Request for Information (RFI): Cotton Traceability Solutions

End date: Midnight (GMT) 30 Apr 2022

Better Cotton key contact:

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Description

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. 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.

Background

As Better Cotton enters its next strategic phase, to achieve our 2030 vision and drive change on the ground for farmers, Better Cotton will make it possible to trace Better Cotton through the global supply network.

By introducing traceability, we will generate additional demand for Better Cotton, supporting our core markets of apparel and textiles while contributing to systemic change in cotton production. We work with a wide variety of farm types and sizes in multiple countries and cultures. It is crucial that these producers, and the Better Cotton they produce, continue to meet customer requirements and rapidly evolving international regulatory frameworks.

To offer traceability, we expect to partner with an existing traceability solution provider to 'white label' their solution. We are undergoing a Request for Information process to understand the various offerings in a structured way and help us determine who we should engage with in the next phase; Request for Proposal (RFP).

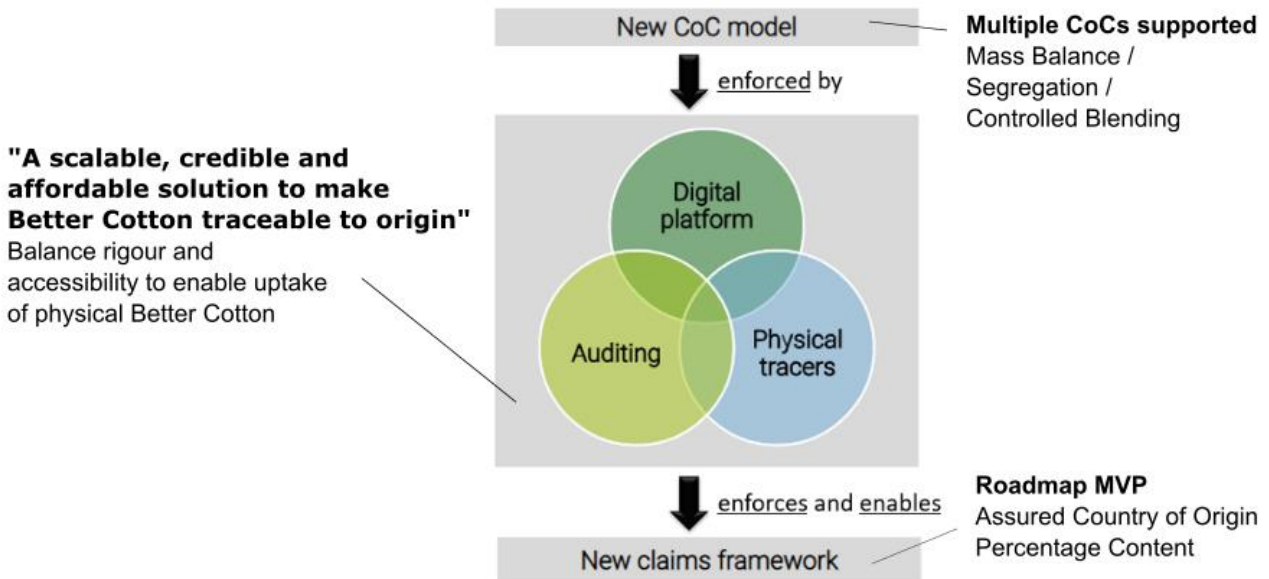To deliver traceability, we must deliver several interdependent capabilities, as shown in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1 Traceability Programme Deliverables

In this Request for Information, the term 'supply chain actors' refers to the cotton supply chain as defined in Diagram 2. It is understood that some solution providers already support the cotton and/or textile supply chain whilst others do not. These RFI questions refer specifically to Better Cotton's context but please answer the questions as to how the platform could be applied to the cotton supply chain in general.
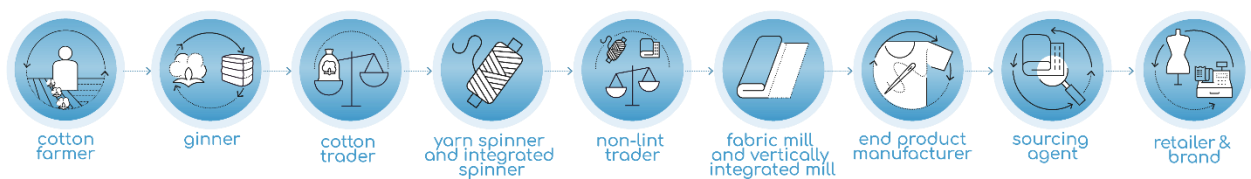

Diagram 2 Cotton supply chain actors

Scope of Work

Objective

The purpose of this request is to gather additional information on the capabilities of a given traceability solution to produce a shortlist of vendors who will then be invited to participate in a Request for Proposal.

This Request for Information is split into the following sections, and we welcome responses in a similar structure.

1. Company Information
2. Functionality
3. Data and Information Security
4. User Onboarding
5. Integration and Interoperability
6. Technology
7. Branding
8. Pricing
9. Responses and Clarifications

1. Company Information

Please provide a summary of your company, including:

- Your vision and general philosophy as an organisation
- Ownership structure
- Number of employees
- Company structure (management and teams)
- Office locations
- Date founded
- Your core customer base, highlighting any presence in the apparel\textile sectors

Please also take the opportunity to explain why you would be the ideal partner for Better Cotton in the next phase of its traceability journey.

2. Functionality

2.1 Unique Selling Point

From a functionality point of view, please summarise what it is about your product that makes it unique. What makes it a compelling proposition for any organisation looking for a traceability solution?

2.2 Chain of Custody and Claims

Please provide information on how your solution addresses the following key needs:

- The ability to implement a 'Fibre Forwards' and\or 'Product Backwards' approach to Chain of Custody.
- Supply chain actors sourcing traceable Better Cotton can use Mass Balance, Identity Preserved Segregation and Controlled Blending Chain of Custody models. Please describe how your solution can detect, manage, and enforce each model from an end-user viewpoint.

- Please describe how claims are assembled and validated based on the Chain of Custody model used. We are primarily interested in Country of Origin and percentage content claims.

2.3 Core Functional Areas

Please describe how your solution addresses the following high-level functional needs:

- **Transactions** – Does your solution use self-assessment or output-input matching? Summarise the transaction validation rules available in your solution.
- **Inventory** – Explain the method of recording inventory e.g., combined inventory or stock, or both. Please provide details of validation rules and inventory verification methods.
- **Conversion** – Describe how transformation processes (e.g., yarn to fabric) and the related conversation factors and wastage are managed
- **Additions** – Describe how the addition of other fibres/yarns/fabrics and trimmings is managed

2.4 Physical Tracers

Please summarise your ability to work with physical tracing solutions*. For instance, do you offer physical tracers as an integral part of your solution or are you in a current partnership with physical tracing companies? Or are you aware of use cases for non-partner tracers? Details of which tracers you work with would be helpful.

* Examples of physical tracers are DNA markers, isotope tracing, RFID tags

2.5 Other Functionality

Please list any other major out-of-the-box functionality your solution offers beyond traceability. For example, route to market (as distinct from country of origin), risk mapping, farmer facing functionality, carbon footprinting, supply chain mapping, marketplaces etc.

2.6 Product Roadmap

Please provide a summary of your product roadmap for the next three years, highlighting any major new functionality you plan to release that might be relevant to Better Cotton. Please also explain how your customers can influence the roadmap.

3. Data & Information Security

Please provide information on how your organisation addresses the following data and information security topics.

- **Data Storage** - Please provide a summary of how data is stored in your solution, what technologies are used and the geographic location(s) where data is hosted.
- **Technical Security** - Please provide a technical overview of how data is made secure in your solution, including details of any technical security certifications you hold.
- **Data Standards** - Better Cotton is developing a data model based on GS1 principles. Please indicate if you are willing and able to adopt Better Cotton's data standard within your solution.

- **Data Protection** – please describe your approach to complying with data protection legislation from distinct parts of the world
- **Information Security** - Please provide information on whether your organisation is certified to a recognisable information security standard such as ISO27001. If you are not certified, then please provide a summary of how you assure information security within your organisation.

4. User Onboarding

Better Cotton wishes to be as self-sufficient as possible in user onboarding and would likely assume full responsibility for all user login access administration.

4.1 User Login Accounts

It is highly desirable that the chosen solution will allow Better Cotton to create user login accounts in three ways, as detailed below. Please indicate if your solution can meet these requirements.

- Automatic creation of user login accounts, triggered from within Salesforce via an API
- Bulk creation of user accounts via a file upload performed by the Better Cotton team
- Manual account creation within the solution by Better Cotton teams

Please indicate if your solution has an API through which user accounts can be created by external systems.

4.2 Training

Please describe the training services you provide, both for end-users and Better Cotton system administrators. Information on training courses, content and media used would be helpful.

5. Integration and Interoperability

It is imperative that Better Cotton's chosen traceability solution can integrate with both its own internal systems and those of its supply chain actors, to enable maximum efficiency of data exchange. Please describe your overall approach to integration and the degree to which your solution can integrate with those of your customers and their stakeholders.

In addition, please address the following specific integration needs:

5.1 Supply Chain Actor Systems

Please provide information on how your solution can exchange data with supply chain actor systems. Specifically:

- Details of any current technical integrations with ERP or PLM systems.
- Any electronic data exchange standards through which your solution is interoperable with common supply chain systems.

5.2 The Cotton Cloud

The Cotton Cloud is Better Cotton's strategically important online data warehouse. It stores and makes available for reporting a wide variety of Better Cotton's data. It gathers data from multiple source systems daily and is built on Microsoft's Azure platform. Please indicate if:

- You are willing to allow data to be transferred from your solution to the Cotton Cloud and for it to be stored therein perpetuity.
- Your solution can technically integrate with Azure, specifically Azure Data Factory

5.3 Salesforce

Salesforce is a strategic system for Better Cotton. It is the master data holder for supply chain company information in the Better Cotton systems architecture. Please describe the capability of your solution to integrate bi-directionally with Salesforce.

5.4 Single Sign-On

Please provide information on how your platform can support Single Sign-On functionality. For example, is your solution able to participate in Single Sign-On with identity providers such as Salesforce and Active Directory? Please provide details of any current implementations of Single Sign-On involving your solution.

5.5 Privacy Management

Better Cotton is in the process of implementing Clarip, a privacy management tool that identifies and manages areas of data protection risk in its public-facing systems. Clarip will require access to your solution to scan for such risks. Please indicate any experience you have with this or other tools and the ability of your software to interact with them.

6. Technology

Please provide an overview of the technical architecture of your solution. We are interested to know about the underlying technologies upon which your solution is built, why you chose them and the advantages they offer. High-level technical architecture diagrams would be helpful if available. Please describe how your solution can scale and flex to assure system availability and performance for a globally distributed user base. Please also indicate what options are available within your solution to overcome the challenges of providing an IT system solution to a large population of end-users based in China.

7. Branding

It is important that the chosen traceability solution is branded as a Better Cotton platform and conforms as far as is possible to the Better Cotton brand guidelines for colours and fonts etc. In effect, a 'white label' agreement is sought with the solution provider. Please indicate if you are willing and able to enter into such an agreement.

8. Pricing

Please provide a summary of your pricing model for both one-off and recurring costs. Areas to include are:

- Licencing
- Setup fees
- Training and support costs
- Customisations

Please also state whether you offer a SaaS or Enterprise model, or both.

9. Responses and Clarifications

Thank you in advance for taking the time to respond to this Request for Information. We appreciate your interest in Better Cotton.

Please submit your final response as a Microsoft Word document with supporting attachments no later than midnight GMT **30 April 2022**. Responses should be addressed to tom.jennings@bettercotton.org (Tom Jennings, Senior Traceability Officer), under the title: **"[Company name] - RFI: Cotton Traceability Solutions"**

If you require clarification on any item in this Request for Information, please contact Tom and we will be pleased to assist.