

# Request for Proposals: Better Cotton Traceability Digital Solution: India Pilot and Scale-up

RFP n#: 2022-06-TRC-INDIAP

Location: Remote

Start date: 30 August 2022

Pilot Start date: November 2022

Pilot End date: 25 August 2023



**Better Cotton key contact:**

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Traceability Manager  
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All applications must be sent by email, to Better Cotton's key contact, with the subject header: "Application RFP Better Cotton Traceability Digital Solution: India Pilot and Scale-up – RFP n# 2022-06-TRC-INDIAP"

Questions, requests, and applications sent after the deadline (**6 July 2022 Midnight BST**) will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

## About Better Cotton

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.

**Better Cotton is a voluntary standards system. We not only source information about the supply chain to understand the scale and impact of Better Cotton, but we also play an active role in monitoring and providing assurances to the claims of Better Cotton.**

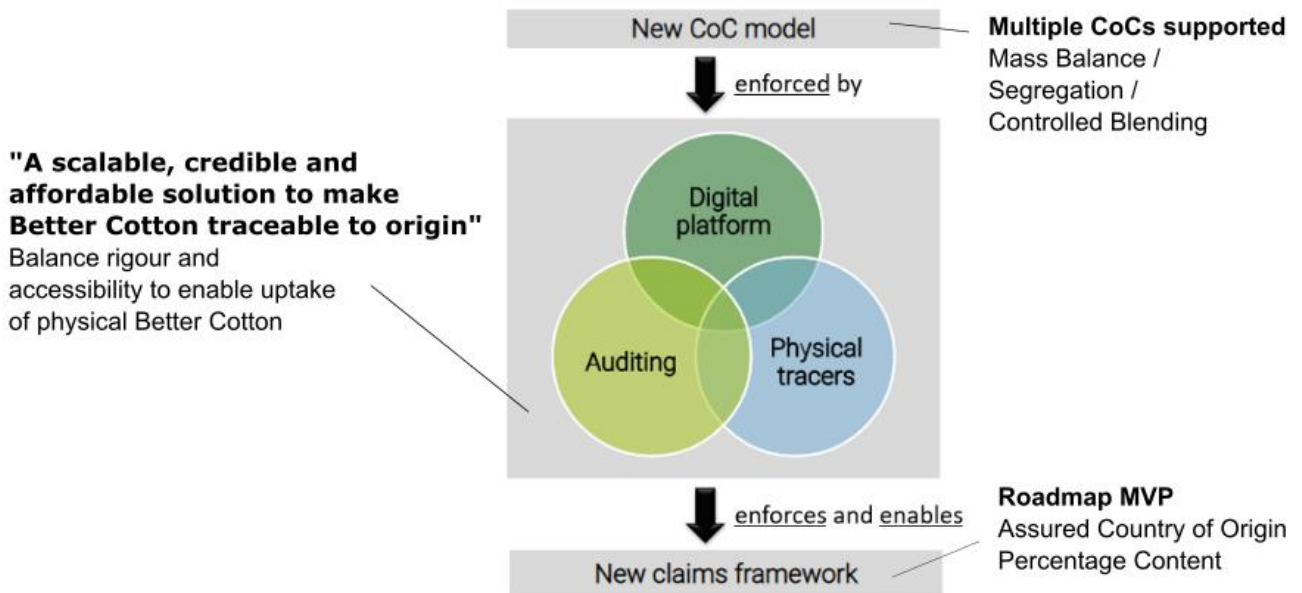
More information about Better Cotton can be found on our website: [www.bettercotton.org](http://www.bettercotton.org).

# Background

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

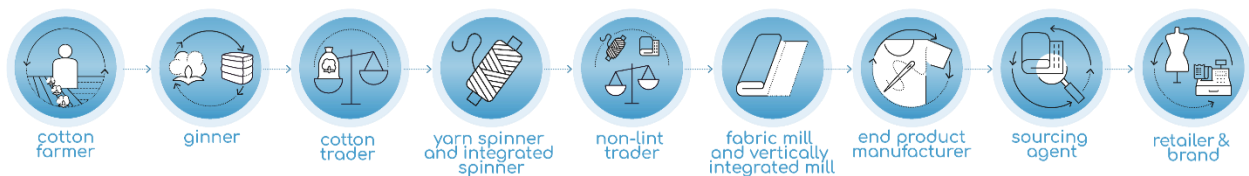
By introducing traceability, we will generate additional demand for Better Cotton, supporting our core markets of apparel and textiles while contributing to systemic change in cotton production. We work with a wide variety of farm types and sizes in multiple countries and cultures. It is crucial that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

We must deliver several interdependent capabilities to deliver traceability, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Interdependent capabilities to deliver traceability

In this Request for Proposals, the term ‘supply chain actors’ refers to the cotton supply chain as defined in Diagram 2. Please note that this diagram does not include intermediaries or subcontractors, nor does it include dye houses and other chemical finishing actors.



**Diagram 2** Cotton supply chain actors

## RFP Structure

Better Cotton will work with an existing traceability solution provider to 'white label' a digital traceability platform. **This document outlines a request-for-proposal (RFP) which consists of two parts – a pilot of up to 50 companies, and the future scaled solution of approximately 10,000 companies across the global cotton supply chain (Ginner to Retailer).** Applications will be assessed through a series of activities as outlined in the High-level Application Timeline below. At the end of the RFP process, two to three vendors will be selected to participate in a pilot in India. Following the pilot, the performance of vendors and their solutions will be assessed to inform who will have the opportunity to deliver the future scaled solution for global roll-out.

As such, the RFP is split into the following sections:

1. Pilot
2. Future Scaled Solution
3. Required Skills & Knowledge
4. Proposal Checklist

## High-level Application Timeline

Before 6 July 2022	Candidates can request further information to inform their applications by email headed "Request for further information RFP Better Cotton Traceability Pilot – India – RFP n#2022-06-TRC-INDIAP" addressed to Nicholas Sexton at <a href="mailto:tender@bettercotton.org">tender@bettercotton.org</a> .
6 July 2022	Applications deadline at midnight BST  All applications must be submitted by email, headed "Application RFP Better Cotton Traceability Pilot – India – RFP n#2022-06-TRC-INDIAP" addressed to Nicholas Sexton at <a href="mailto:tender@bettercotton.org">tender@bettercotton.org</a> .
Preliminary 7 – 13 July	Following an initial review, candidates who are not successful at progressing to Round 1 will be notified by midnight BST on 13 July 2022.  Candidates shortlisted for an interview will need to sign Better Cotton's Mutual NDA.

<p>Round 1 Interviews 18 – 22 July</p>	<p>Round 1 will involve a one hour in-depth discussion of the candidates RFP submission. All interviews will be virtual. Interview outcomes will be shared with candidates by midnight BST on 26 July 2022.</p> <p>Successful candidates will receive by midnight BST on 26 July 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- more detailed requirements,</li> <li>- our draft data model,</li> <li>- draft business rules model,</li> <li>- requirements to demonstrate.</li> </ul>
<p>Round 2 Interviews 1 - 4 August</p>	<p>Round 2 will establish the interpretation of Better Cotton’s requirements and require the candidate to demonstrate up to five of these requirements. The interview will take up to two hours. Interview outcomes will be shared with candidates by midnight BST on 5 August 2022.</p>
<p>Round 3 Interviews 8 – 12 August</p>	<p>Round 3 will review the commercial elements of the submission and alignment with Better Cotton’s strategic objectives. Broader Better Cotton leadership will also participate in this interview. The interview will take up to two hours. Interview outcomes will be shared with candidates by midnight BST on 15 August 2022.</p>
<p>30 August 2022</p>	<p><b>Start of the consultancy</b></p>
<p>W/c 30 August 2022</p>	<p>Kick-off meeting.</p>
<p>W/c 5 September 2022</p>	<p>Inception report and meeting.</p>

# 1. Pilot

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## Context

The India Pilot is being delivered in partnership with Verité and the Responsible Sourcing Network (RSN). The pilot forms one output of the STREAMS (Supply Chain Tracing and Engagement Methodologies) project coordinated by Verité. STREAMS aims to enhance the tracing of goods made with child labour and forced labour in the garment sector.

India is the second largest producer of cotton in the world. The supply chain is one of the most complicated, with cotton traded with numerous intermediaries from farm to Retailers/Brands via key supply chain nodes. The significant demand for cotton from India has led to an increase in pressure on farmers to adopt sustainable practices. To ensure farmers are supported to adopt and sustain beneficial practices, and to be ahead of upcoming regulation, traceability of cotton from crop to shelf will need to become a reality.

Demonstrating traceability of cotton as a pilot within this context, from **inbound of ginner to retailers/brands**, will inform how traceability is delivered in a global context. The solution will need to operate alongside physical tracers and an auditing approach to provide the required assurance that traceability is operating as intended.

## Design

The pilot will begin with the cotton harvest in selected states in India in November-December 2022, continuing until the end-products containing the traceable Better Cotton are received by the retailers/brands over a period of approximately nine months. From Farm to Spinner the supply chain will be in India, and beyond Spinner the supply chain will likely cover multiple countries. Supply chain mapping is ongoing to determine the number of supply chain actors who will be involved in the pilot, but this figure is expected to be below 50 with the volume of products limited to specific product lines in agreement with involved retailers/brands.

## Scope

Better Cotton currently supports a Mass Balance Chain of Custody (CoC) model where the Better Cotton Platform (BCP) is used to enter transactions and reconcile Better Cotton volumes. Better Cotton's Mass Balance model tracks the claim units, known as Better Cotton Claim Units (BCCU's), rather than tracking the physical movement of the cotton. When traceability is launched, two new CoC models will be introduced alongside our current mass balance system including identity preserved **Segregated** and **Controlled Blended** Better Cotton.

For the duration of the pilot, supply chain actors will continue to use the Better Cotton Platform (BCP) to report on Mass Balance Better Cotton. The BCP is an online system owned by Better Cotton ([ref](#)). The platform is used by more than 10,000 ginners, traders, spinners, fabric mills, garment and end product manufacturers, sourcing agents and retailers to electronically document volumes of cotton sourced as 'Better Cotton' as they pass through the supply chain. The piloting digital platforms will only

be used to trace Segregated and Controlled Blended Better Cotton. **However, the platform is expected to support all three CoC models as a future scaled solution.**

The objectives of the pilot are to:

- Trace Better Cotton from **Ginner inbound** to Retailers/Brands with digital traceability solution(s),
- Reconcile Better Cotton volumes through Segregation and Controlled Blending,
- Inform the design and delivery of the scaled-up digital traceability solution where the complexity of the India supply chain is taken as a proxy for future implementations.

The pilot scope is provided below:

	In scope	Out of scope
<i>Which CoCs should be in the digital solution for the pilot?</i>	Implementing Segregation and Controlled Blending CoC models	Implementing a Mass Balance CoC model (mass balance will continue to be sourced through the BCP)
<i>What regions will the cotton be sourced from for the pilot?</i>	Proposed pilot states are Gujarat and Maharashtra	Other states of India
<i>What about non-Better Cotton content? (excluding conventional content)</i>	-	Tracing other content outside of Better Cotton e.g. 30% Other is sufficient
<i>How will we understand the source of conventional cotton blended with Better Cotton?</i>	Understanding the impact of the YESS Standard alongside Better Cotton's CoC models, ensuring 2 out of 4 Spinners involved in the pilot conform to the YESS Standard	Due diligence on conventional cotton
<i>What about physical tracing of bales?</i>	The pilot will implement up to two bale tagging physical traceability solutions	-
<i>What about physical tracing of yarn?</i>	The pilot will implement up to two yarn physical traceability solutions	-
<i>What about auditing?</i>	Auditing and assurance across the supply chain including Ginners, Spinners, Fabric Mills, End Product Manufacturers	Auditing and assurance of subcontractors, Dye Houses
<i>What claims can be made on pilot products?</i>	Retailers and Brand making content claims	Retailers and Brands making impact-related claims

## Requirements

The requirements below are pilot-specific and limited in scope. **The key takeaway is that the pilot will use real supply chain data so data security requirements are of high priority and the transaction flow must be representative of a scaled platform, however, integration with internal IT systems and business processes does not apply.**

### Users:

- The digital platform provided shall supply a test environment for the pilot
- Better Cotton shall supply the digital platform provider with a list of pilot participants for account creation – **Note:** integration with Salesforce is not required for the pilot. Within Better Cotton, Salesforce functions as the identity provider for authentication but is considered out of scope for the pilot.
- There shall be up to 5 Better Cotton administrative users who shall have access to the platform during the pilot to monitor transactions and documents, and respond to support requests
- There shall be training material and instructional videos for the pilot participants co-created by Better Cotton and the platform provider

### Data & Security:

- The digital platform shall be configured to the Better Cotton logical data model (MVP version) and business rules model for the pilot
- The digital platform shall incorporate data privacy by design principles so that personal data is automatically protected without any action from the data subject – **Note:** our data model may require collection and storage of personal data / PII
- All industry standard data and information security requirements apply for the pilot e.g. secure access control, encryption for data in transit and at rest, application security, information security
- The entire transaction data shall be exported after the pilot, and subsequently manually uploaded to the Cotton Cloud. The Cotton Cloud is Better Cotton's data warehouse which houses our analytics tools – **Note:** integration with the Cotton Cloud is not required for the pilot
- The digital platform shall follow an opt-in rule for all data sharing, including personal data and commercially sensitive data – **Note:** this does not apply to sharing transaction data with the recipient of the transaction
- The digital platform shall be able to visualize the Route to Market of an end product (geographically or diagrammatically) – **Note:** on the condition that using supply chain data for this purpose has explicit consent from the concerned parties

### Use & Monitoring:

- The digital platform shall be available 24/7 due to the global nature of the cotton supply chain i.e. it shall NOT use a 'follow the sun' principle
- The digital platform shall only be available in English for the pilot.
- The digital platform shall enable supply chain actors to export data for their own reporting, in particular retailers and brands
- The digital platform shall notify the acknowledging company when there is a new inbound transaction(s), a transaction(s) has been changed or is awaiting acknowledgment
- The digital platform shall enable bulk data entry via .csv file upload
- The digital platform shall enable document upload per transaction

### Custody & Inventory:

- The digital platform shall trace from fibre forwards to retailer/brand
- The digital platform shall support identity preserved segregation and controlled blending chain of custody models



- The digital platform shall require self-assessment of transactions – a supply chain actor enters an outbound transaction, and the receiving company acknowledges the inbound transaction
- The digital platform shall require ginners to enter inbound seed cotton transactions as farmers will not have access to the platform
- Better Cotton administrators must have the ability to monitor and cancel transactions when needed

**Conversion:**

- The digital platform shall trace the conversion/transformation of Better Cotton as seed cotton, lint cotton, yarn, fabric, and end-product
- The platform shall be able to apply industry average waste factors for a conversion/transformation process
- The user shall be able to enter site-specific waste factors for a conversion/transformation process

**Addition:**

- The digital platform shall identify the percentage of Better Cotton in yarn, fabric and end-product, and the country/countries of origin of the Better Cotton content
- The digital platform shall enable information to be entered on the conventional cotton content – **Note:** a free text box field will be sufficient to gain understanding of the YESS standard

**Support:**

- The digital platform shall signpost to Better Cotton as the first point of contact for support
- The digital platform provider shall provide hyper-care support for the duration of the pilot

**Improvements & Development:**

- The digital platform provider shall specify which version of their software Better Cotton will be piloting (i.e. we do not wish to have a **major** software release during the pilot).
- The digital platform provider shall share up-to-date system documentation and release notes for the software version that will be used during the pilot

**Usage – Pilot estimates**

	No. of Supply Chain Actors (user accounts)	No. of Product Lines	Anticipated transactions per Product Line
India Pilot	Up to 50	4	Up to 20

\*forecast



## 2. Future Scaled Solution

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### Context

The shortlisting process will not be limited to the provider's ability to deliver a pilot. Better Cotton will also take a long-term view of your approach to scaling the solution and the nature of the future partnership between our two organisations. Until the new system is implemented, our existing Better Cotton Platform will continue to be used.

### Requirements

The highest priority requirements are listed below to indicate technical and business conditions for the solution to scale. **The key takeaway is that for scaling, the digital platform must integrate with both the internal IT systems and business processes of Better Cotton.** This is not an exhaustive list of requirements – to reiterate, a more detailed list of requirements, the data model and business rules model will be shared with Round 2 candidates.

#### Users:

- Salesforce (SFDC) shall be the identity provider for user access and the digital platform shall enable account management (creation, deletion, and editing) through Salesforce
- The digital platform shall integrate bi-directionally with Salesforce via an API (or equivalent)
- The platform shall provide Better Cotton administrators with the ability to block a supplier
- The digital platform shall provide a searchable directory of onboarded and active suppliers
- The digital platform shall enable access to the platform for auditing and certification bodies

#### Data & Security:

- The digital platform shall be configured to the Better Cotton logical data model and business rules model
- Data entered and shared via the digital platform shall remain the property of Better Cotton
- The source code of the digital platform shall be held in Github and protected via third-party ESCROW agent
- The digital platform provider solution shall be suitable for making online backups that enable a full system restore
- The digital platform shall incorporate data privacy by design principles so that personal data is automatically protected without any action from the data subject – **Note:** our data model may require collection and storage of personal data / PII
- Better Cotton's data privacy platform, Clarip shall be granted read only access to the data repositories of the digital platform
- The digital platform shall integrate unidirectionally with the Cotton Cloud (SQL Server) - the Cotton Cloud reads transaction data daily
- The digital platform shall follow an opt-in rule for all data sharing, including personal data and commercially sensitive data - **Note:** this does not apply to sharing transaction data with the recipient of the transaction.
- The digital platform shall enable Retailers and Brands (and supply chain actors) to request suppliers to provide personal data and commercially sensitive data via the platform, if not voluntarily shared

- The digital platform shall be able to visualize the Route to Market of an end product (geographically or diagrammatically) – **Note:** on the condition that using supply chain data for this purpose has explicit consent from the concerned parties
- There shall be a searchable, central repository of all documentation uploaded by supply chain actors for Better Cotton administrators to access

#### Use & Monitoring:

- The digital platform shall be available 24/7 due to the global nature of the cotton supply chain i.e. it shall not use a 'follow the sun' principle
- The digital platform shall be 'white label' to enable Better Cotton branding
- The digital platform shall enable Better Cotton to send announcements to platform users, e.g. a welcome or landing page
- The digital platform shall enable supply chain actors to export their data for their own reporting, in particular retailers and brands
- The digital platform shall enable Better Cotton to run reports on transaction data across the whole supply chain
- The digital platform shall notify the acknowledging company when there is a new inbound transaction(s), a transaction(s) has been changed or is awaiting acknowledgment
- The digital platform shall enable bulk data entry via .csv file upload
- The digital platform shall enable document upload per transaction
- The digital platform shall not require download of any components in order to run the application e.g. extensions, plugins
- The digital platform shall enable languages currently supported in the Better Cotton Platform: English, French, Turkish, Mandarin, Portuguese

#### Custody & Inventory:

- The digital platform shall trace from fibre forwards to retailer/brand
- The digital platform shall support mass balance, segregation and controlled blending chain of custody models as defined by Better Cotton (see Appendix I)
- The digital platform shall enable the downgrading and upgrading of Better Cotton between CoC models
  - E.g. 100% Identity preserved segregated Better Cotton is downgraded to mass balance
  - E.g. 50% Controlled blended Better Cotton is downgraded to mass balance
- The digital platform shall require self-assessment of transactions – a supply chain actor enters an outbound transaction, and the receiving company acknowledges the inbound transaction
- The digital platform shall require ginners to enter inbound seed cotton transactions as farmers will not have access to the platform
- Better Cotton administrators must have the ability to monitor and cancel transactions when needed

#### Conversion:

- The digital platform shall trace the conversion/transformation of Better Cotton as seed cotton, lint cotton, yarn, fabric, and end-product
- The platform shall be able to apply industry average waste factors for a conversion/transformation process



- The user shall be able to enter site-specific waste factors for a conversion/transformation process

**Addition:**

- The digital platform shall identify the percentage of Better Cotton in yarn, fabric and end-product, and the country/countries of origin of the Better Cotton content
- The digital platform shall report errors if minimal Better Cotton content thresholds are not met

**Support:**

- The digital platform shall provide signposting to the Better Cotton Helpdesk as the first point of contact for support requests i.e. we do not want support requests to be raised directly with the provider
- Better Cotton shall escalate support requests to the digital platform provider when unable to resolve the problem
- The digital platform provider shall have multiple support contacts for Better Cotton (more than one person) that have sufficient knowledge of the Better Cotton use case to provide effective support
- There shall be self-serve instructional videos which are targeted at specific supply chain actors (e.g., ginners, spinners, etc.) and are available to all supply chain actors (e.g., a spinner can view the ginner video) – these will include videos on the different chain of custody models, created and owned by Better Cotton

**Improvements & Development:**

- The digital platform provider shall provide a product development roadmap with Better Cotton, at a minimum on a yearly basis
- The digital platform provider shall work with Better Cotton and their benchmark partners to provide access and/or develop integrations to benchmark partner systems
- The digital platform provider shall align with the Better Cotton Helpdesk roadmap and provide new/modified Helpdesk functionalities as part of platform releases
- The digital platform provider shall supply a separate pre-production environment to Better Cotton, in which new functionality or new versions of an existing functionality are made available to a limited number of Better Cotton users for testing

**Usage – Scaled system estimates**

	No. of accounts	No. of users	Volume of cotton	Volume of transactions per year	Total volume of data	Segregation CoC volumes	Controlled Blending CoC volumes
Current state	16,000	26,000	4.7m MT	800,000	80Gb	N/A	N/A
At launch	18,000	29,000	5.5m MT	1,000,000	100Gb	8%	10%
Long-term (2030)	22,000	35,000	9m MT	1,200,000	300Gb	35%	25%

\*Apart from current state, all other usage forecasts are estimates only

## 3. Required Skills & Knowledge

Skills, Knowledge and Experience of the pilot project team	
<i>Essential</i>	
•	Experience of developing software solutions across supply chain nodes
•	Knowledge of traceability and Chain of Custody models
•	Experience of working with client-led data models and logic models
•	Experience of systems integration
•	Fluent written and spoken English
<i>Desirable</i>	
•	Experience working with the cotton supply chain
•	Knowledge of physical and tracer traceability methodologies and relationship with digital traceability platforms
•	Experience of integration with Salesforce and/or Microsoft Azure

## 4. Proposal Checklist

Interested parties are requested to submit a proposal in response to this RFP containing the following information:

- **Organisation** - A summary of the company\organisation, including evidence of financial and management stability
- **Case studies** –At least one example of a relevant case study from a recent client
- **Pilot project team** - The size, roles, skills and experience of the proposed project team
- **Availability** – Information on availability of resources during the proposed project period
- **Pilot project management** – Details of how delivery is proposed to be structured, including an estimated time plan and critical path dependencies for Pilot go-live in November 2022
- **Requirements** - Detail in a table format indicating which requirements your solution will/can meet, and how it will do this
- **Costs** – Please note we are expecting costs for the pilot and separate cost estimates for the future scaled solution. A breakdown of cost estimates as follows

Pilot costs, including:

- Consultancy costs for the build and implementation of the pilot platforms
- Testing and project management
- On-going Hypercare support costs
- Day rates – please include details of day rates for all proposed roles and details of any not-for-profit discounts on day rates if applicable
- VAT – please note BCI does not pay VAT so costs should exclude VAT

Future scaled-up solution costs, including:

- Consultancy costs for the build and implementation of the platform including day rates for all proposed roles and details of any non-profit discounts on day rates if applicable
- Testing and project management
- Annual ongoing costs platform costs based on estimated consumption including. Platform license and/or data hosting costs.
- VAT – please note BCI does not pay VAT so costs should exclude VAT

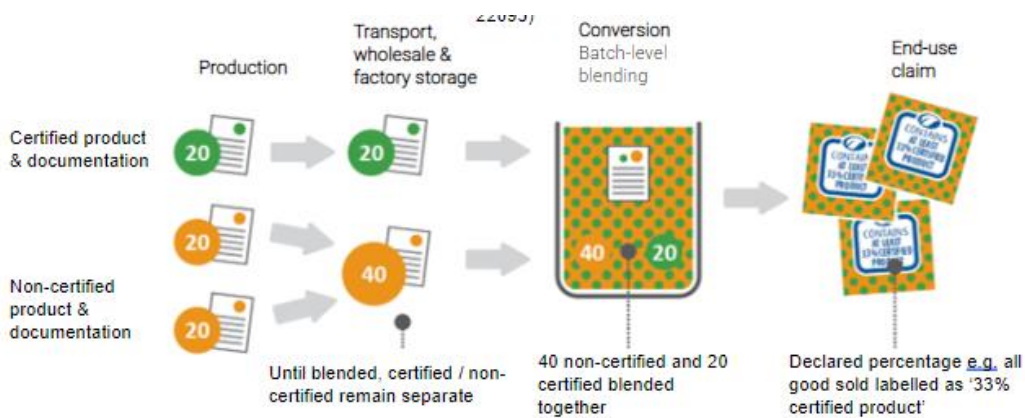
BCI recognises that at this stage costs will be estimates based on high level requirements and therefore liable to change. More detailed requirements will be discussed, and more accurate quotes sought as the selection process proceeds. However, it is hoped that the initial estimates provided will be subject to a margin of error of not more than 20% when compared to final quotes.

In addition to skills, competencies, and expertise, we will consider value for money and demonstrable commitment to the sustainability field to evaluate applications.

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.

# Appendix I: Chain of Custody models

1. **Mass balance:** Allows mixing of physical Better Cotton with conventional. Mass Balance only requires a ratio of certified to uncertified cotton to be preserved as it moves through the supply chain. Volumes to be reconciled **at site level** meaning that more mass balanced Better Cotton cannot leave a facility than enter it, allowing for wastage and conversion factors. Better Cotton’s Mass Balance model tracks the claim units, known as Better Cotton Claim Units (BCCU’s), rather than tracking the physical movement of the cotton. Currently all traceability of a product is lost.
2. **Controlled blending:** Allows for the mixing of like materials with non-like materials, resulting in a known proportion of specified characteristics within all parts of the final output. Requires the recording of inputs and outputs at batch-level, and greater levels of identification than the segregated model. Controls must be in place on conventional materials to support product-level claims (e.g. only low-risk conventional cotton used in controlled blending).



3. **Segregation:** Requires the physical and / or temporal segregation and / or unique identification of like products from non-like products. Categories can be introduced for like and non-like products based on characteristics including content, origin and quality. Implementation requirements for suppliers can be prescriptive or outcome based.

