

Member Toolkit

Retailers and Brands

2021

Your guide to managing your BCI Membership

| **Join** | **Implement** | **Communicate** |



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Glossary of BCI Terms

BCI:	Better Cotton Initiative
BCP:	Better Cotton Platform (formerly known as Better Cotton Tracer)
BCCU:	Better Cotton Claim Unit
BMZ:	Bundesministerium Für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit (German Federal Ministry for Economic Development Cooperation)
CoC:	Chain of Custody
DFAT:	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
GIF:	Better Cotton Growth and Innovation Fund
IDH:	The Sustainable Trade Initiative
RB:	Retailer and Brand Member
SM:	Supplier and Manufacturer Member
ODF:	Output Declaration Form
OPM:	On-Product Mark
VBF:	Volume Based Fee

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to BCI

The Better Cotton Initiative exists to make global cotton production better for the people who produce it, better for the environment it grows in and better for the cotton sector's future. BCI aims to transform cotton production worldwide by developing Better Cotton as a sustainable mainstream commodity.

To achieve this mission, BCI owns and stewards the [Better Cotton Standard System](#) – the system which encompasses a diverse range of activities and stakeholders from cotton production, through the cotton supply chain to consumer-facing retailers and brands. The programme is aimed at achieving measurable change for the environment, farming communities and the economies of cotton producing areas.

The four specific aims of BCI are:

- To reduce the environmental impact of cotton production;
- To improve livelihoods and economic development in cotton producing areas;
- To improve commitment to and flow of Better Cotton throughout the supply chain; and
- To ensure the credibility and organisational sustainability of the Better Cotton Initiative.

1.2 How BCI Retailer and Brand (RB) Members Are Creating Change

BCI Members believe that a systemic approach to change in cotton production is required. However, the approach must be compatible with business, being both pragmatic and cost-effective.

The Better Cotton Standard System was created by multi-stakeholders and is supported by the Better Cotton Growth and Innovation Fund (GIF).

BCI RBs contribute to the Better Cotton GIF through volume-based fees (VBF) generated by verified sourcing of cotton-containing products “as Better Cotton”. Public and private partners of the Better Cotton GIF, match-fund the VBF of BCI RBs to generate the total funds available for field level training and capacity building including annual farmer education programmes for production of Better Cotton.

1.4 The Toolkit

This Toolkit is targeted at the cross-functional teams in corporate offices of BCI RB Members, to help them adopt the Better Cotton responsible sourcing programme after joining BCI. The process and timeline outlined here are based on emerging best practice from the >200 Retailer and Brand Members of BCI.

Who are these teams?

The functions that create successful implementation are staff managing CSR, Production Forecasting and Planning, Sourcing, Quality, Supply Chain, Merchandising, Communications, PR, Marketing, and Finance. Good coordination between corporate and field staff is essential for successful implementation. BCI strongly recommends assigning the implementation task to a central coordinator or manager, who would also be the liaison with the Better Cotton Initiative's Membership Team – the primary contact for BCI.

1.3 The Business Case for Retailers and Brands

The business case for retailers and brands is as follows:

- BCI is a credible, multi-stakeholder approach to transform the market and promote more sustainable cotton production. It collects and analyses farm level results and does not bring unacceptable cost to commercial businesses.
- BCI provides a consistent mechanism for participation of retailers and brands through the Better Cotton Chain of Custody and allows them to communicate their participation to stakeholders including customers and consumers.
- BCI RB Members have access to an abundant supply of Better Cotton. BCI's online platform, the Better Cotton Platform, allows RB Members to source cotton containing products/orders as Better Cotton by using mass balance administration, and have those volumes verified by the Better Cotton Platform.
- There is minimal supply chain disruption, rather suppliers are invited to join the Better Cotton Chain of Custody implementation in a way that does not add unnecessary complexity.
- BCI supports its members to adopt its responsible sourcing programme and provides training support for RB Members in key sourcing countries.
- Retailers and brands join a mature system of sourcing, with >8,000 commercial businesses using the Better Cotton Platform.
- BCI Members have representation on the BCI Council, its governing body, and can influence the future direction of BCI as a group.
- BCI collects and analyses farm level results that, thus far, have demonstrated strong positive environmental, social and economic benefits for BCI Farmers and their communities; BCI Members are investing in a credible and worthwhile programme.

The core content of this toolkit is the 'Roadmap and Timelines' for an RB Member in their first year at BCI. The timelines are colour coded and capture the following:

- Administrative timeline across a year of BCI membership;
- Programme implementation timeline;
- Recommended communications timeline;
- Calendar of BCI global events and trainings; and
- BCI resources to support this process.

Programme implementation is company-specific and may vary from the process and times given here, but the overall implementation roadmap should contain the activities outlined in the 'Roadmap and Timelines.'

The supporting tool for this document is a spreadsheet. The tabs in the spreadsheet are the implementation 'Roadmap and Timeline'; 'BCI Resources available to members'; and 'Case Studies', which are examples of member programmes.

2. Toolkit Instructions

2.1 BCI Retailer & Brand Member (RB) Toolkit

This Toolkit is intended to provide visibility of all activities that promote proper planning of the essential components of your BCI Membership, and the implementation of the Better Cotton Chain of Custody in your sourcing of cotton-containing orders. Timelines and specific engagements are not contractual, but rather, are recommendations based on our experience with existing members.

2.2 Instructions

- This RB Toolkit pdf (this document) is for printing.
- Links contained in this document are active/clickable when online. They will open relevant documents and links on the Better Cotton Initiative website.
- Each rectangular box in the 'Roadmap and Timelines' page corresponds to a detailed description in subsequent pages.
 - Note that the timelines within this toolkit are not interactive. For the interactive timeline, follow the instructions below.

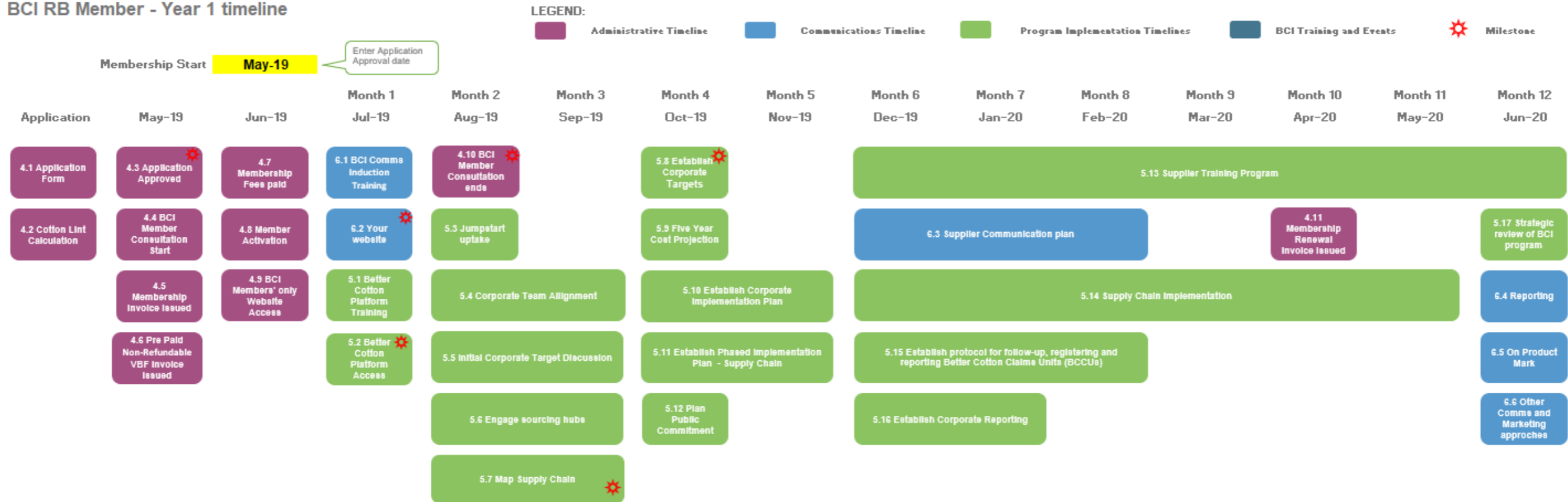
2.3 Instructions for Using the 'Interactive Timeline'

- The Interactive Timeline can be accessed by clicking on the 'Interactive Toolkit' link on the 'Roadmap and Timelines' page (p6) of this document.
- Download the Interactive Toolkit and save it to your computer.
- Once the Interactive Toolkit is open, enter your membership start date into the relevant cell in the "Roadmap and Timelines" tab.
- The timeline will adjust to your start date and allows you to see what a recommended implementation timeline looks like for a new BCI RB Member based on our experience and observations.
- Use this roadmap to create a company-specific project plan to understand timings and activities over the BCI annual operating cycle.
- Click on each of the boxes to find a description of tasks related to that activity.

3. BCI Roadmap and Timelines

The Interactive Timeline can be accessed via the link: [Interactive Timeline](#). Download and save it on your computer.

BCI RB Member - Year 1 timeline



BCI Timelines



4. Administration

This section describes the general administrative steps involved in a BCI membership.

4.1 Application Form

Timeline: Application

- Complete and have the BCI Membership Application Form*, including the Code of Practice, signed by an authorised signatory for your company.
- Ensure all supporting documents listed in the application are prepared for submission e.g. your company registration documents; your company logo graphic; and your business's cotton lint calculation.
- Submit the application to membership@bettercotton.org.

4.2 Cotton Lint Calculation

Timeline: Application

- An essential step to engage in more sustainable cotton is to know how much cotton lint your company required for its previous audited fiscal year's performance. BCI fees are determined by this cotton lint figure. This is the total cotton lint that was "consumed" by all spinners and vertical mills in an RB's supply chain for the RB to end up with all of the finished products they bought from their garment manufacturers. All types of cotton that you use are included (e.g. Fairtrade, certified organic). This calculation helps you to understand your dependence on cotton and initiate discussions about responsible sourcing of the raw material.
- You may assess your cotton lint consumption by:
 - Using your own calculations with your company's previous year's sales data and the BCI cotton lint conversion factors; or
 - Using the BCI Cotton Calculator ([Cotton Calculator](#))

In all cases, you are fully responsible for any claims related to this calculation. THIS FIGURE IS AN ESTIMATION AND YOU MUST CLEARLY CAPTURE ASSUMPTIONS MADE TO CARRY OUT THIS CALCULATION. Assumptions may change and evolve over the years but should be well documented each year. For example, you may decide to include licensee products or products containing much less cotton etc. as your control of the sourcing and ambition in the programme grows. **BCI uses your cotton lint usage to determine your membership and volume-based fees.**

- Submit your detailed calculation to your Membership contact.
- Cotton calculation guidelines, requirements and tools can be found on the BCI website ([Measuring Cotton Consumption](#)).

4.3 Application Approved

Timeline: Approval Process

- Application forms are submitted to BCI Leadership for approval. This can take from one to six weeks.
- You are informed immediately on approval of your application.

4.4 BCI Member Consultation Starts

Timeline: Approval Process

- According to the BCI Statutes, BCI Members have the possibility to provide feedback on new members joining BCI. This is carried out in the form of a three-month Member Consultation starting when a member is approved.
- BCI posts your membership intent into the Membership Area of the BCI website for the Member Consultation.

- While under Member Consultation, applicants who pay their membership dues are activated, and have the same access to BCI resources and benefits as existing members.

4.5 Membership Invoice Issued

Timeline: Approval Process

- A membership fee invoice is raised by BCI Finance when you are approved, payable within 60 days. Membership services will be accessible upon full payment of the invoice.
- It is important to note that membership fees are used to cover the operating budget of the BCI Secretariat.

4.6 Pre-Paid Non-Refundable VBF Invoice Issued

Timeline: Approval Process

- A farmer contribution fee is also invoiced when your membership is approved, payable within 60 days.
- This fee is deductible from annual volume-based fees (VBF) generated by 31 December of the current year.
- It is important to note that volume-based fees are fully used to cover costs related to the production of Better Cotton, mainly for the farmer training programme. It is invested into the Better Cotton GIF, where it attracts match-funding from public and private donors.

4.7 Membership Fees Paid

Timeline: Approval Process

- Status change from 'Application Approved' to 'Member Under Consultation',
- No action is required from the member.
- Member should not keep BCI Programme implementation on hold during this period.

4.8 Member Activation

Timeline: Approval Process

- Member activation gives access to member services, and specifically, access to the Members Only areas of the BCI website.
- You are also able to access the RB Caucus Forum on Yammer where RB Members can interact amongst each other and with their BCI Council Representatives.
- You will receive the Monthly Member Update and Quarterly Bulletin, regular e-communications for members.
- You will be contacted for an online on-boarding meeting with your key contact in the BCI Membership Team.
- Your key contact will ask you to complete an online Better Cotton Chain of Custody and Better Cotton Platform training before your on-boarding meeting.
- You can also access your Better Cotton Platform account on successful completion of the Better Cotton Platform training.
- Your key contact in the BCI Membership Team will request a Communications Induction Training for you and relevant colleagues, and facilitate access to regional BCI staff, including the Supplier Training Programme.
- Importantly, you can use the Better Cotton Claims Framework to inform all your stakeholders that you are a member of BCI.

4. Administration *(continued.)*

4.9 BCI Members Only Website Access

Timeline: Approval Process

The members' area of the BCI website contains information that only members can access. These include field stories, pictures, logo access, key facts and data, BCI policies, and more. Please consult the BCI Communications Team for review before you publish any BCI information, or claims related to BCI.

4.10 BCI Member Consultation Ends

Timeline: Month 3

- If three months of Member Consultation ends with no feedback, the applicant is confirmed as a BCI Member. There are no additional application steps or access to additional member resources given during Member Activation. All member resources and benefits are accessible once the member has paid their first invoice, after the application is approved.
- During Membership Consultation, BCI reserves the right to exclude a member following feedback gathered through the consultation. Any monies paid will be refunded in the case of exclusion during the member consultation stage.
- PLEASE NOTE: Any member exclusion after Member Consultation i.e. during the course of a membership, can only take place through a formal BCI Council decision, and in this case, no monies are refunded by BCI.

4.11 Membership Renewal Invoice

Timeline: Month 10

- The membership renewal invoice will be issued by BCI Finance two months prior to the membership renewal date. The invoice is payable within 60 days.
- Membership services will be suspended if the invoice is not paid in full.

4.12 VBF Invoice and Pre-Paid VBF Invoice

Timeline: Quarter 1

- Volume based fee invoices are calculated based on the total Better Cotton Claim Units (BCCUs) registered in the member's Better Cotton Platform Account (BCP). The rate is determined by BCCUs registered (= Better Cotton sourced) and annual cotton consumption figures that BCI holds at the beginning of the year. VBF invoices are sent in Quarter 1 each year. Pre-paid VBF or Farmer Contributions are deducted. If these latter are higher than VBF, please note NO REFUND IS POSSIBLE. Your pre-payments are invested during the

year you pay them to cover field activities (i.e. farmer training to create Better Cotton supply).

- The pre-paid volume-based fee invoice is invoiced in the first quarter of the current year. This is equal to the previous year's volume-based fee for existing members.

4.13 Submit Self-Assessment

Timeline: September/October

- BCI Members are requested to take a self-assessment in Autumn each year.
- The self-assessment is a survey to determine if members align with the BCI Code of Practice which is part of your application file and signed by your company representative. The link to the self-assessment survey is emailed by the BCI Membership Team in September/October of each year. **The survey must be completed and submitted within 4 weeks.**

4.14 Deadline for Declaring Annual BCCUs

Timeline: December

- Total annual BCCUs must be declared and acknowledged in the BCP by RB Members by 31 December each year.
- It is your (RB Member's) responsibility to inform your suppliers and follow up reporting according to the requirements of the Better Cotton Chain of Custody.
- BCI verifies BCCUs you have registered in your BCP account, and your communications claims must match registered BCCUs.
- Be sure to study the Better Cotton Chain of Custody and understand all related documentary requirements to support BCCUs registered in your account.

4.15 Submit Five Year Forecast

Timeline: April-November

- Internally review and complete your five-year cost projection for scaling up your BCI Programme. Be sure to consult with all relevant colleagues for alignment.
- Update and submit a new forecast with every budget cycle, strategic review or performance management review to submit within the BCI timeline above – this is important for the Q1 invoicing of VBF.
- The cost projection helps with your budgeting cycle as well as enabling BCI to forecast funding for the GIF and supply related work.
- The 5-Year Plan Scale Up Projection Tool can be accessed via the following link: [BCI Sourcing Scale Up Projection Tool](#).

Joining BCI, for a retailer and/or brand, is foremost a commitment to implement a responsible sourcing programme for cotton-containing purchase orders. It requires members to actively implement the Better Cotton Chain of Custody Guidelines by engaging with their supply chains. The high-level milestones and related activities described here are based on our observations of programme implementation with current members and will help you plan and guide internal engagement within your company and supply chain.

5. Programme Implementation

5.1 Better Cotton Platform Training

Timeline: Month 1

- Review the Better Cotton [Chain of Custody Guidelines](#) to understand the requirements to source cotton-containing products “as Better Cotton.”
- Understand what the Chain of Custody requires you to hold for two years as documentary support for your BCCU allotments and ensure that relevant procedures are put in place within your company.
- The Better Cotton Platform (BCP) is an online system owned by BCI, and is used by ginners, traders, spinners, other textile value chain actors, and by retailers and brands. It is used to account for volumes of seed Better Cotton as they are sold from farms to gins, and for documentation and reporting purposes between suppliers and manufacturers after the gin level in the supply chain. The Better Cotton Platform allows BCI to verify the volumes of Better Cotton lint sourced by spinners and merchants in an RB Member’s supply chain, allowing BCI’s RB Members to make credible claims about their sourcing activities to their stakeholders.
- The Better Cotton Chain of Custody and Platform Training are available around the clock on our online training platform via this [link](#).
- It is recommended that the BCI primary contact takes the training to understand how it works and determine how the Better Cotton Platform must be adopted by the RB Member to cover their sourcing. Then, colleagues who will be involved in managing the reporting should take the training. Alternatively, many people involved in the project can take the training, then decide together who should be accessing the system for monitoring and management. Plan to do refresher trainings at least once per year for all personnel having access to the member’s Better Cotton Platform account.
- Be sure to manage access for staff who leave your company and inform BCI within 15 days according to the Better Cotton Chain of Custody.
- Contact the BCI Better Cotton Platform Coordinator (support@bettercotton.org) in case of specific questions relating to use of the system.

5.2 Better Cotton Platform Access

Timeline: Month 1

- Once training is completed, plan who should have BCP access in your company, then apply for BCP access by emailing the Better Cotton Platform Coordinator (support@bettercotton.org).

5.3 Jumpstart Your Uptake

Timeline: Month 2

New BCI Members, at this point, are usually ready to have some “quick wins” by accepting BCCUs as they source cotton-containing products/orders from their suppliers who are already BCI Members. Some suppliers who are BCI Members may be ready to allot BCCUs towards cotton-containing orders from new RB Members. BCI recommends starting with these opportunities to gain experience about how the Better Cotton Chain of Custody works and use the experience to inform implementation plans being established by the company. Please note however that for longer term success a systematic, collaborative and educational approach must be taken towards your supply chain.

5.4 Corporate Team Alignment

Timeline: Months 2 and 3

There might still be a need to consolidate or achieve cross-functional corporate alignment within a new member company to support systematic planning of the responsible sourcing programme.

- Contact the BCI Membership Team to plan meetings with your key cross-functional colleagues essential to successful implementation. BCI Membership or other staff can be a valuable resource for this type of company meeting.
- Aim to get your key functional colleagues and decision-makers on board with your Better Cotton sourcing implementation plan.
- Raise awareness and inspire your staff – your company is using “business as usual” to create transformation of a commodity together with like-minded businesses globally. Your engagement is improving the lives of cotton farmers.
- Use BCI photos, artwork, farmer stories, member quotations and videos to bring visibility internally, accessible here: [BCI Resources](#).

5.5 Initial Corporate Target Discussions

Timeline: Months 2 and 3

- Participation of cross-functional colleagues is key to kick off discussions on targets.
- The following key functions are the most useful to include in these discussions: Brand Merchandising, Sourcing, Supply Chain, Production Forecasting and Planning, Fabric Procurement, Product Category Staff, Quality, CSR, Communications and Marketing.
- Supply chain mapping of your products by country against the list of suppliers engaged with BCI [on the website](#) is the type of mapping exercise that is helpful to uncover the products that will help you meet target volumes. Your first targets may be internal until you are comfortable releasing an externally communicated target.
- Revisit your five-year cost projection periodically to match targets with your budget and ensure alignment with senior management.
- When your plans are robust enough to meet targets, and there is a critical mass of internal and supplier engagement, consider publishing your target commitments. It is important to share your sourcing targets with your key suppliers and business partners, so they can use the information to inform their participation in BCI.
- Other company stakeholders are also keenly interested in your CSR progress.
- The Better Cotton Claims Framework provides language to use when publishing your targets.

5.6 Engage Your Sourcing Hubs

Timeline: Months 2 and 3

- As the discussions at corporate level occur, your colleagues from regional sourcing hubs should get engaged quickly in Chain of Custody discussions as they are responsible for sourcing decisions and know your suppliers.
- Make sure that they are aware of our online Chain of Custody training and have a copy of the Better Cotton Chain of Custody Guidelines.
- BCI staff based in sourcing hubs can also visit your local offices to carry out training or involve your staff in roundtables taking place from time-to-time locally.

5. Programme Implementation (Continued)

5.7 Map Supply Chain

Timeline: Months 2 and 3

- Together with key corporate and sourcing hub colleagues, continue your supply chain mapping to start working systematically to set targets for sourcing cotton-containing orders as Better Cotton.
- Map products vs countries vs suppliers in country vs BCI Members/Better Cotton Platform users to uncover the products that will help you meet target volumes.
- You can also start systematically getting your suppliers to use the Better Cotton Platform or to become BCI members – as far as possible get your suppliers involved rather than change suppliers which creates disruption and unnecessary cost.
- Part of mapping is answering the following questions, which help create a controlled and phased implementation of Better Cotton sourcing:
 - Which product lines are heaviest in cotton content?
 - Where are they coming from? Which countries, which suppliers?
 - Which suppliers are vertical?
 - Which of your suppliers are on [the BCI list](#) i.e. they are already on the Better Cotton Platform?
- Dialogue with key suppliers about their plans for scaling up their responsible sourcing programmes or getting engaged with BCI.
- Determine quick wins to meet targets in early years and systematically plan the scale up for following years.

5.8 Establish Corporate Targets

Timeline: Month 4

- With the knowledge gained from your supply chain mapping and your five-year cost projections, you are ready to establish corporate targets for your Better Cotton Programme and create a firm plan to achieve them for at least the first two years.
- Does your company intend to engage with consumers at a product level about its Better Cotton Initiative engagement?
 - If yes, then the sourcing thresholds for use of the BCI on-product mark must be considered in setting corporate targets. Find the relevant guidelines here ([Better Cotton Claims Framework](#)).
- Make sure your targets align with your business needs.
- Get approval for your targets from key corporate decision makers.
- Assign responsibilities for meeting the targets.
- Internal communication to key colleagues about the commitment is important for continued progress until a wide implementation plan is adopted.

5.9 Five Year Cost Projection

Timeline: Month 4

- Review five-year cost projection and resubmit it to BCI based on established targets.
- Contact BCI Membership (membership@bettercotton.org) for a copy of the 5-year projection template, it is updated every year

5.10 Establish Corporate Implementation Plan

- Outline your implementation plan so that there is a common reference point for all your cross-functional colleagues.

- This may be via an internal company website or a paper document and should contain your context, your commitment, your strategy, your targets and timelines, key functional roles and who is accountable for achieving your targets as well as when you will report on and review these targets.
- Our interactive timeline can also be added to your corporate implementation plan or inform the skeleton of your plan.
- Another level of implementation detail will describe the supply chain implementation.
- Keep all your stakeholders updated on your progress.

5.11 Establish Phased Implementation Plan - Supply Chain

Timeline: Months 4 and 5

- Create a phased implementation plan based on your initial sourcing discussions. This is reviewed each year to scale up existing suppliers to 100% sourcing of cotton-containing products as Better Cotton and to include new suppliers in the programme.
- As you include new suppliers and progress with implementation, use the BCI Supplier Training Programme to bring suppliers on board. This results in real supply chain engagement and helpful discussions on sourcing cotton-containing orders as Better Cotton.
- Carefully plan and phase communications from your company to key suppliers. Create a communications plan for your supply chain:
 - COMMUNICATE your commitments – it triggers suppliers' business discussions around engaging with BCI.
 - DIALOGUE with your suppliers – it allows them to buy into your vision.
 - ALLOW suppliers time to explore this new direction and how to integrate it into their business – leads to long term success.
 - AGREE on targets that they can comfortably meet while you meet your goal – this tends to reduce risk of opportunistic pricing.
- Hold staff accountable for checking that suppliers register BCCUs on an on-going basis.
- Agree on your overall plan internally and allocate resources appropriately for successful implementation.
- Assign roles and responsibilities to different functions within your company.
- Reach out to your Membership contact to invite your suppliers to join a supplier training session [online](#).

5.12 Plan Public Commitment

Timeline: Month 4

With your Corporate Communications personnel, plan when you would like to make your programme targets public. This is important for your stakeholders to see, especially your supply chain business partners as they support your Better Cotton scale-up by making firm plans based on your commitment.

5.13 Supplier Training Programme

Timeline: Months 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12

- During supplier implementation, visit the [Supplier Training Programme](#) (STP) area of the BCI website to plan your supplier scale up by region.
- Respect the training schedules as BCI Staff involved are monitoring the entire supply chain implementation of the BCI Programme and so seasonally might not be available due to the cotton harvest.

5. Programme Implementation *(Continued)*

- Invite all your suppliers who should be involved in the Better Cotton Chain of Custody - old and new, BCI Members or non-BCI Members - as an opportunity to learn, have a refresher, update and dialogue. Ideally, suppliers for this training are end-product manufacturers (cut-sew), fabric mills, and spinners.
- Be prepared to share your company implementation plan and progress to inspire and motivate them to work with you to achieve desired levels of sourcing.
- For the Better Cotton Platform, be clear and prescriptive on what you would like them to do. For example, which document reference do you need them to record in the Better Cotton Platform to track the progress of your Better Cotton scale up? Allotments of BCCUs must be aligned with sourcing of cotton-containing products or orders.

5.14 Supply Chain Implementation

Timeline: Months 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11

- Supply chain implementation is a process that is repeated and expanded progressively, with new and existing suppliers from your supply chains, as you progress to higher levels of Better Cotton uptake.
- Carry out controls to ensure that all suppliers from previous production seasons are fully aware of your plans to continue sourcing cotton-containing products as Better Cotton in the current season and that it is becoming part of your sourcing as usual.
- Ensure your BCP accesses are set up logically for optimal follow-up of reporting by suppliers:
 - Plan how many logins you need for your colleagues to adequately control reporting e.g. login per sourcing country or sourcing hub or per brand or product category?
 - All suppliers shall be on the BCP.
- Calculate the expected BCCUs for a period (per season or per half year) and per supplier and ensure that they are uploaded by a clearly communicated deadline date to your BCP Account. As orders are delivered, create a reliable and auditable link between BCCUs registered to your account and real orders delivered to you.
- Ensure that before 31 December each year the BCCUs match what was agreed with your different suppliers.

5.15 Your Supplier Communication Plan

Timeline: Months 6, 7 and 8

- Establish your internal communications plan to keep suppliers aware of your targets and progress.
- Communicate your plans; some BCI Members have dedicated suppliers' portals, annual supplier meetings or conferences.
- Ensure that all product specification packages contain factual and clear instructions regarding sourcing your cotton products as Better Cotton.

5.16 Establish a Protocol for Follow-Up, Registering and Reporting Better Cotton Claims Units (BCCUs)

Timeline: Months 6, 7 and 8

- Document concisely and clearly instructions for the supply chain to follow. This is so that there is a reference document or instruction in place that communicates the Better Cotton Chain of Custody Guidelines.
- Documentation ensures continuity in case of staff turnover.
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- Documentation assures auditors that you are implementing with due diligence and that you can reliably demonstrate alignment with the BCI Chain of Custody Guidelines.

5.17 Establish Corporate Reporting

Timeline: Months 6 and 7

- At corporate level, plan to report regularly on progress to your company programme sponsors and cross functional colleagues.
- Ensure that before 31 December each year, the BCCUs registered match what you agreed with your different suppliers.
- BCI can only verify what you have on your Better Cotton Platform account and your communications claims must match registered BCCUs. Any claims related to your overall cotton footprint are entirely your company's responsibility. BCI recommends that you establish a verification process with a suitable third party on your cotton lint calculation to support those claims.

5.18 Strategic Review of BCI Programme

Timeline: Month 12

- Review your programme during your business's strategic review period and adjust targets to better fit strategic direction. Consider these factors:
 - How have you performed against expectations?
 - What needs to change?
 - Who needs to do it?
 - By when?
- Review your financial planning, budgets, and payments to BCI, and use these insights to adjust your five-year cost projections; when finalised, re-submit to BCI Membership.
- Also review whether the programme is providing the desired stakeholder value. Consider communications, marketing and PR activities related to your BCI engagement. Adjust or develop further if necessary. Be sure to plan time to consult with BCI Communications Staff for support and approval of BCI-related marketing communications.
- As part of your review and actions, consult with BCI Membership on any expected and unexpected changes that happened during the fiscal year – selling parts of the business, reorganisation, acquiring brands, changing membership from a single brand to a holding company with a portfolio of brands etc.
- Communicate internally and with BCI, any relevant information such as communication campaign launches, or more aggressive supply chain scale-up so that BCI can plan to support you.

6. Communication

The steps below will help you to make credible and positive claims about Better Cotton and allow flexibility in how to communicate about your commitment.

6.1 BCI Communications Induction Training

Timeline: Month 1

- Members can start engaging with stakeholders using the [Better Cotton Claims Framework](#).
- A BCI communications induction call is offered.
- Discuss ways you can announce your membership to your stakeholders.
- Contact membership@bettercotton.org if you would like your corporate logo displayed on the BCI website carousel. So far, BCI is unable to display all your brand logos.

6.2 Your Website

Timeline: Month 1

- You can publish a 'Membership Statement' and the BCI logo on your corporate and/or brand website.
 - The BCI Communications Team must sign off the publication of any further information.
 - Let your supply chain know you are a BCI Member. Those who are already BCI Members can start planning for your orders. Those who are not members can learn how to do this with the Better Cotton Chain of Custody or consider membership themselves.

6.3 Reporting

Timeline: Month 12

- Consider including your BCI Membership and progress in your sustainability reporting. Sign off proposed content with BCI Communications Team.
- BCI can only verify volumes sourced as Better Cotton shown in your Better Cotton Platform account. Your communications claims must match this.
- Any claims related to overall annual cotton consumption are your company's responsibility. We maintain that the latter are estimates and must be supported by your assumptions when making these calculations. See [here](#) for verification requirements. We recommend that you have a third party review them.

6.4 On Product Mark (OPM)

Timeline: Month 12

- Retailer and Brand members sourcing at least 10% of their total cotton consumption as Better Cotton and meeting the additional eligibility criteria can apply for the use of the BCI on-product mark (OPM). The OPM is a way to utilise product packaging/e-commerce or catalogue product listings as channels through which members can communicate their commitment to BCI. NOTE: Under no circumstances, via any channel, can a member suggest that Better Cotton is physically present in a product.
- Members must be sourcing at least 10% of their total cotton lint buy as Better Cotton (verified on the Better Cotton Platform) and be making all Level One Claims from the Better Cotton Claims Framework in order to meet eligibility.
- Establish your brand(s) marketing strategy regarding use of the OPM.

- Note that due to the nature of the Chain of Custody model used by BCI (Mass Balance Administration), any majority cotton product can be used as a channel to communicate commitment, using the OPM. This strategy for use of the OPM should be established up-front.
- Contact the BCI Communications Team to review your eligibility and discuss communications plans.
- Contact the BCI Communications Team for approval of your OPM artwork.

6.5 Other Communications and Marketing Approaches

Timeline: Month 12

- The Better Cotton Claims Framework outlines multiple communications options. Claims can be made that demonstrate your commitment, demonstrate your investment in real terms, tell farmer stories and outline results to name a few options.

Examples are available that detail ways in which BCI Members are using the Claims Framework. Ask your key BCI contact in the Membership Team for examples

7. Training and Events

Throughout the year we hold various events around the world and online webinars to help you learn more about Better Cotton. These range from events that outline what it means to be a member of BCI, to specific training and networking events for existing members to learn more about sourcing cotton-containing products as Better Cotton. The most up to date listing of events will always be online at <http://bettercotton.org/get-involved/events/>.

7.1 Annual Global Cotton Sustainability Conference hosted by BCI

Timeline: June each year

This annual conference brings the entire sector together to collaborate on a more sustainable future for cotton. Join industry leaders and experts for an interactive opportunity to explore thematic areas at field level, in the supply chain and in consumer facing business.

For details and to register visit the link below:

[BCI Global Cotton Conference](#)

7.2 Better Cotton Chain of Custody and Better Cotton Platform Training

Timeline: Available online

BCI has created an online training platform so that training is available to everyone 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. There are compulsory quizzes in the training and you need to successfully complete these to be able to create your Better Cotton Platform Account. You can gain access [here](#).

7.3 BCI Regional Member Meetings

Timeline: Variable

Every year BCI may host the BCI Regional Members Meetings in India, Pakistan, China, USA and Turkey. This is based on perceived demand. Join us for updates on Better Cotton globally and locally. It is the ideal opportunity for networking with fellow BCI Members across the cotton supply chain, including ginners; cotton traders; spinners; fabric and garment mills; and retailers and brands. Visit the [BCI events page](#) for dates and locations of the Regional Members Meetings.

7.4 Retailer and Brand Peer to Peer Workshops and Roundtables

Timeline: Variable

Every year BCI runs moderated peer-to-peer workshops in various locations across the world. These workshops offer learning opportunities with the goal of providing a platform for BCI RB Members to discuss how to unlock barriers to sourcing Better Cotton and to share best practices in programme implementation.

Visit the [BCI events page](#) for dates and locations of Workshops and Roundtables. BCI also sends member invitations.

7.5 BCI Field Trips

Timeline: Variable, usually Q3 and Q4 annually

Join us for a chance to visit cotton farms, ginners, and other actors at the source of cotton production. Different locations around the world will offer different agendas and registration options. In most cases, attendees will be responsible for their own travel and accommodation at a central location where the BCI Field Trip will begin. Ground transportation and other logistics will be provided by the BCI Field Trip organiser.

Visit the [BCI events page](#) for dates and locations of BCI Field Trips.

8. Resources

This resources page is intended as a quick BCI reference for RB Members to access tools related to specific steps in the BCI journey. The categorisation of BCI tools is broad. These tools and resources may be applicable at various stages of your membership journey. (Updated as of January 2021)



8.1 Step 1: Learning about Better Cotton for Your Business

These tools are also effective for internal training or introductions to BCI.

- www.BetterCotton.org: Access the BCI website for all current information.
- [BCI Introduction Slides](#): A brief introduction to BCI.
- [BCI Online Q&As](#): Access the most common FAQs.
- [Key Facts Flyer](#) & Brochure

8.2 Step 2: Securing Internal Buy-In

These tools promote deeper engagement with internal teams to integrate Better Cotton into your business.

- [Members List](#): Current list of BCI Members helpful for identifying suppliers, peers and competitors already in BCI.
- [Supplier List](#): All suppliers on the Better Cotton Platform using the Better Cotton Chain of Custody
- [BCI Video Library](#): For a variety of short video content.
- [Membership & Funding Model](#): It is critical to understand the long-term financial implications for this responsible sourcing programme.

8.3 Step 3: Join BCI

Apply for membership and start to access your member benefits.

- [Membership Application & Fees Table](#)
- [Cotton Calculator](#): For an estimate of your total cotton footprint.
- [BCI Sourcing Scale Up Projection Tool](#): Estimate what your engagement will cost over the next five years.

8.4 Step 4: Set Targets and Map Supply Chain

Access tools to help you set targets and drive the uptake of Better Cotton through your business.

- [Regional Workshops](#): Join BCI for an upcoming event.
- [Supplier List](#): See Resources page on our website for the list of suppliers using the Better Cotton Platform

8.5 Step 5: Source Better Cotton

These materials enable you to engage with suppliers, and successfully implement the responsible sourcing programme.

- [Better Cotton Platform](#): Required to document your BCCUs.
- [Price Differential Guide](#): Handling price differentials in your supply chain in 3 steps.

- [Supplier Training Programme](#): This one-day face-to-face training is designed to help Retailer & Brand Members jump-start a new Better Cotton sourcing programme or expand an existing one. Ask your key contact to help you book relevant BCI staff for a supplier meeting. Alternatively, it can also be carried out as a webinar.
- Better Cotton Chain of Custody Training on Mindflash [online learning platform](#). Training is available for your suppliers 24 hours per day, 7 days per week online on this platform
- Visit [this link](#) to see how your supply chain can participate in BCI by being a BCI Member or by purchasing an account and having access to the Better Cotton Platform

8.6 Step 6: Communicate about Better Cotton

Share your successful procurement of Better Cotton with internal and external stakeholders. (Note that you need your BCI website member login to access some of the resources).

- [Image Library](#)
- [Claims Framework](#)
- [Farmer Quote Library](#)
- [Promotional Artwork](#)

8.7 BCI Case Studies

Please visit the [CottonUp Guide](#) for recent case studies on how retailers and brands have been implementing sustainable cotton sourcing.

8.8 Additional Support

Get in touch with your key BCI contact in the Membership Team for more details about [Membership Resources](#) only accessible to members, training details or more information about the online learning platform.

Reach out to BCI for more support or specific questions:

membership@bettercotton.org. Our global team is located in Switzerland and the UK, but we also have offices and colleagues in the USA, China, India, Pakistan and Turkey who are available to support you and your supply chain partners.