

Request for Proposals Regenerative Framework Development

RFI n#: 2024-8-SA-REGEN

Location: Remote

Start date: 5th September 2024

End date: 13th January 2025



Better Cotton key contact:
Natalie Ernst
Standards, Certification, and MEL

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

You may submit questions to tender@bettercotton.org - RFI n# 2024-8-SA-REGEN until 28th August 2024.

Questions, requests and applications sent after the deadline (5th September 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. In difficult times, we are meeting the challenge head on. Through our network of field-level partners we have provided training on more sustainable farming practices to more than 2.2 million cotton farmers in 22 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 2,500 members.

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

Background

Better Cotton's proposed approach to regenerative agriculture builds on three pillars, including project delivery, reporting, and potential certification. The overall aim is to promote and enable a global shift towards more regenerative practices in cotton production, while responding to increasing industry needs around regenerative certification and claims.

We are seeking expressions of interest from skilled individuals or organisations interested in supporting Better Cotton in the operationalisation of this approach. Interested individuals or organisation may submit proposals for either one, two, or all three of the below workstreams, which should run in parallel and feed into each other.

- Workstream 1: Desk review on industry trends and refine Better Cotton’s definition of regenerative agriculture (Deliverables I, II).
- Workstream 2: Standard and Certification refinements on regenerative agriculture (Deliverables III, IV). Development of a credible, feasible, and relevant implementation and assessment framework for the existing regenerative requirements in our farm-level standard, the P&C v.3.0 (III); the extension of this framework to a draft version of a potential regenerative opt-in module to the existing standard (IV).
- Workstream 3: Regenerative reporting (Deliverables V, VI): Identify key regenerative outcomes to be included in Better Cotton’s evidence framework, that align with existing global frameworks and Better Cotton’s Theory of Change (V) and show measurable impact over time. Identify and define practices that can and should be reported on to show progress and uptake on regenerative practices (VI).

Scope of Work

Workstream 1: Desk review on industry trends and refine Better Cotton’s definition of regenerative agriculture

Estimated workload: 5-8 working days

- Review, analyse, and compare existing standards, frameworks, academic literature, and trends on regenerative agriculture, to understand key industry trends and variations in definitions and approaches.
- Review and assess relevance of these regenerative approaches and trends in the cotton sector.
- Work with Better Cotton staff to refine Better Cotton’s definition on regenerative agriculture.

Deliverable I: Comprehensive report on existing trends, standards, and frameworks relevant to regenerative practices in the cotton sector - as well as their commonalities and differences – to be used by Better Cotton as a go-to resource.

Deliverable II: Refined definition of regenerative agriculture for Better Cotton

Workstream 2: Standard and Certification refinements on regenerative agriculture

Our farm-level standard, the P&C v.3.0. covers the key tenets of regenerative agriculture. As part of the update of our farm-level standard to P&C v.3.1 and based on learnings from the first season of implementation, we are looking to develop a framework that help guide our producers in implementing and meeting the existing requirements for regenerative agriculture. This framework is

intended to be used as a tool to encourage practice adoption and show improvement over time, while at the same time providing an objective framework for auditors to check compliance. It should contain the most relevant practices for each regenerative requirement and define parameters on how to show improvement over time (Deliverable III). This framework should then be further evolved to include a scoring and weighting system, as well as entry thresholds, which can be used as a voluntary opt-in module for regenerative certification (Deliverable IV).

Estimated workload: 10-15 working days

1. Develop an implementation and assessment framework for existing regenerative requirements in the Better Cotton the P&C v.3.0

- In close consultation with Better Cotton staff, **identify key topic areas and the most relevant regenerative practices** to be included in the regenerative implementation and assessment framework linked to P&C v.3.0. The identification process should include, at a minimum:
 - o Utilising and reviewing findings from Workstream 1, particularly the comparison of other regenerative standards and frameworks, along with existing scientific knowledge and literature on regenerative practices in cotton-growing contexts (considering different geographies and farm sizes) relevant to the areas covered in the P&C v.3.0.
 - o Consultation with country teams on key practices, feasibility challenges and opportunities.
 - o Review of Better Cotton internal resources (such as MEL data, self-assessments, and overall assessment results), learnings from the first season of implementation, and others.
 - o Propose and discuss the identified topic areas and practices with the Better Cotton Standard, Impact, and MEL teams.
- In close collaboration with Better Cotton Standard, Impacts, and MEL staff, define and advise on the **technicalities of the framework**. This work should include, at a minimum:
 - o A proposal on how the framework can ensure global consistency for assessments, while respecting the different contexts in which Better Cotton producers operate (e.g., geographically, varying farm sizes, etc). This could include context- specific criteria, different frameworks, etc.
 - o The definition of the parameters on how to show and assess improvement over time (e.g., area of land covered, number of farming households included, complexity of practices, etc).
 - o Other relevant technical details that might arise during the development phase.
- After a consultation period led and supported by Better Cotton staff, including field partners, other potential technical experts, and Better Cotton global and country staff, **integrate that feedback to finalise the framework** to be rolled out in season 25/26.

Deliverable III: Robust assessment and implementation framework, effective to be rolled out as implementation and assessment guidance for the regenerative requirements in the P&C v. 3.0 as of January 2025.

2. Extension of the assessment and implementation framework (deliverable III) to a first draft of a regenerative certification opt-in module

- Based on the assessment and implementation framework (deliverable III) and in close collaboration with Better Cotton country, Standard, Impact and MEL teams, develop the first draft of the regenerative certification opt-in module, including:
 - o Proposed scoring and weighting system that considers that applicability across different contexts.
 - o Proposed potential additional key practices or specifications not covered in P&C v.3.1.
 - o Proposed entry thresholds for potential regenerative certification and/or potential minimum conditions for eligibility for regenerative certification, as well as conditions for keeping the certification.

Deliverable IV: First draft of a proposed regenerative opt-in module, ready to be pilot tested and further consulted on, refined, and adjusted as of January 2025.

Workstream 3: Regenerative Reporting

In order to be able to better respond to industry needs to report on regenerative progress and outcomes, Better Cotton aims to update its existing MEL tools with more specific regenerative metrics. This includes an update of our existing Evidence Framework with relevant regenerative outcomes (deliverable V) as well as selected practices to be included in our practice adoption reporting (deliverable VI).

Estimated workload: 10-15 working days

1. Define regenerative outcomes to be included in the evidence framework

- Propose and define relevant regenerative outcomes to be included in the Better Cotton Evidence framework. This work should include, at a minimum:
 - o Assessing and utilising the findings from Workstream 1, as well as any additional key market and industry trends on reporting requirements.
 - o Assessing the P&C v.3.0 and Better Cotton's theory of change, as well as other existing Better Cotton MEL data, approaches, and developments.
 - o Consulting with country teams and thematic leads to ensure alignment, relevance, and feasibility.
 - o Identifying key details of indicators - including data points, data collection approaches, and reporting formats and timelines, proposed data verification, etc.
 - o Considering and balancing strong, relevant, and impactful messaging with costs and feasibility of data collection, opportunities for the use of novel technologies where appropriate, and others.

Deliverable V: Adjusted Evidence Framework including Regenerative Outcomes.

2. Define regenerative practices to be globally reported on for practice adoption data

- Propose and define relevant regenerative practices to be reported on in a standardised way across all contexts to demonstrate regenerative progress. This work should include, at a minimum:
 - o Assessing and utilising the findings from Workstream 1, as well as any additional key market and industry trends on reporting requirements.
 - o Assessing the P&C v.3.0 and Better Cotton's Theory of Change, and existing MEL data and efforts, as well as the implementation and assessment framework developed in Workstream 2.
 - o Consulting with country teams and thematic leads to ensure alignment, relevance, and feasibility.
 - o Identifying key details of indicators - including data points, data collection approaches and reporting formats, proposed data verification, timelines, etc.
 - o Providing advice on final proposed outcomes, considering and balancing strong, relevant, and impactful messaging, costs and feasibility of data collection, opportunities for the use of novel technologies where appropriate, etc.

Deliverable VI: Proposed regenerative practices and respective indicators to be reported on globally for adoption data.

Essential Links

- o Better Cotton P & C Version 3.0
<https://bettercotton.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Better-Cotton-PC-v.3.0.pdf>
- o **Evidence Framework For MEL**
<https://bettercotton.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Better-Cotton-Evidence-Framework.pdf>

High-level Timeline

28 August 2024	Applications deadline All applications must be submitted via this form .
2 September	Interviews with shortlisted candidates
By September 4 2024	The successful applicant will be notified Unsuccessful <u>shortlisted</u> applicants will also be notified
5 September 2024	Start of the consultancy
5 September, 2024	Induction Call

By 30 September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submission of draft deliverable I: Tangible report on relevant existing regenerative frameworks, standards, and trends.
By 30 October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submission of final deliverable I: Tangible report on relevant existing regenerative frameworks, standards, and trends. - Submission of deliverable II: Better Cotton’s refined definition on regenerative. - Submission of draft of deliverable III: Implementation and Assessment Framework (to be shared by Better Cotton for further consultation).
By 30 November 2024	<p>Submission of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliverable V: Adjusted Evidence Framework with Regenerative Outcomes. - Deliverable VI: Proposed practices and metrics for regenerative practice adoption reporting.
By 13 January 2025	<p>Submission of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final version of deliverable III – Implementation and Assessment framework (with integrated feedback). - Deliverable IV: Proposed regenerative opt-in module.

Required Skills & Knowledge

Skills, Knowledge and Experience
<i>Essential</i>
Sound technical knowledge and experience in regenerative agriculture, practices, including contextual differences and outcomes
Relevant academic degree or qualifications in agronomy, sustainable development, soil health, natural resource management or similar
Solid understanding of differences between Smallholders and Large Farms farming contexts
Experience of working in a global (sustainability) organisation
Proven experience in working with or for Voluntary Standard Systems and /or certification schemes (e.g. standard setting, auditing, or similar) (essential for Workstream 2 of the assignment)
Proven experience in MEL design and data (essential for Workstream 3 of the assignment)
Sound and proven knowledge of ongoing industry trends and developments on regenerative agriculture

Pragmatic and solution-oriented working attitude, ability to break down complex issues into manageable steps
Proven analytical skills
Fluent English
<i>Optional</i>
Knowledge or Experience of regenerative agriculture in cotton production contexts

Application Requirements

Please note that we have changed our RFP submission protocol, and this is now in two phases;

- **Phase 1:** Initial details will be submitted on the form found in [this link](#).
- **Phase 2:** You will receive an email with live links to upload relevant documents (please check your Spam and Junk folders).

Proposals responding to this Request should be a maximum of 10 pages (excluding CVs and a sample of work), and include the following:

- Overview of relevant experience
- Proposed methodology and timeline for all parts of this assignment (**note: we do accept proposals for either one or two of the assignments separately as well**).
- Detailed and transparent budget, in EUROS, including time allocation and day rates

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 and technical expertise of the proposed 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
- Adherence to the available budget