

Restoring the Environment Keynote

Restoring the Environment –
exploring the role of climate leadership
in shaping cotton's future.

with
Tori Tsui
Climate activist and writer





Better Cotton Conference 2025

Tori Tsui

Restoring the Environment

– exploring the role of climate leadership in
shaping cotton's future.



ITS ALL CONNECTED

-

Tori Tsui

WHAT FUELS FASHION?



The Climate Reality

Questions we must ask:

- 1 What are the consequences of how we grow cotton?
- 2 Who pays the price?
- 3 Who shoulders the burden?



Los Angeles fires
"bad fire season"

Valencia floods
"random flash flood"

The Reality of Cotton - and Polyester

Better Cotton matters — because what we wear is deeply connected to the health of our planet.

Polyester

The Most Used Fibre

- Made from fossil fuel derivatives
- Polymerised plastic on our skin
- Derived from the same source driving the climate crisis

Cotton

The Most Used **Natural** Fibre

Comfortable.
Breathable.
Durable.

But

- Drains water in arid regions
- Relies heavily on chemical inputs
- Contributes to land degradation

Farmers First

The forgotten heroes

Cotton cannot exist without farmers. Closest to Earth and most exploited. Frontline of climate change. Little control over emissions impacting their land.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO BE BETTER?





Better Cotton's Impact

Tori Tsui



15 Years of Transformation

- 2.13 million Better Cotton farmers
- 5.47 million tonnes produced (22% of world's cotton)
- 22 countries aligned with Better Cotton standard
- 2.43 million farmers trained and supported
- Farmers rights + livelihoods = central to mission
- Empowered farmers = collaborative environment
- Best practices shared across farming communities



Regenerative Revolution

Healing the Land

THE CHEMICAL REALITY

4.7% global pesticides + 10% insecticides
sold worldwide go into cotton farming

THE SOLUTION

Investing in sustainable practices rooted in generations of indigenous knowledge to create eliminate chemicals and stabilise farming.

- ✓ Improved Yields
- ✓ Reduced Input Costs
- ✓ Farmer Livelihood

Data & Certification

Measuring what matters

- Field-level data collection for transparency
- New certification scheme (January 2025)
- EU Green Claims Directive compliance
- Evidence-based, accountable progress



Flawed Methodology

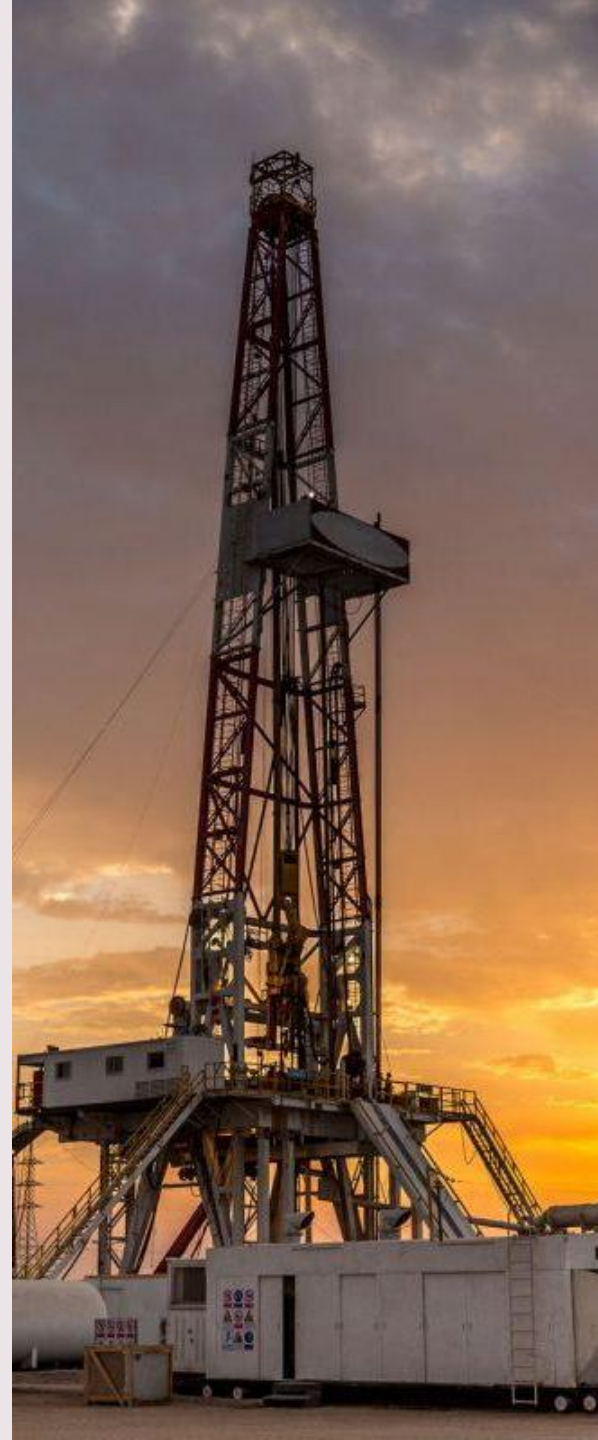
Make the Label Count Coalition

Life cycle assessment methodology.

"In its current form, the PEF methodology deems a 100% polyester T-shirt to be 42% more sustainable than a 100% cotton t-shirt."

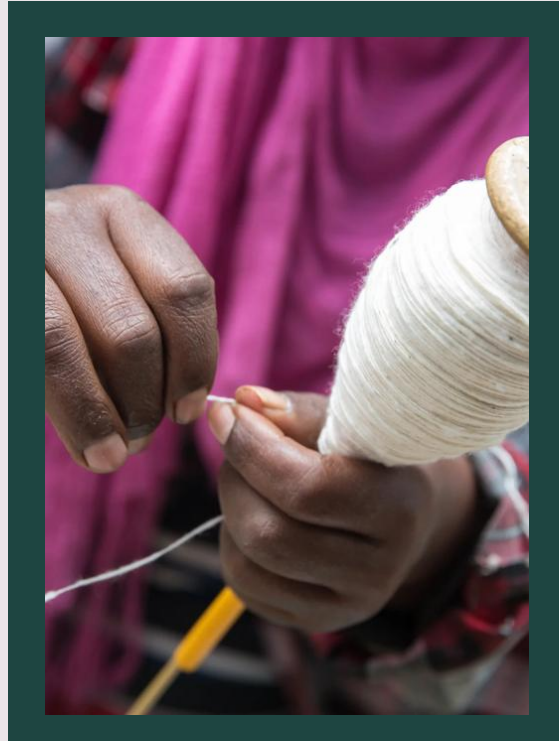
Methodology rewards synthetic "longevity".

This is the problem.



Climate Justice

People at the centre





Financing the Future

Breaking Barriers to Scale

Better Cotton is piloting new farmer centric solutions.

- Credit trading schemes for verified sustainability impacts
- Partnerships with local financiers
- Pathways to carbon markets

Call to Action



REFRAME THE NARRATIVE

Cotton ≠ just commodity

Cotton = lifeline for millions

Cotton = soil beneath farmer's feet

Cotton = fabric of sustainable world

WE NEED

Brands

Retailers

Policymakers

Investors

THE ASK

Investment,

Partnership, Advocacy,

Become Better Cotton members



Thank You
Tori Tsui