

Certification & Assurance Manager

Starting Date: As soon as possible

Contract type: Permanent

Salary: UK: £50,000- £55,000 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: 24 April 2022. Applicants may be contacted on a rolling basis

Background

Are you a systems thinker, who tackles problems with logic and innovation? Are you able to find compromises, even when they seem impossible? Do you thrive on a balance of both analytical work and direct stakeholder collaboration? If this sounds like you, read on!

Better Cotton, the world's largest cotton sustainability programme, is growing and we are looking for a forward-thinking **Certification & Assurance Manager** to join our team. Our mission is to help cotton communities survive and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment. 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.

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 balances rigour, flexibility, and value. Since more than 99% of our farmers are smallholder family farms, our assurance system does much more than assessments and licensing. It also aims to support farmers and Partners with key information and systems to identify gaps and drive continuous improvement.

About this role

Better Cotton is in an exciting stage of growth and the **Certification & Assurance Manager** will play a leading role in helping to evolve our systems to be more efficient, innovative, and data-driven going forward. This is an important role that will provide leadership and vision for the central assurance team (approx. 6 staff) and the Better Cotton assurance teams in country (approx. 40 staff).

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.

Part of your role will be identifying opportunities -- including research, pilot, and partnerships-- that will further strengthen or improve our assurance approach as we pursue our [2030 strategy](#) with an increasing focus on impact. This will include for example exploring landscape level assurance, establishing new partnerships with other sustainability schemes, and guiding our investments in innovations such as the use of worker-voice technology and satellite monitoring approaches.

You will also work closely with our enthusiastic and committed assurance teams (both in headquarters and within country programmes) to oversee effective implementation of assurance activities. You will work closely with the Programme teams in India, China, Mozambique; building relationships and getting to know the local challenges and partners. Dependent on COVID considerations, this role will involve periodic long-haul travel to cotton growing countries (e.g., 2-3 trips per year), and occasional travel within Europe or between Better Cotton headquarter offices (London and Geneva).

Responsibilities

The main areas of responsibility include:

1. Leading the further evolution of the assurance model, to ensure it remains efficient, credible, and innovative

- Assess current strengths and gaps in the existing assurance model; initiate recommendations to improve the efficiency, consistency, and credibility of this model
- Proactively engage with ISEAL members, auditors, and other stakeholders to follow developments and apply best practice concepts
- 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
- Maintain compliance with the ISEAL Assurance Code of Good Practice
- Identify and build high-impact partnerships that will aid in the design or delivery of effective assurance

2. Ensuring consistent, high-quality assurance operations at a global level

Operational management of assurance team

- For a designated set of countries, provide 'matrix management' to the Assurance teams in country. This includes supporting the teams to deliver assurance activities, and working closely with them to anticipate local risks and design good solutions
- Co-manage the Global Assurance Team (which includes about 40 staff across 10 countries) through regular calls, workshops, and team support
- With support from the team, oversee the maintenance and updating of key assurance systems and procedures

Reviewing assessment reports and accountability for licensing decisions

- Be accountable for final licensing decisions for Better Cotton farms/ producer units. This includes reviewing assessment reports, raising comments, and providing final oversight on licensing decisions
- Manage and facilitate appeals procedures, including membership of the designated Appeals Committee

Capacity building and calibration

- Plan and deliver periodic training to verifiers and other stakeholders to ensure they have the skills and competencies required
- Design and implement improved processes to monitor assessor performance, recruit and retain good verifiers and improve auditing practices

3. Supporting effective resourcing and planning of the assurance programme

- Feed into the annual planning and budgeting for assurance functions at headquarters level and support country-teams in planning/ budgeting process
- Oversee regular reviews of the assurance programme, including country-level feedback and external programme reviews
- Identify gaps in capacity, skills, or other investment and develop proposals to close these gaps

4. Contributing to successful cross-functional projects and initiatives

- Work closely with other Better Cotton functions and departments (e.g., Programme teams, M&E, Data and Traceability, etc) to collaborate on cross-functional initiatives as required
- Support fundraising proposals and donor-funded project implementation

The Certification & Assurance 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
Essential
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

Skills, Knowledge, and Experience
<i>Essential</i>
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
Experience in line management, especially across different cultures and geographies
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, sustainability, or related field
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, e.g., 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; part-time (i.e., 80%) positions can be considered. This is a permanent role with an initial three-month probation period. 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 applying via [this link](#).

Application deadline: 24 April 2022

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.