

Request for Proposals:

First Mile Chain of Custody - Third Party Verifiers

RFI n#: 2024-03-TRC-3PV
Location: India
Start date: May 2024 – June 2024

Better Cotton key contact:
Himaya Patel
First Mile Traceability Coordinator



All applications must be submitted via this [online form](#).

You may submit questions to tender@bettercotton.org quoting 'RFP n#2024-04-TRC-3PV'

Questions, requests, and applications sent after the deadline (12 April 2024) will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

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 provided training on more sustainable farming practices to more than 2.9 million cotton farmers in 26 countries. More than a fifth of the world's cotton is now grown under the Better Cotton Standard and our membership network includes more than 2,400 members.

More information about Better Cotton can be found on our website: www.bettercotton.org

Background

We are seeking proposals from skilled organisations capable of conducting assessments against strengthened first mile traceability measures.

There is a growing demand for traceability as stakeholders worldwide seek more clarity over the social and environmental challenges associated with textile supply chains, and policymakers increasingly

require businesses to demonstrate greater transparency. In 2023 Better Cotton launched a Traceability Solution to meet the industry demand and demonstrate the origin of Better Cotton.

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.

Advancements in traceability technologies and adoption is also an opportunity to improve raw material traceability in the "first mile". The "first mile" refers to the way in which Better Cotton is segregated, traded, transported and traced from the farm to the gin. First mile traceability is most complex in smallholder farmer contexts given the role of informal economic actors, aggregators, transportation, and markets. Better Cotton currently tracks the movement of cotton in the first mile using a code (AAV code) that is cascaded to cotton farmers through our programme partners and field network. The code is associated with a set (licensed) volume of production.

The increased availability and accessibility of technology in the field means the time is right to rethink our first mile controls. With the right design, improving how cotton is tracked forward in the field (and traced back) will also enable us to deliver greater value and benefits.

The Better Cotton Chain of Custody Standard v1.0 was published in May 2023 and is able to be applied across our supply chain base of approx. 15,000 organisations since October 2023. This new Standard introduced new Chain of Custody models to allow the transactions of physical Better Cotton across the supply chain.

To support the credible roll-out of the new Standard, Better Cotton is strengthening traceability in the first mile of the supply chain by developing a first mile auditing and integrity framework.

Scope of Work

The expected output will be to conduct three gin assessments in Gujarat and/or Maharashtra using documents currently being developed by Better Cotton. The selected organisation will also be required to provide feedback and suggestions on the aforementioned documents.

Organisations will also be required to write and submit assessment reports in a timely manner using templates provided by Better Cotton. The scope of this work does not include the closing out of any findings from the audits.

Better Cotton shall provide initial onboarding training, training on the Better Cotton Chain of Custody Standard, and training on the newly developed first mile auditing and integrity framework.

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

High-level Timeline

12 April 2024	Applications deadline – 17:00 GMT 12 April 2024 All applications must be submitted via this form .
12 April to 29 April 2024	Application review, due diligence and interviews
By 29 April 2024	The successful applicant will be notified. Unsuccessful <u>shortlisted</u> registrants will also be notified
6 May	Start of the auditing consultancy - kick off meeting and training
By end of May 2024	Output 1 – conduct audits on three ginners
By end of June 2024	Output 2 – final audit reports

Required Skills & Knowledge - Organisation Level

Skills, Knowledge and Experience
<i>Essential</i>
Accredited by a ISO17065
Sufficient qualified assessors/auditors in applied regions
Experience in assessments/audits in Chain of Custody Standards
Liability Insurance
Ability to manage assessments/audits and to adhere to timelines set by Better Cotton
Mature management system and internal audit process
Systems to ensure confidentiality and impartiality as well as prevent conflict of interest
Systems for ongoing assessor/auditor training and calibration
<i>Optional</i>
Experience in the cotton industry
Approved for other textile standards such as Textile Exchange and GOTS

Required Skills & Knowledge – Assessor Level

Skills, Knowledge and Experience
<i>Essential</i>
Demonstrated experience in carrying out supply chain/ chain of custody audits/assessments for sustainability standards in the agricultural and/ or forestry sector

(preferred experience in CoC systems that are similar to Better Cotton, i.e., segregation and mass balance modules)
Strong spoken and written English and Hindi
Trained and competent in basic auditing principles, i.e., ISO 19011 or similar
Experience in assessments/audits in Chain of Custody Standards
Having successfully conducted a minimum of three (3) supply chain audits/assessments in similar certification schemes (i.e., including traceability)
Experience in carrying out audits in the 'first mile' of supply chains
Optional
University degree in agriculture, natural resources, environmental management, or another relevant subject is encouraged but not required
Strong spoken Gujarati or Marathi
Previous experience with the Better Cotton Standard system or work with Better Cotton and our members/ other stakeholders
Previous experience with auditing/assessing financial and tax documents as they pertain to Chain of Custody and traceability

Application Requirements

Proposals responding to this Request for Proposals should include the following:

- Overview of relevant experience of organisation and team members
- A succinct, well-documented technical proposal (maximum of 2 pages) that includes:
 - A summary of the overall task to be completed
 - Proposed methodology and timeline
 - Declaration of any potential conflicts of interest relating to this assignment
- Financial Proposal: Please provide a detailed budget in Euros including time allocated and daily rates, as well as any expenses that will be incurred
- Evidence of approval for other Chain of Custody Standards (where applicable)

Please note that ALL costs must be included in the detailed budget including travel expenses, translation costs and taxes.

Consultants are invited to submit their proposals before 17:00 GMT 12 April 2024 via [this form](#).

We thank all applicants for their interest; however only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

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.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Technical Evaluation Criteria

- Demonstrated understanding of this RFP
- Quality and clarity of the proposed approach and methodology
- Feasibility of the proposed activity plan and timeline, and appropriateness of time allocated to delivering each task
- Relevant professional experience of the proposed organisation and consultant(s)
- Quality and relevance of the sample work submitted

Financial Evaluation Criteria

- Quality and clarity of budget provided, and level of detail included
- Alignment of the budget to the activity timeline detailed in the technical proposal
- Value for money