

Request for Information (RFI): Physical marker and tracer solutions

End date: Midnight (BST) 1 July 2022

Better Cotton key contact:

Tom Jennings
Traceability
Tom.jennings@bettercotton.org

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.

Traceability programme 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 producing communities. It is crucial that these communities, 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 a number of organisations who offer complementary elements of integrity.

We anticipate the integrity programme will comprise of a combination of:

1. Validation and logic controls on the future digital platform;
2. Traditional on-site, remote and risk-based surveillance audits;
3. The use of physical tracers and/or isotope testing in supply chains.

The purpose of this request is to gather information on the practicalities, product roadmap and costs associated with different physical tracers.

Shortlisted vendors will be invited by Better Cotton to participate in a Request for Proposals in an upcoming pilot. The RFP will include more details on the scope and timelines of the pilot.

Requested information

The below questions are targeted at physical tracer methods. Please answer the questions that are applicable to your solution (and identify which questions are not suitable for your solution).

1. Company information

Please provide a summary of your company, including:

- Vision and general philosophy as an organisation
- Ownership structure
- Number of employees
- Office locations
- Date founded
- Website
- Core customer base, highlighting any presence in the apparel/textile sectors

2. Solution details (general)

- Please provide an overview of your solution and describe how it works
- What level of traceability “resolution” can be achieved through your solution?

3. Solution details (technical)

- Can the component being measured survive mechanical / chemical processing?
- What is the life expectancy of the compound being measured?
- What percentage blend differentiation does your solution accommodate?
- Where in the supply chain is your solution best applied?
- Where in the supply chain is your solution best sampled?
- Any additional details or functionalities that make your solution a compelling proposition?

4. Testing and verification

- What is the level of error associated with your solution?
- Is there a sampling error?
- Is there independent confirmation of the performance of your solution?
- How many samples are necessary to establish a reasonable level of confidence in results?
- What interferences associated with cotton production and manufacturing might impact results (please consider implications of processing, commingling with cotton of other origins, blending with other fibres)

5. Implementation

- What would be the key steps involved in deploying your solution in cotton supply chains? Do you offer a range of deployment models?
- How quickly can your solution be implemented?
- What onboarding / training / process changes are required for supply chain actors using your solution?
- What expertise of the cotton sector could you bring to a traceability pilot?

6. Finances

- Please provide a summary of your costing model. What are the main cost considerations for your solution?

7. Further information

- Is there any additional information you would like to share with Better Cotton at this stage?

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 response as a PDF by midnight (BST) 1 July 2022. Responses should be submitted to tom.jennings@bettercotton.org