

Technical Standards Manager

Post announcement

Type of contract: Permanent contract

Starting date: As soon as possible

Contract Type: Permanent

Location: United Kingdom or Switzerland. Other locations with BCI offices considered for exceptional candidates.

Salary: CHF 90,000 – 95,000, GBP: £50,000 - 55,000

Application closing date: 9am on 31st May 2021



Background

The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) is a multi-stakeholder initiative and the largest cotton sustainability programme in the world. BCI and its Partners currently support over 2.3 million farmers in 23 countries in adopting more sustainable agricultural practices. Thanks to these efforts, Better Cotton accounts for around 22% of global cotton production. BCI works closely with stakeholders all the way from farms to fashion brands and civil society organisations, driving the cotton sector toward sustainability.

BCI's key objectives are to:

- » Reduce the environmental impact of cotton production;
- » Improve livelihoods and economic development in cotton producing areas;
- » Improve commitment to and flow of Better Cotton throughout the supply chain;
- » Ensure the credibility and sustainability of the Better Cotton Initiative.

The Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS) is at the heart of BCI's approach and includes six main components: the Better Cotton Principles & Criteria, Assurance Programme, Capacity Building, Chain of Custody, Results and Impact, and the Claims Framework.

The Better Cotton farm standard is known as the [Principles and Criteria \(P&C\)](#), and it lays out the global definition of Better Cotton across seven principles. The P&C ensure that Better Cotton meets clearly defined requirements on crop protection, water management, biodiversity and land-use, soil health, fibre quality, decent work, and management systems.

The Better Cotton P&C was last updated in 2017, and the next revision of the P&C is planned to launch towards the end of 2021 and run throughout 2022. This revision process will be ambitious and challenging, reflecting the significant scale that BCI now operates at, and the multitude of stakeholders that will need to be consulted and involved, from worker-representative groups to civil society experts, brands & retailers, and farmers themselves.

The revised P&C will need to deliver on a number of strategic priorities for BCI, including a greater focus on decent work, better integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation, alignment with new global 'impact targets', a more farmer-centric approach, and others. At the same time, it will need to be simple and clear for users, will need to focus on the most relevant

environmental/ social issues for each region and farm type, and deliver on its main aim of driving sustainability impacts at field level.

About this role

BCI is seeking a motivated and highly skilled Technical Standards Manager who will lead this next revision of the Principles & Criteria, and who will also play a key role in the ongoing evolution and management of the broader Better Cotton Standard System, to ensure it remains credible, efficient, and relevant. The ideal candidate will have demonstrated expertise in agronomy and sustainable agriculture, ideally with some experience in cotton. The candidate will have strong knowledge of best practices and key challenges in agricultural areas including pesticide management/ IPM/ HHP phase out, soil health, biodiversity, and water.

The ideal candidate will also have strong stakeholder engagement skills and a successful track record in working with different perspectives to reach consensus and compromise. The candidate will be familiar with sustainability standards and certification programmes, and ideally will have managed a similar standards revision exercise previously.

This role is part of the Standards and Assurance (S&A) function, and reports to the Head of S&A. It will work closely with other functions including Monitoring & Evaluation and Implementation and will have regular interaction with benchmarked partner programmes.

It is anticipated that this role may involve up to 20% travel, especially during peak periods in the standard revision and roll-out process [Covid restrictions permitting].

Responsibilities

Principles & Criteria Revision Process

- » Project manage the P&C revision process, including developing and implementing a stakeholder engagement strategy, managing an appropriate governance structure, and ensuring that project timelines, deliverables, and budgets are adhered to.
- » Identify project risks proactively, proposing solutions (in collaboration with others) as necessary, and demonstrating a good understanding of the risks/ benefits of various solutions.
- » Ensure that proactive stakeholder engagement is at the core of the standard revision process; manage stakeholder expectations effectively, work with the project team and key stakeholders to reach compromises as needed, and ensure decisions are clearly justified and transparent.
- » Work with relevant BCI teams and partners across BCI countries to design & implement a training and communication plan for the revised P&C, including an impact assessment of proposed changes and appropriate phase-in timelines, to ensure a smooth transition process.
- » Ensure that the standard revision process complies with the ISEAL Standard-Setting Code of Practice; provide documentation to demonstrate compliance as required.

- » Further refine and improve BCI's processes to ensure local applicability of the standard; this could include additional guidance or clarifications, protocols for local adaptation or exemptions, etc.

General Stakeholder Engagement

- » Further refine existing stakeholder mapping to identify key groups that interact with or are affected by the Better Cotton Standard System; develop appropriate outreach and consultation channels with these groups.
- » Ensure that key stakeholder groups – especially those who are vulnerable or marginalised – are adequately represented during P&C revision processes.
- » Directly facilitate or oversee a variety of stakeholder engagement and consultation channels, including e.g., expert working groups on specific topics, focus groups of BCI partners, farmers, or civil society members, etc.; ensure that views can be openly expressed, disagreements discussed in a constructive way, and compromises or consensus agreed wherever possible.

Ongoing P&C oversight and implementation support

- » Monitor and anticipate impacts of the P&C across BCI countries, including identifying implementation challenges or areas where Producers cannot meet core indicators; work proactively with cross functional BCI teams to find appropriate solutions and feed into future revision/ local adaptation processes.
- » Provide clarification or interpretation on standards-related matters, considering local context and relevance in different farming contexts; develop guidance or clarification materials to help clarify the intent of the P&C.
- » Work with the BCI Global Implementation Team and country teams to provide input into training and capacity building materials.
- » Establish regular outreach with BCI staff and partners in the field; integrate their feedback and experiences to feed into future innovation and development.

Financial and project management

- » Ensure projects are delivered on time, on budget, and with proactive risk management.
- » Support the effective financial management and reporting within the S&A team, in cooperation with the Head of S&A, to ensure sound financial management.
- » Manage, as required, consultancy budgets and contracts to ensure efficient and effective use of financial resources.
- » Support BCI's fundraising efforts in cooperation with the BCI Leadership Team to secure dedicated funding for standards-related research and innovation efforts.

Other

- » Carry out technical reviews of assurance/ verification reports from BCI farms, especially during busy assessment/ licensing seasons.
- » Support on licensing decisions and licensing Appeals processes, as required.
- » Work closely with colleagues in the S&A team to monitor developments and trends in sustainable agriculture and cotton production; proactively identify opportunities to integrate these into the Better Cotton Standard System where appropriate.

- » Contribute to collaborations with other standard setters and certification schemes to identify areas of cross learning for BCI, and to share insights from our own standard system.
- » Carry out and/or contract research/ pilot projects on an ad-hoc basis, including working with the Fundraising team to identify opportunities and secure funding; ensuring learnings are well documented and communicated, and lessons learned shape future BCI approaches.
- » Represent BCI in various industry events, working groups, or projects, as appropriate and as agreed with the line manager.
- » Participate in various other projects or cross-functional initiatives, according to interest, capacity, and organisational requirements.

Profile

Successful candidates for the Technical Standards Manager role will have the following attributes:

Qualification, Skills & Experience
Essential
University degree at Master's level, or equivalent higher education qualification, in a relevant field (e.g. agronomy, agricultural sciences, sustainability, etc.)
At least 8-10 years' working experience in a related field, with a minimum 5 years' experience managing projects.
Demonstrated knowledge and expertise in agronomy/ sustainable agriculture; knowledge of best practices and common challenges related to pesticides/ IPM, soil health, water, biodiversity, and climate change adaptation/ mitigation
In-depth understanding of certification and standards schemes
Demonstrated experience leading stakeholder engagement (i.e., managing focus group discussions, leading working groups, etc)
Strong project management skills, as demonstrated through successful delivery of complex projects in a multi-stakeholder environment
Fluent in English – excellent ability to communicate clearly and concisely in verbal and written work
IT literacy, to include: Word; Excel; PowerPoint; Outlook
Excellent organisational abilities – able to prioritise effectively and meet deadlines across multiple competing workstreams
Willingness to travel regularly (unless travel restrictions are in place) and to carry out some administrative tasks
Desirable
First-hand experience coordinating or managing a standard revision process
Experience writing technical indicators or standards documents
Field experience in agriculture at least one of the major countries where BCI operates (i.e., India, Pakistan, Turkey, China, US, Mozambique, Mali, etc)
Knowledge and experience in decent work/ labour issues in agriculture
Fluency in at least one additional language relevant in BCI countries of operation – French, Mandarin, Portuguese, Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Turkish, etc

Working arrangements

- » This is a full time (40 hours per week) position. Part time roles (at least 80%) could be considered on discussion.
- » United Kingdom and Switzerland are preferred locations; however, ideal candidates in other locations with a BCI office will be considered.

Applications

Interested applicants with the required attributes are asked to send, in English, a detailed CV and a brief cover letter (2 pages maximum) via email with subject “Application for Technical Standards Manager” to: recruitment@bettercotton.org

Application deadline: 9 AM on the 31st May 2021

We thank all applicants for their interest; however, only candidates short-listed for a telephone interview will be contacted.

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