

Director of Standards, Certification and MEL

Starting Date: as soon as possible

Contract type: Full time, open ended

Salary: GBP 90'200 commensurate with relevant experience

Location: UK-based candidates are preferred; exceptional candidates in Switzerland, Netherlands or Sweden will be considered. Remote and flexible working supported.

Application closing date: 21st February 2024

About this role

The Director of Standards, Certification and MEL is a key leadership level role that oversees the design and credibility of our farm-level sustainability standard, assurance programme, and monitoring, evaluation and learning workstreams. Specifically, this role will be accountable for:

1. Oversight and evolution of our farm-level sustainability standard, the [Principles & Criteria](#). This includes technical development of the standard as well as related guidance and interpretations; supporting effective implementation, and maintaining compliance with ISEAL standard-setting requirements
2. Design and implementation of the Better Cotton assurance programme across 10 countries, including spearheading the transition of the current assurance system towards third-party certification
3. Ensuring that monitoring, evaluation, and learning approaches are fit for purpose to measure and report on field level impact, maintain credibility, and meet evolving needs of Better Cotton members

This role will oversee a direct team of approximately 20 staff. It will also have matrix (operational) oversight of approximately 30 assurance staff within Better Cotton country teams, including: China, Türkiye, Pakistan, India, US, Mozambique, Mali, Cote D'Ivoire, Egypt, and Uzbekistan.

Responsibilities:

In this role, you will be responsible for delivering the following outcomes:

Oversight of Standards:

- a) The Principles & Criteria remains credible, relevant, and accessible; requirements are set at an appropriate level to support future growth of Better Cotton, while catalysing sustainability impact at field level over time

- b) The P&C is reviewed and evolved through a transparent, multi-stakeholder process with strong engagement from internal teams, partners, brands, farmers/ workers, civil society, and other key stakeholder groups, in compliance with the ISEAL standard-setting code
- c) There are clear and transparent processes to manage exemption requests and issues of local applicability related to P&C indicators
- d) Benchmarking of the P&C against partner 'equivalent' standards is carried out in a comprehensive and transparent way, with strong engagement of relevant teams and senior management

Certification:

- a) Better Cotton's assurance and certification approach is credible, efficient, and fit-for-purpose given our scale and organisational strategy
- b) With support from the assurance team, impacts of new EU regulation are understood and a plan is implemented to transition from our current hybrid model (second and third-party assurance) to a third-party certification model by 2025
- c) Regular monitoring and reporting of assurance activity and outcomes is in place to promote transparency with stakeholders and enable assurance learnings to drive continuous improvement
- d) Quality, consistency, and efficiency of assurance activities improves over time; with continued investments in training, monitoring and calibration of verifiers
- e) Compliance with ISEAL assurance code is maintained

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning:

- a) MEL approaches and systems are credible and effective in measuring impacts at field level, including supporting progress against the [Better Cotton 2030 impact targets](#)
- b) Quality of field level data from Better Cotton farmers continues to improve over time, through testing new approaches and use of digital tools at farm level
- c) Credible research is carried out to measure impacts of Better Cotton projects, in collaboration with research organisations, academics, funders and other key stakeholders
- d) Better Cotton Members are supported with improved tools to communicate impacts of their participation with Better Cotton, including credible claims and Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs) for key countries

Cross-cutting:

- a) Effective team and line management is in place; staff feel both challenged and supported, feedback is encouraged, and team development is prioritised.
- b) A culture of experimentation and innovation is fostered, where new ideas are raised and discussed freely, cross-learning is encouraged, and pilot/ innovation projects are pursued
- c) Close collaboration is in place with key internal functions and external stakeholders, including Supply Chain and Programme teams, and other standards and cotton sustainability initiatives

- d) Effective engagement is delivered at the Better Cotton leadership level, including participation in strategic decisions; demonstrated ability to adopt an organisational perspective
- e) Strategic targets, annual work plans, KPIs, and solid budgeting systems are established across the function, with ongoing monitoring of work delivery and budgets
- f) Effectively showcase Better Cotton during external events and interactions with potential donors and funders to emphasize its positive representation.

Profile

The selected candidate will have the following skills, knowledge, and experience:

Essential

1. Extensive experience in standards and/or assurance programs, ideally related to the agricultural sector or with a sustainability standards organisation
2. Excellent general knowledge on relevant sustainability areas; such as climate change and labour rights
3. Demonstrated ability to effectively manage a large and diverse team, ideally with remote staff across different cultures and geographies
4. In-depth understanding of certification and standards schemes
5. Demonstrated ability to oversee complex projects and budgets, and to work closely with teams to deliver tasks in line with expectations
6. Excellent English written and oral skills, including communication to diverse audiences
7. Proficiency in Microsoft Excel, PowerPoint, & Word
8. Excellent organisational skills and attention to detail; balanced with an ability for strategic thinking and long-term visioning
9. Ability to effectively facilitate multi stakeholder processes
10. Willingness to travel (approximately 2-3 long-haul trips/ year + several shorter trips)

Desirable:

1. Knowledge of the agricultural or cotton farming sector, including technical knowledge of relevant sustainability issues such as pesticides, climate -smart agriculture, and decent work
2. Knowledge of technical standard development processes and familiarity with relevant ISEAL codes of good practice
3. Experience living or working in one of the Better Cotton countries of operation (China, Turkiye, Pakistan, India, US, Mozambique, Mali, Cote D'Ivoire, Egypt, or Uzbekistan); or partner benchmark countries (Brazil, Israel, Spain, Greece, Australia)
4. Fluency in at least one additional language relevant in Better Cotton countries of operation – French, Mandarin, Portuguese, Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Turkish, etc

What we offer

- Flexible working, with core hours from 10 am to 4 pm local time and hybrid working between home and office
- Continuous learning and development
- 25 days paid annual leave, plus 8-9 Bank Holidays

- Enhanced maternity and paternity leave
- The opportunity to work from anywhere in the world for up to one month per year
- A busy yet supportive work environment
- The opportunity to make your mark and make a difference.

Working arrangements

The position is full-time (40 hours per week) and ideally based in the UK, although exceptional candidates in other Better Cotton established European locations may be considered (Sweden, Switzerland and Netherlands). Better Cotton UK staff are expected to be in the London office either one day/ week (if living in London area) or 4 days/ month (if living in other cities in UK). Some domestic and international travel may be required. UK applicants must be currently authorised to work in the UK without the need for visa sponsorship now or in the future.

About Better Cotton

Better Cotton is the world's largest cotton sustainability programme. Our 200+ colleagues of 37+ nationalities are united by a shared passion and commitment to achieving the Better Cotton 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 trained 2.8 million farmers last season - from the smallest to the largest - in 22 countries in more sustainable farming practices. A quarter of the world's cotton is now grown under the Better Cotton Standard.

About our Values

The post holder will be expected to operate in line with our workplace values which are:

- **Trustworthy** (including honest, transparent, credible)
- As having **Integrity** (including responsible, authentic)
- **Positive** (including problem-solving, pragmatic)
- **Engaging** (including adaptable, inclusive, holistic)
- **Daring** (including courageous, innovative, game-changing)

Being you @ Better Cotton

Better Cotton is committed to creating a diverse environment and is proud to be an equal opportunity employer with a strong commitment to good practice and transparency in the management of natural, human, and financial resources.

We have a zero-tolerance approach to any attitudes or behaviours that put children or adults at risk of harm. Safeguarding incidents are acts of serious misconduct and are grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal and referral to relevant authorities for criminal prosecution. Therefore, all offers of employment are subject to satisfactory references and appropriate screening checks.

Our Hiring Process

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: 21st February 2024

Initial Screening:

If you are selected, you will be contacted for an initial screening, which may involve a brief phone interview or video call. The purpose is to learn more about you, confirm basic qualifications, and discuss the role and organisation.

Interviews:

If you are confirmed after the initial screening, you will be invited for interviews. The interview process at Better Cotton may include one or more rounds of interviews with various stakeholders, such as the hiring manager, team members, and potentially senior management.

Assessment and Testing:

Depending on the role, you might be required to complete assessments, technical tests, or skills evaluations to gauge your competency and suitability for the position.

Reference Checks:

Once you progress further in the process, reference checks are conducted to validate your work history, skills, and qualifications, and for some roles, your education and criminal history.

Offer stage:

After completing interviews, assessments, and reference checks, the hiring team evaluates your performance and fit for the role. If you are selected and your references are relevant and satisfactory, you will receive a formal job offer letter outlining the terms of employment, compensation, benefits, and any other relevant details.

We thank all applicants for their interest; however, only candidates short-listed for interviews will be contacted. Better Cotton is currently unable to provide sponsorship for work permits, and candidates need to have a pre-existing right to work in the location where they will be based.