

Better Cotton Highly Hazardous Pesticides Exceptional Use Process v.1.0

To be used with the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria v.3.0

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Background and Context

Aligned with the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria (P&C) v.3.0, Better Cotton Farmers are expected to commit to phasing out Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) in the context of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategy. However, in some cases, viable alternatives may not yet exist for specific HHPs targeted for phase out. In these circumstances, phasing out HHPs without better alternatives can lead to adverse impacts, such as greater use of broad-spectrum insecticides, pesticide resistance and/or negative impacts on yields and livelihoods. To address this challenge, Better Cotton has set up a specific exceptional use process for HHPs.

The aim is to have a clear, transparent, and rigorous process to make informed decisions on the exceptional use of HHPs that are otherwise prohibited or targeted for phase out under the P&C. The process aims to ensure a thorough and impartial consideration of the impacts of continued use of the respective HHP vs. the impacts of phasing out (including evaluating the trade-offs of available alternatives). It also ensures that any granted exemptions are subject to specific monitoring and reporting requirements and include longer-term commitments to phasing out and finding better alternatives.

Exceptional Use Approvals

Applications for exceptional use are reviewed by members of the dedicated Better Cotton Pesticides Committee. Exceptional use is granted for specific active ingredients at a country or regional level and are subject to a defined period (a maximum of two seasons; any further extension would require an updated review). Exceptional use is subject to specific, defined conditions, including regular monitoring and reporting, use of mitigation measures, and others.

Process Overview

1. Initiate a request for exceptional use

- a) Programme Partners (PPs) or individual Large Farms (LFs) can initiate the process by communicating the need for exceptional use to their local Better Cotton Country Team.
- b) Producers located in the same country or region are encouraged to reach out jointly if they have similar needs and challenges. Better Cotton Country Teams will support Producers or Programme Partners in gathering the necessary elements to submit an application for exceptional use. The final application must come from the Better Cotton Country team¹.
- c) Partners or Producers should initiate this process at least four months before the start of sowing, as in some cases, further information or external input may be required for the application.

2. Submit an application

- a) Completed applications for exceptional use must be submitted at least 60 calendar days prior to the start of sowing, using the application form provided by Better Cotton.
- b) The application will require:
 - General information: the name and contact details of the applicants, the active ingredient concerned, the specific pest(s) that are targeted, method of application, application equipment, intended quantities and geographical scope of use.
 - Background context and current use: a description of the Integrated Pest Management approach in place, plus description of the historic extent and nature of use of the HHP
 - This should include volumes used, type and nature of application (number of farmers and/or land area) and associated Toxic Load Indicator (TLI). This information may be provided by the Better Cotton Country Teams or via external data sources where required.
 - Evaluation of alternatives: description of alternative options (both chemical and non-chemical), including results of any previous use, trials, or research studies carried out.
 - This will include an overview of the advantages/ disadvantages or trade-offs associated with these alternatives and an initial recommendation as to their viability
 - Where possible, opinions from IPM experts should be incorporated in this section
 - Risk assessment and mitigation: Assessment of risks to human health and the environment associated with the specific HHP, plus an overview of specific measures to mitigate each risk
 - This should include measures already in place and those planned, and how mitigation measures will be checked and monitored

¹. Or strategic partner, in countries where Better Cotton works through local strategic partners.....

- A detailed plan on how a long-term commitment to phase-out will be pursued (i.e., through efforts to identify, investigate and test alternatives to the HHP, collaboration with local stakeholders, etc.)

3. Application review

Applications are reviewed by Better Cotton Country Teams for eligibility, accuracy, and completeness before being submitted to the Better Cotton Pesticides Committee, typically composed of Better Cotton technical experts, country staff, Producer representatives and external experts.²

4. Decision-making

The Better Cotton Pesticides Committee will evaluate the application and supporting evidence, make a decision on exceptional use, and document the decision and any specific required conditions in a written findings report. When a decision is made, the Committee will inform the Country Team and affected Programme Partners/ Producers in writing.

If further information is required before the Committee can decide, they will document this in writing and the applicant will have a defined time period (usually 30 days) to provide further information as required.

The report shall include at least:

- A summary of the Committee discussion and key points raised
- The final decision (approval or rejection) and rationale
- In case of an approval, specific conditions for exceptional use, including, at minimum:
 - Mandatory mitigation measures
 - Reporting requirements
 - The period for which exceptional use is granted

Exceptional use can be granted for a maximum of two seasons. After that, an updated application is required to enable any further extension.

5. Monitoring and review process

- For any HHP approved for exceptional use, the Programme Partner or Large Farm using the HHP in question is responsible for complying with all required conditions (including monitoring and reporting) required for exceptional use.
- If these conditions are not met, the exceptional use approval can be revoked (subject to review by the Better Cotton Director of Standards & Assurance and Senior Director of Programmes); and/ or specific Producers' licenses may be affected by non-compliance under Principle 3 of the P&C v3.0
- At any point, Better Cotton may request further information or an update on how the conditions of exceptional use are met.

² The composition, roles and responsibilities and decision-making modalities of the Better Cotton Pesticides Committee are laid out in a separate Terms Of Reference attached in annex 1.....

- The following information will be shared with Better Cotton and made public in aggregate, anonymised format:
 - Number of Producers using the HHP and quantities applied
 - Evidence of prevention and mitigation measures implemented
 - Description of progress to identify and test alternatives to the exceptional use HHPs

Better Cotton staff will be responsible for reviewing the monitoring information submitted by Partners/Large Farms who have been granted exceptional use of HHPs. If exceptional use is granted for a large number of Producers or a large geographical area, the review may be based on a sample of Producers.

