

BCI Task Force on Forced Labour and Decent Work

27 March 2020

Introduction

BCI has established an expert Task Force on Forced Labour and Decent Work to review selected components of the Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS) along with key drivers of forced labour. Based on this review, the Task Force will then develop recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the BCSS in identifying, preventing, mitigating and remediating forced labour risks.

Objectives and Focus Areas

The members of the Task Force will be asked to contribute their expertise and subject knowledge in the following key areas:

1. To review existing BCSS elements – including relevant indicators from the Better Cotton Principles & Criteria, assurance model, capacity building approach, and related standard operating procedures (SOPs).
2. To develop recommendations on how to strengthen the BCSS and SOPs as related to identification, prevention, and reduction of the risk of forced labour, including in the following three main areas:
 - a. **Risk-based approaches:** Data sources, methodologies, and due diligence checks to identify specific regions, circumstances, or Producers where risks of forced labour are highest.
 - b. **System improvements for high-risk regions specifically:** This could include suggested revisions to BCI indicators, along with best practice verification or capacity building approaches that would apply in high-risk contexts only.
 - c. **General system improvements:** Changes in the BCSS or SOPs that could be implemented globally (at scale) to help BCI teams, verifiers, and partners better understand labour issues, gather relevant information from farmers and workers, and more effectively flag potential risks around labour violations.

Although the primary focus of the Task Force will be on forced labour, it is anticipated that recommendations are likely to cover a broader set of interrelated Decent Work elements, such as child labour, freedom of association and collective bargaining. These recommendations will be taken into consideration by the BCI Leadership Team and BCI Council – some recommendations may be possible to implement in the short/ mid-term, while others may feed into the next Better Cotton Standard review.

Final Outcome and Next Steps

Final recommendations from the Task Force will be produced in the form of a written report. In the interest of transparency, it is expected that the final recommendations of the Task Force will be made public. All Task Force members will have the opportunity to review and to disassociate their organisation or make a statement of dissension in the (unanticipated) case that they do not wish to be associated with some of the recommendations.

Piloting of recommendations

After the Task Force has delivered their initial recommendations, BCI anticipates a second phase of work where selected high-priority recommendations will be piloted or field-tested. This would likely take place in Q3-Q4 2020 and will be led by BCI (with strong stakeholder input). This would be outside the initial scope of work of the Task Force (as outlined above). However, Task Force members may be invited to perform an advisory role in this pilot phase, subject to further discussion and mutual agreement.

Timeframe

The Task Force will carry out its main engagement between April and August 2020, with a draft set of recommendations expected to be prepared by early August. The Task Force will convene through regular virtual meetings, coordinated and facilitated by the BCI Assurance Team. In between virtual meetings, Task Force members would be requested to spend a moderate amount of time (estimated a couple of hours) to review draft documents and provide input ahead of the next call, to ensure the group can make efficient use of meetings.

Pending major changes to COVID-19 pandemic-related travel restrictions, a possibility of an in-person working session will be explored.

For additional information or questions, please contact the BCI Standards and Assurance Team at assurance@bettercotton.org.