

Assurance and Audit Manager

Starting Date: As soon as possible

Contract type: Permanent

Salary: UK: £50,000- £54,000 per annum; Switzerland: CHF 93,000- 97,000 per annum (commensurate with experience)

Location: London or Geneva (or surrounding areas) preferred; exceptional candidates in other locations will be considered

Application closing date: 31 January 2022

Background

Better Cotton is the world's largest cotton sustainability programme. Our mission: to help cotton communities survive and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment. In challenging times, we are meeting the challenge head on. Through our network of field-level partners we have trained over 2.5 million farmers - from the smallest to the largest - in 23 countries in more sustainable farming practices. A quarter of the world's cotton is now grown under the Better Cotton Standard. We have united the industry's stakeholders behind our efforts, from ginners and spinners to brand owners, civil society organisations and governments. Everyone who cares about cotton and its sustainable future can now be part of something better.

The Standards & Assurance function forms a key part of the Better Cotton Standard System, which works together to drive field-level sustainability improvements. To ensure that Better Cotton farmers meet our field-level standard for sustainable cotton, we operate a unique [assurance model](#) which is designed to balance rigour, flexibility, and value. Oversight of farmer performance is conducted through various mechanisms, including self-assessment surveys, field visits carried out by Better Cotton local country teams, and 3rd-party verification visits. We also work closely with our network of more than 70 Implementing Partners to support the monitoring of field projects.

This unique model enables millions of smallholder cotton farmers to participate with Better Cotton on a cost-neutral basis, while still ensuring the credibility of Better Cotton producers and claims. It also means that Better Cotton is continually learning, innovating, and improving our assurance approach, especially as we expand to new countries and partnerships.

About this role

Better Cotton is now seeking a motivated and organised **Assurance and Audit Manager** to play a key role in leading the future design and implementation of the assurance model. The ideal candidate will have experience in designing assurance, audit, or certification systems, and will be a strategic thinker with a pragmatic attitude to getting things done.

In this role, you will help Better Cotton evolve our assurance model to remain fit-for-purpose as we pursue our [2030 strategy](#) with an increasing focus on impact. This will include assessing how we might integrate remote audits into our core assurance approach (post-pandemic), re-examining our use of self-assessments, and guiding our investments in innovations such as the use of worker-voice technology and satellite monitoring approaches.

In addition, you will play a key role in delivery of the assurance programme. This includes helping to manage the headquarter assurance team (5-6 staff) plus matrix management for assurance teams in Better Cotton country programmes (e.g., China, India, Pakistan, Mozambique, Turkey, etc.). You will work directly with Better Cotton staff in your designated countries to plan and implement their assurance programme, identify local challenges and opportunities, and provide oversight of licensing decisions for Better Cotton producers.

This role reports to the Director of Standards & Assurance (S&A) and works closely with the other members of the S&A team and the Global Programmes Team across 4 continents. Dependent on COVID considerations, this role will require travel to certain countries under your remit (approximately 2-3 long-haul trips per year) as well as periodic travel within Europe or between Better Cotton headquarter offices (London and Geneva).

This exciting role offers excellent opportunities for personal and professional development, together with a competitive benefits package.

Responsibilities

The main areas of responsibility for the Assurance and Audit Manager will include:

1. Drive future improvements and innovations in assurance programme design

- Assess current strengths and gaps in the existing Better Cotton assurance model; over time, initiate recommendations to improve the efficiency, consistency, and credibility of this model, making sure it remains fit-for-purpose and balances the needs of various stakeholders
- Proactively engage with ISEAL members, certification bodies and other related stakeholders to follow developments in the industry, learn from best practice, and apply ideas to the Better Cotton model
- Together with other members of the S&A team, initiate and lead pilot projects around new approaches to assurance, including use of worker-voice technology, landscape approaches to assurance, remote auditing, etc.
- Initiate and oversee projects to evolve Better Cotton's online tools and databases to support more efficient assurance implementation, and make better use of data and insights
- Ensure that feedback and suggestions from Better Cotton teams in country, Implementing Partners, and third-party verifiers are captured and feed into ongoing programme improvements

- Be responsible (together with support from the team) for maintaining and updating key assurance procedures, tools, and documents

2. Ensure consistent, high-quality assurance implementation at a global level

With the support of the Assurance team, you will be responsible for making sure that assurance requirements are implemented consistently in practice, and for planning and managing the relevant resources (human, financial, technical, etc.). This will include:

Operational management of assurance team

- For the designated countries under your leadership, provide 'matrix management' to the Assurance Coordinators in country, who are responsible for the execution of country-level assurance plans. Provide leadership and direction, help problem-solve when required and ensure plans are credibly executed in accordance with internal protocols.
- Co-manage the Global Assurance Team (which includes about 40 staff across 10 countries) through organizing monthly calls to collect feedback and discuss challenges; introducing changes in global processes or tools, and enabling cross-country learning and collaboration.
- Provide support to designated managers who work with Better Cotton Strategic Partners (for example, in our benchmarked country projects in Brazil and Australia) in establishing appropriate and credible assurance protocols for partnership countries

Oversight of assurance data management

- Assume accountability for the timely collection, verification, and inputting of relevant assurance data, ensuring that Better Cotton's online database holds accurate and up-to-date information.

Reviewing assessment reports and accountability for licensing decisions

- With support from the Assurance team, be accountable for final licensing decisions for Better Cotton producers. This includes reviewing assessment reports, raising comments or questions back to Better Cotton assessors or third-party verifiers, and providing final oversight on Producer licensing decisions
- Manage and facilitate appeals procedures, including membership of the designated Appeals Committee

Annual review and planning

- Oversee regular reviews of the assurance programme, including country-level feedback and periodic external programme reviews
- With support from the Director of S&A, feed into the annual planning and budgeting for assurance functions at headquarters level and support country-teams in planning/ budgeting process

3. Oversee effective capacity building and calibration

- Plan and deliver periodic training to the Global Assurance Team, third party verifiers, Implementing Partners, and other stakeholders to ensure they have the skills and

competencies required to execute the Assurance Program with integrity, consistency, and credibility.

- In collaboration with the Assurance team, design and implement improved processes to monitor assessor performance, recruit and retain good assessors/ third-party verifiers over time, and improve the overall quality of auditing practices

4. Other areas of responsibility

- Work closely with other Better Cotton functions and departments (e.g., Programme teams, M&E, etc) to collaborate on cross-functional initiatives as required
- Feed into revisions and ongoing development of the Better Cotton standard (and related guidance), based on learnings from the assurance programme
- Maintain compliance with the ISEAL Assurance Code of Good Practice, including supporting the team in periodic reviews against the code and implementing any recommended improvements
- Support fundraising proposals and donor-funded project implementation

The Assurance and Audit Manager will also be asked to work on other strategic projects and initiatives, as capacity allows.

Profile

The selected candidate will have the following skills, knowledge, and experience:

Skills, Knowledge and Experience
<i>Essential</i>
University degree, or equivalent higher education qualification, in a relevant field
Valuable work experience with a substantial timeframe in relevant field (standards and certification, auditing, sustainable development, etc.)
Fluent in English with very strong written and verbal communication skills
Experience of project management in an international context
Excellent understanding of what constitutes credible and scalable assurance in the context of global commodity value chains
Strong understanding of basic auditing approaches and principles
Balance of strategic thinking with attention to detail
Superior skills and aptitude to appraise arguments critically and logically, organise ideas in a clear manner, and draw conclusions and formulate arguments in way that is effective, concise, and specific
Excellent analytical and problem-solving skills, with a proactive approach to finding and proposing well-balanced and thoughtful solutions
Experience in line management; including clear and concise communication, effective problem-solving, and leadership

Skills, Knowledge and Experience
<i>Essential</i>
Excellent organisational abilities – proven capacity to handle competing priorities and manage multiple projects running in parallel
Proven ability to collaborate effectively across different teams and cultures; strong relationship building skills and service-oriented attitude
Good communication skills with the ability to communicate clearly and concisely, as well as the ability to assimilate and process information for wide-ranging audiences.
Proven ability to work autonomously with a high level of personal effectiveness and ability to adapt to changing priorities
Excellent computer and IT skills, including: Word; PowerPoint; Excel, Outlook (Microsoft Suite)
<i>Desirable</i>
Academic background in rural/agricultural development and sustainability
Direct experience working with farmers or farming communities
Advanced numerical skills and experience in analysing large data sets
Experience with Sharepoint, PowerBI (Microsoft Suite), and/or Salesforce
Competency in languages most relevant to Better Cotton countries, such as Hindi, Urdu, Mandarin, French, Portuguese and Turkish
Experience working on fundraising proposals and projects

Working arrangements

This is a full time (40 hours per week) position; although part-time (i.e., 80%) positions can be considered. This is a permanent role with an initial three-month probation period.

Better Cotton supports flexible-working, and the position will likely be split between remote work and office, following government guidelines and in line with our flexible working policy.

Applications

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

Application deadline: 31 January 2022

We thank all applicants for their interest; however, only candidates short-listed for a telephone interview will be contacted. Better Cotton is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to good practice and transparency in the management of natural, human, and financial resources.