Request for Proposals: Uzbekistan
Cotton Supply Chain Mapping

RFP n#: 2022-02-TRC-UZBMAP
Location: Uzbekistan
Start date: 21 March 2022
End date: 27 May 2022

Better Cotton key contact:
Rachel Beckett
Programmes team
tender@bettercotton.org

All applications must be sent by email, to Better Cotton’s key contact, with the subject header: "Application RFP Uzbekistan Cotton Supply Chain Mapping – RFP n# 2022-02-TRC-UZBMAP".

Questions, requests, and applications sent after the deadline (13 March 2022) will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Introduction

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 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, and by 2030 our aim is to have trained 5 million farmers and doubled global production of Better Cotton.

Uzbekistan was the 6th largest producer during the 2020/21 cotton season and the only country of the top 10 cotton producing countries where Better Cotton isn’t working either directly or through a benchmark agreement. The opportunities that could come from Better Cotton engagement, for both social impact (almost 2 million people were involved in the 2020 harvest) and environmental impact, are huge.

The ILO, Cotton Campaign and others have been successful in driving national-level, state-led labour reforms in the Uzbek cotton industry. Both GIZ and IFC have implemented sustainable cotton projects in the country, supporting capacity building efforts, and running a mock assurance programme to gauge compliance against the Better Cotton Principles & Criteria. Commercial incentives need to be in place for the newly privatised cotton sector to continue to reform and conform to international standards – Better Cotton has the potential to provide that incentive by linking vertically integrated cotton producing and manufacturing clusters to key markets for sustainably produced cotton.
**The Assignment**

The purpose of the assignment is to document how cotton internally moves through facilities under the Cluster system and assess the potential for Clusters to segregate and track cotton moving through their facilities.

To achieve this the consultant will be required to:

**Map the supply chain and understand how the movements of cotton through it are currently tracked and documented, and where there are gaps.**

Building on a supply chain mapping study completed prior to the privatisation of the Uzbek cotton sector as a starting point, the consultant will be required to produce a detail supply chain map describing the key roles, responsibilities, processes and documentation used and generated by Uzbek clusters.

**Analyse the operations of four Clusters selected by Better Cotton to understand existing processes and potential to introduce appropriate segregation and documentation systems in the future**

With support from the Better Cotton team the consultant will be required to identify four Clusters of different sizes with varying resource constraints and processing facilities that represent a cross section of the industry. Following this, the consultant will be required to undertake physical visits to the operational sites to document the existing process and operational systems, and to ascertain the potential for future strengthening of these systems and processes. As part of this activity, the consultant will specifically need to engage with IFC and UNECE, who are preparing to implement a traceability pilot as part of UNECEs’ “Traceability for Sustainable Garment and Footwear” initiative with one Cluster in Uzbekistan. This engagement may take the form of a workshop with related stakeholders to collect learnings from their pilot planning to date.

**Identify and document if, and how, the Cluster-based production system could be integrated into a segregated Chain of Custody model**

Based on the detailed mapping of the Uzbek cotton supply chain, operational systems and processes within the Clusters, and desk review of Better Cotton’s draft Chain of Custody guidelines for traceability, associated documentation and research. the consultant will be required to identify the changes needed and the steps that would need to be taken by Better Cotton to integrate Clusters into a segregated Chain of Custody model. The consultant will also need to identify potential barriers and mitigations to the change (including digital capacity, literacy, and general willingness to adapt existing systems and processes).

As part of this the consultant will be required to produce “As-is” mapping of the current process including systems and control, and “To-be” mapping to who the processes and systems that would enable physical segregation of Better Cotton by Country of Origin. This should be accompanied by a recommended roadmap for implementation.

**Identify and document opportunities to verify the credibility of the proposed (or existing) documentation**

The consultant will provide high level analysis of opportunities to establish and verify the credibility of the documentation currently available in the Uzbek supply chain and identify other information points of interest to establish traceability of cotton grown and processed in Uzbekistan.
Full background to the assignment and the Cluster system can be found in Annex 1.

**Deliverables**

**Inception Report**

Upon the review of available documents and an initial discussion with Better Cotton, the consultant should submit an inception report and give a presentation to the Better Cotton project team. The inception report and presentation will:

- Describe the approach that will be used to undertake each of the tasks described above
- Include a detailed work plan and schedule
- Include a list of stakeholders to be interviewed, and identify where the consultant will need support from Better Cotton to engage additional further stakeholders
- Include an outline for the final report to be submitted

**Final report and recommendations**

The full report and recommendations should include:

- Detailed supply chain mapping of how Uzbek cotton moves through clusters, including descriptions of roles, responsibilities, processes and documentation. Where necessary, documentation should be translated into English with attention to documentation that could support subsequent verification.
- Case studies on the selected 4 clusters, outlining existing processes, systems, and potential to introduce segregation and documentation systems. Attention should be paid to the digital maturity of systems, staff training and development, and quality management systems that could support credible segregation.
- A clear roadmap for implementing a segregated Chain of Custody model in clusters, including a detailed gap analysis of “As-is” and “To-be” processes, systems and controls.

**Executive summary**

The main executive summary should be a maximum four pages and contain the main findings and recommendations from the assignment. It should be accompanied by a PowerPoint slide deck (no more than 12 slides) summarizing the same. The audience for the PowerPoint slide deck is the Better Cotton Leadership team.
Uzbekistan Cotton Supply Chain Mapping
Applications deadline: 13 March 2022

Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 March 2022</td>
<td>Applications deadline – 5pm GMT time, 13 March 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All applications must be submitted by email, headed &quot;Application RFP Uzbekistan Cotton Supply Chain mapping – RFP n#2022-02-TRC-UZBMAP &quot; addressed to Rachel Beckett at <a href="mailto:tender@bettercotton.org">tender@bettercotton.org</a>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 March – 18 March 2022</td>
<td>Applications review &amp; shortlisting / Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 March 2022</td>
<td>The successful applicant will be notified</td>
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<td>Unsuccessful shortlisted applicants will also be notified</td>
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<tr>
<td>w/c 21 March 2022</td>
<td>Start of the consultancy – kick off meeting (indicative)</td>
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<tr>
<td>w/c 4 April 2022</td>
<td>Inception report</td>
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<tr>
<td>By 27 May 2022</td>
<td>Final report / deliverables</td>
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Required Skills & Knowledge

Skills, Knowledge and Experience

**Essential**
- Experience working with suppliers on raw material traceability (preferably in cotton)
- Solid knowledge/understanding of chain of custody and traceability in agricultural or mined commodities (preferably with experience in auditing and supply chain compliance)
- Experience in analysis and assessment of supply chains
- Knowledge of approaches to supply chain integrity
- Excellent written communication and report writing skills
- Fluent written and spoken English

**Desirable**

It would be desirable for the lead consultant or another member of the named team to have:
- Existing knowledge of the cotton value chain in Uzbekistan
- Existing knowledge and understanding of the Better Cotton Standard System
- Ability to communicate in Uzbek or Russian would be a distinct advantage as it would allow direct communications with stakeholders without the need for a professional translator.
To Apply

Interested parties are requested to submit a detailed proposal including at a minimum:

- A succinct, well-documented **Technical Proposal** that includes:
  - A summary of the overall purpose and each task to be completed
  - An overview of the proposed methodology and approach
  - Activities and a corresponding timeline
  - A clear description of the project team, detailing the relevant experience of team members
  - Declaration of any potential conflicts of interest relating to this assignment
- At least one sample of previous relevant work (the contents of which will remain confidential and will be used for the sole purpose of evaluating the submission). This sample report must be less than three years old unless particularly relevant to this assignment.
- **Financial Proposal**: Please provide a detailed budget in Euros including time allocated and daily rates, as well as any expenses that will be incurred, respecting the overall budget available for the assignment detailed in the Budget & Payment section at the end of this document.

Please note that ALL costs must be included in the detailed budget including travel expenses, translation costs and taxes.

Consultants are invited to submit their proposals before 5.00 pm GMT 13 March 2022 to tender@bettercotton.org

We thank all applicants for their interest; however only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

Better Cotton is committed to good practice and transparency in the management of natural, human and financial resources. All applications will be reviewed under the principles and subject to Better Cotton's policies on equal opportunity, non-discrimination, anti-bribery & corruption and conflict of interest.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

**Technical Evaluation Criteria**
- Demonstrated understanding of this RFP, and the responsiveness of the proposal to it
- Quality and clarity of the proposed approach and methodology
- Feasibility of the proposed activity plan and timeline, and appropriateness of time allocated to delivering each task
- Relevant professional experience of the proposed consultant(s)
- Quality and relevance of the sample work submitted

**Financial Evaluation Criteria**
- Quality and clarity of budget provided, and level of detail included
- Alignment of the budget to the activity timeline detailed in the technical proposal
- Value for money
- Adherence to the available budget ceiling
Budget and Payment

The total budget available for this assignment is EUR 30,000. This must cover all and any expenses associated with the delivery of this assignment including taxes, travel and translation and other associated costs.

Payment to the consultant will be made based on the following schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upon acceptance of the inception reports and presentation and submission of the advance invoice</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upon submission of approved final report and executive summary documents as per the agreed timetable</td>
<td>70%</td>
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Annex 1: Background to the Assignment

The centrepiece of the Uzbek government’s cotton sector transformation strategy has been to reorganise the sector under around 120 privately-owned vertically integrated ‘cotton-textile clusters’ (known simply as “Clusters”). The central concept is that Clusters bring farming, farming services, ginning, spinning and textile production under the control of one entity which is incentivised to rapidly invest in modern technologies and capacity-building for farmers. Additionally, there is a focus on ceasing raw cotton exports and adding value in-country, meaning that Clusters now gin and spin all the cotton prior to export. The larger Clusters typically have a direct farming operation under which they produce some cotton on their own land, with the remaining cotton that they process being produced by a network of contract farmers in their local area.

The Cluster system provides an operating environment that is conducive to full traceability in country. However, in the initial stages of any future formal Better Cotton programme in Uzbekistan it is likely that the majority of participating Clusters would initially only focus on meeting the required standards on their direct farming operations. This means that Clusters will need to have the ability to segregate cotton that they have produced themselves, from that which has been grown by their network of contract farmers.

In 2021, Better Cotton committed to developing a global traceability system and platform, with the aim of preserving as much information about licensed cotton as possible as it passes through the supply chain. The minimum viable product is to have comprehensive information about country of origin of physical Better Cotton in an end product, with the intention once scaled to add new capabilities, including linking field-level impact data to finished articles. To underpin the approach, Better Cotton will revise our Chain of Custody model in early 2022, introducing new requirements for those handling traceable fibre, and new procedures and approaches to ensure the integrity of our future system, which will be trialled later in the year in a range of operating contexts.

Introducing a traceability system and secure chain of custody would be a pre-requisite for any future Better Cotton field-level assurance / licensing programme in Uzbekistan, ensuring that any cotton from licensed producers in Uzbekistan can be fully traced and tracked through the Better Cotton supply chain, and that Uzbek cotton is not able to enter the Better Cotton Mass Balance system.