or role** | **Gender (M/F)** | **Location of interview** | **Comments & interview topics covered** | **Training sessions the worker has attended *(Number and topic – also add information on other relevant programme activities i.e. access to demo plots)*** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Are the training records accurate and complete in line with details provided by workers interviewed?**  Yes  No  Partially | | | | |

# 5 Internal Assessment and Baseline Information

There is a need, for many of the requirements of the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria, to gather baseline data via surveys and internal assessments. Collecting baseline data allows the Producer Unit Manager (in collaboration with the Field Facilitators) to make informed decisions on what and how to implement the required plans and policies. It is expected that these surveys and internal assessments should be conducted annually to monitor performance and identify any behaviour changes

It must be noted that this exercise is required in order to complete a Self-Assessment in the set-up year and to effectively develop plans and a relevant and appropriate Continuous Improvement Plan.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Has the PU conducted the internal assessment and series of surveys to gather all the necessary baseline information? | Yes. When?  Partially. Please identify what is left to complete?  No. Why not? |

Please comment on the quality and completeness of the Internal Assessment. *For example, would you recommend that further focus is required on a certain topic or principle, or the LG sample is too small?*

|  |
| --- |
|  |

How have the outcomes of the Internal Assessment been reflected in the training plans and the Continuous Improvement Plan? *Are there any other plans or policies that have been adapted based on the key findings of the Internal Assessment? Would you recommend that there are areas which should be edited based on the outcomes?*

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Next Steps:** If it becomes evident to the IP Representative whilst conducting the Readiness Check that baseline information is still be gathered / internal assessment is not yet conducted/complete, please include in the Corrective Action Plan.

# 6 Better Cotton Principles and Criteria – Assessing Current Status

For the rest of the Readiness Check the IP Representative is to utilise the Principles and Criteria (P&C) matrix on the following pages to assess whether the PU is ready to be put forward for licensing. The PU is expected to fully meet each Core Indicator before their initial licensing assessment. Where there is a risk of non-compliance and more work is required, a Corrective Action Plan is to be developed and implemented before the Producer is put forward for licensing.

## 6.1 How to fill out the matrix

* The ‘Current Status’ column is to be completed by the IP Representative for each indicator based on the evidence and observations during the Readiness Check visit.
  + One response is to be checked per question.
  + Where there are additional questions, each question must be responded to.
  + If an indicator is not applicable to the PU, please mark it as ‘indicator fully met’.
* The second half of the P&C matrix forms the Corrective Action Plan based on the findings of the Readiness Check. A Corrective Action Plan must be developed during the closing meeting of this visit with the PU Manager.
  + The ‘What needs to be done/ what changes need to be made’ and ‘Action Owner’ columns are to be completed with the PU Manager.
  + Be mindful with finding the right long-term solution rather than a short-term solution to ensure it remediates the root cause of the issue or concern.
* ‘IP sign off’ is to be completed by the IP Representative once the PU Manager has submitted evidence of closure and improvements which has been validated by the IP representative. Please note the IPs name and date of approval and a brief summary of evidence provided by the PU.
* *See the next page for an example of the populated table.*

*Example assessment of indicator current status. The Corrective Action Plan has been developed and implemented with the validation of evidence completed by the IP Representative*

| **Indicator No.** | **Current Status**  ***Provide further detail for minor and major work needed responses*** | **Corrective Action Plan** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **What needs to be done / what changes need to be made?**  ***PUM and IP develop together*** | **Action Owner** | **Timeline** | **IP sign off *(name, date & validation of evidence)*** |
| **2.1.9** Opportunities for collaboration and collective actions (beyond the Producer’s unit of production) to achieve sustainable water use are identified. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed    Major work needed  *No opportunities have been identified by the PU staff yet*  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: | *PU Manager is to investigate local organisations and initiatives to find opportunities to collaborate. IP Representative will share connections with local PUs to cross-share opportunities in the region.* | *PU Manager Name & IP Coordinator Name* | *2 weeks of visit (1st week of April)* | *IP Representative Name, 20 April 2020*  *Initiatives provided along with minutes from meeting with ABC Water Initiative.* |

# Principle 1: Crop Protection

| **Indicator** | **Current Status**  ***Provide further detail for minor and major work needed responses*** | **Corrective Action Plan** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **What needs to be done / what changes need to be made?**  ***PUM and IP develop together*** | **Action Owner** | **Timeline** | **IP sign off *(name, date & validation of evidence)*** |
| **1.1.1** A locally adapted and time-bound plan, based on agro-ecosystem analysis and which identifies appropriate specific practices to implement the five components of Integrated Pest Management, is established. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  Has a baseline survey been conducted to understand what pesticides are in use within the PU? |
| **1.1.3** A timeline for implementing the 5 components of the Integrated Pest Management plan is established. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **1.1.4** There is no calendar or random spraying. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  Please comment on the awareness of the farmers on pest scouting techniques such as Economic Threshold Level (ETL)? |
| **1.2.1** All pesticides used are registered nationally for the use on cotton. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  Are farmers using combinations of pesticides / ‘cocktails’?  If yes, are these nationally registered?  If yes, what are the common combinations? |
| **1.2.2** All pesticides used are correctly labelled in at least one *de facto* or *de jure* official national or applicable official regional language. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **1.3.1** Pesticides listed in: (i) Annex A and B of the Stockholm Convention; or (ii) Annexes of the Montreal Protocol; or (iii) Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention; are not used. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **1.4.1** The Producer has a plan to phase out by 2021 pesticides listed in category 1 of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS); 1a of the World Health Organization classification (WHO). | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **1.4.2** The Producer has a plan to phase out by 2024 pesticides listed in category 2 of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS); 1b of the World Health Organization classification (WHO). | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **1.5.1** The Producer has a plan to phase out Pesticides defined as carcinogenic, mutagenic or reprotoxic (CMR) substances according to Categories 1a and 1b of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS). | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **1.6.1** The Producer must ensure that any person who prepares and applies pesticides is: (i) Healthy; (ii) Skilled and trained in the application of pesticides; (iii) 18 or older; (iv) not pregnant or nursing. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **1.7.2** Minimum Personal Protective Equipment is worn while preparing and applying pesticides, which includes protection of the following body parts from dermal absorption, ingestions and inhalation: *(i) Face and airways: eyes, ear canal, nose, scalp (ii) Limbs: arms, forearms, palms, legs, feet*  *(iii) Abdomen and genital area*. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  Are farmers aware of the importance of minimum PPE?  Has any training been conducted?    Could PU staff identify locally adapted solutions / suggestions?  Are there specific body parts that farmers are not consistently covering (e.g. eyes or feet)? If yes, what barriers are there? |

# Principle 2: Water Stewardship

| **Indicator** | **Current Status**  ***Provide further detail for minor and major work needed responses*** | **Corrective Action Plan** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **What needs to be done / what changes need to be made?**  ***PUM and IP develop together*** | **Action Owner** | **Timeline** | **IP sign off *(name, date & validation of evidence)*** |
| **2.1.1** A time-bound Water Stewardship Plan is defined that addresses each of the following components: *(i) Mapping and understanding of water resources;  (ii) Managing soil moisture; (iii) Applying efficient irrigation practices to optimise water productivity (applicable to irrigation farms only); (iv) Managing water quality; (v) Engaging in collaboration and collective action to promote sustainable water use.* | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **2.1.2** A timeline for implementing the five components of the Water Stewardship Plan is established. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **2.1.9** Opportunities for collaboration and collective actions (beyond the Producer’s unit of production) to achieve sustainable water use are identified. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **2.1.10** By March 2022, collaboration and collective actions (beyond the Producer’s unit of production) towards local sustainable use of water are implemented as per opportunities identified in the Water Stewardship Plan. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |

# Principle 3: Soil Management

| **Indicator** | **Current Status**  ***Provide further detail for minor and major work needed responses*** | **Corrective Action Plan** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **What needs to be done / what changes need to be made?**  ***PUM and IP develop together*** | **Action Owner** | **Timeline** | **IP sign off *(name, date & validation of evidence)*** |
| **3.1.1** A time-bound soil management plan is defined that addresses each of the following components:  *(i) Identifying and analysing soil type;  (ii) Maintaining and enhancing soil structure; (iii) Maintaining and enhancing soil fertility;  (iv) Continuously improving nutrient cycling.* | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **3.1.2** A timeline for implementing the four components of the soil management plan is established | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **3.1.3** Soil testing is conducted that includes NPK and pH analysis. A minimum of 1 soil test per Learning Group on a minimum of 20% of the Learning Groups within a Producer Unit must be conducted each year, and with different Learning Groups each year, so that all Learning Groups are covered over a period of 5 years. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |

# Principle 4: Biodiversity and Land Use

| **Indicator** | **Current Status**  ***Provide further detail for minor and major work needed responses*** | **Corrective Action Plan** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **What needs to be done / what changes need to be made?**  ***PUM and IP develop together*** | **Action Owner** | **Timeline** | **IP sign off *(name, date & validation of evidence)*** |
| **4.1.1** A time-bound Biodiversity Management Plan that addresses each of the five following components, is defined: *(i) Identifying and mapping biodiversity resources; (i) Identifying and restoring degraded areas; (iii) Enhancing populations of beneficial insects, as per the Integrated Pest Management plan (P1); (iv) Ensuring crop rotation; (v) Protecting riparian areas.* | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **4.1.2** A timeline for implementing the five components of the Biodiversity Management Plan is established. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **4.1.3** Biodiversity resources are identified and mapped. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  What methods were used to identify and map out the biodiversity resources?  Have the mapping exercises been completed for both on farm and off farm species?  Please comment on the relevance of the focal species? |
| **4.1.4** Degraded areas on the farm are identified. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  Has a survey been conducted to determine if any degraded areas exist?  Does the PU Manager and FF have a good understanding of the concept of degraded areas?  Could any degraded areas be seen around the farms or villages?  Where degraded areas have been identified, have any interventions or actions been outlined to improve the areas? |
| **4.2.1** In case of any proposed conversion from non-agricultural land to agricultural land, the BCI High Conservation Value (HCV) risk-based simplified approach must be implemented | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |

# Principle 5: Fibre Quality

| **Indicator** | **Current Status**  ***Provide further detail for minor and major work needed responses*** | **Corrective Action Plan** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **What needs to be done / what changes need to be made?**  ***PUM and IP develop together*** | **Action Owner** | **Timeline** | **IP sign off *(name, date & validation of evidence)*** |
| **5.1.1** Good management practices for the harvest and storage of seed cotton are adopted. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |

# Principle 6: Decent Work

| **Indicator** | **Current Status**  ***Provide further detail for minor and major work needed responses*** | **Corrective Action Plan** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **What needs to be done / what changes need to be made?**  ***PUM and IP develop together*** | **Action Owner** | **Timeline** | **IP sign off *(name, date & validation of evidence)*** |
| **6.1.2** The Producer has a time-bound plan for the prevention of child labour in accordance with ILO Convention 138. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **6.1.3** There are no workers below the age of 15 (14 in certain specified countries), or below the minimum age for employment defined by local law (whichever is higher) unless they meet all of the following conditions: *(i) the child is helping on his/her own family’s farm; (ii) the child's work is structured so as to enable him/her to attend school;  (iii) the child's work should not be so demanding as to undermine his/her education; (iv) the child should not perform tasks that are hazardous for him/her because of his/her age;  (v) the child must be guided – both in terms of learning skills and supervision of tasks – by a family member;  (vi) the child has received appropriate training.* | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  Are farmers familiar with the conditions that children can and cannot work? |
| **6.1.4** A written child labour policy, specifying under which circumstances and for which tasks children can or cannot work or be employed and why, has been communicated to farmers/workers/employees. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **6.2.1** Hazardous work is not conducted by workers under 18. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **6.3.1** All forms of forced or compulsory, including bonded or trafficked labour, are prohibited. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **6.4.3** The Producer Unit has a time-bound plan to improve the position of disadvantaged groups. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  Has a survey been conducted to determine whether any disadvantaged groups exist within the PU area?  What groups have been determined as disadvantaged groups by the PU?  Were any additional disadvantaged groups observed by the assessor? |
| **6.5.2** There is no evidence of any policy, practice or customary rule that results in the payment of unequal wages on the basis of gender to workers who perform the same job. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **6.13.1** Farmers in the PU are aware of the legally applicable minimum wage/s (statutory national or regional minimum wage applicable to agriculture, collectively agreed wage, industry minimum). | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  Does the PU Manager have the corrective reference materials?  Are the PU staff aware of the concept and value?  Has any training taken place for the farmers? Or when is this scheduled? |
| **6.19.1** Use of corporal punishment, mental or physical coercion, sexual harassment or physical or verbal abuse or harassment of any kind, is prohibited. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |

# Principle 7: Management System

| **Indicator** | **Current Status**  ***Provide further detail for minor and major work needed responses*** | **Corrective Action Plan** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **What needs to be done / what changes need to be made?**  ***PUM and IP develop together*** | **Action Owner** | **Timeline** | **IP sign off *(name, date & validation of evidence)*** |
| **7.1.1** A Continuous Improvement Plan is available, implemented and monitored according to the applicable BCI Continuous Improvement planning process, and reviewed annually. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  Are the focus areas which have been selected appropriate to the PU and the local sustainability issues?  How did the PU determine these focus areas?  Are the training and planning targets realistic? |
| **7.2.1** A training plan identifying the key sustainability issues to be addressed for the Producer, the name of training provider(s), scheduling and expected participants is available and implemented. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **7.2.2** Training materials for Better Cotton Initiative farmers and workers are available to cover Better Cotton Initiative Principles and Criteria Core Indicators, with a focus on key sustainability issues in the local context. Best practices (validated locally) related to production are shared with Better Cotton Initiative farmers through appropriate dissemination material in local language. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  Have different training mechanisms been used? Please provide examples of training materials i.e. demonstration plots, videos, booklets, games  Are the training materials sufficient i.e. do they cover all necessary topics? |
| **7.2.3** The Producer reports annual data on number of Better Cotton Initiative farmers and workers trained by gender and topic to demonstrate the implementation of the training plan. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **7.2.4** The Producer operates a system to:  (i) Assess and document the level of adoption of practices promoted through training;   (ii) Identify and address the risks associated with adopting the practices promoted through training;  (iii) Evaluate the training materials continuously to improve their content and delivery. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **7.3.1** The Producer collects and maintains accurate and complete Producer Unit data in the format required by the Better Cotton Initiative. This will include (but not be limited to) name and contact information of Producer Unit Manager; list of farmers organised into Learning Groups (for smallholder Production Units); age, gender, education, level of farmers; expected seed cotton production per farmer and area under cultivation; geo-location of Producer Units; names of gins. The Producer Unit data is updated annually, at the latest by the end of sowing. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  Can you comment on the accuracy and completeness of the data based on the interactions with farmers?  Is there a method to validate / cross-check the data? |
| **7.3.2** The Producer maintains a farm-level record keeping mechanism (e.g. Famer Field Book) for essential production data on inputs and outputs in an accurate manner. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  Do all farmers have a Farmer Field Book (FFB)?  How do farmers fill out their FFB?  Can you comment on the accuracy and completeness of the data based on the interactions with farmers?  Is there a method to validate / cross-check the data? |
| **7.3.3** The Producer operates a system to collect, compile and report complete and accurate Results Indicator data in accordance with the Results Indicator Reporting template. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **7.3.4** The Producer creates and maintains a profile of the farm labour force, including estimates of numbers of workers, as per the Better Cotton Initiative defined worker categories and disaggregated by gender. The labour profile is updated annually, at the latest at the end of sowing. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **Additional question(s)**  Was the labour profile available during the Readiness Check? |
| **7.3.5** The Producer ensures that all farmers within the PU maintain receipts of sales of Better Cotton, including the buyer name, date, and volume, for at least one year and is able to collect and submit these sale records to BCI upon request. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |
| **7.4.1** The Producer operates a system to:  (i) Identify and address the risks of non-conformity with core indicators;  (ii) Plan and enforce the implementation of Corrective Actions resulting from monitoring activities. | Indicator fully met  Minor additional work needed  Major work needed  ***If major work is needed, why?***  Not enough time  Lack of knowledge/support  Other. Please provide details: |  |  |  |  |

# 7 Summary Outcome of Readiness Check

## 7.1 Result of the Readiness Check

Is the Producer Unit **ready for licensing** as of the date of this visit?  Yes  No.

*(Answer ‘****No****’ if major work needed has been identified against any indicator in* [*Section 6*](#_6_Better_Cotton) *of this report)*

For the areas where **‘major work needed’** has been identified along with the associated indicator during the assessment in [Section 6](#_6_Better_Cotton), these are areas which need to be addressed via immediate support from the IP before the PU can be put forward for licensing.

## 7.2 Next steps

The IP representative is to share this final report with the PU Manager and discuss the results and outcomes

* If the Producer is ready for licensing based on the check, no further action is required. Please submit this completed report to your Better Cotton Representative as part of the ‘recommendation for licensing’ process.
* If the Producer is not ready for licensing and major work is needed based on the Readiness Check, improvements and actions are to be implemented by the Producer as identified in the Corrective Action Plan. Evidence of closure of gaps and implementation of corrective actions are to be submitted to the IP Representative to validate. The IP Representative is to sign-off in the final column of the table and submit the completed report to your Better Cotton Country Team.

It is the responsibility of the IP to ensure the quality and completeness of Readiness Check reports before they are submitted to Better Cotton. **Please note:** putting a PU forward for licensing before they are fully compliant with all Core Indicators will be monitored and tracked by Better Cotton.

1. PUs can spend 1-2 seasons in set-up phase; if additional time is required before they are ready for licensing, a written variation must be requested. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)