

# Request for Proposals – Producer Unit Rescoping Pilot

## Full project Endline Evaluation Consultancy

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RFP n#: 2025-5-SI-PUREENDLINE

Location: Global, with pilots in  
Telangana India and  
Punjab, Pakistan

Start date: 1 August 2025

End date: 28 February 2026



**Better Cotton key contact:**

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

You may submit questions to [tender@bettercotton.org](mailto:tender@bettercotton.org) – RFP n# 20255-SI-PURE until the 23rd June 2025.

Questions, requests, and applications sent after the deadline 30th June 2025 will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

### **Submission Update:**

**We have changed how we are receiving bids. After submitting your details through the form, you will receive a separate email to upload your supporting documents to a secure platform.**

**AT THE END OF THIS DOCUMENT, THERE IS A QUESTION AND ANSWER SECTION WHICH YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO GO THROUGH IN PREPARATION FOR SUBMITTING YOUR BIDS**

## Description

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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 2.9 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](http://www.bettercotton.org).

## Background

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We are seeking proposals from skilled organisations interested in supporting Better Cotton with a full end of pilot evaluation of a structural, organisational pilot project that aimed to trial a new, landscape-based approach to implementing the Better Cotton system at the farm level.

In smallholder and medium farm contexts, Better Cotton currently licenses at Producer Unit Level. A Producer Unit is a group of farmers – typically around 3000-3500 voluntarily participating cotton farmers in a smallholder context. This group is administered through a farmer list which names the participating farmers and includes some key data on those farmers (name, village name, total area of farmland, area under cotton cultivation, type of irrigation used, years within the producer unit, contact number, etc). This list is not only used by our Programme Partners to invite participants to capacity strengthening and training activities, but also for sampling for data to serve both auditing and monitoring, evaluation and learning purposes. In practice, however, there are many challenges with that list-based approach (like time and cost intensive efforts required for data collection, monitoring and maintaining large data sets, reporting data to better cotton in specific templates)

Under a Producer Unit Rescoping Project (PURE), the approach is tested whereas all cotton farming households within a defined geographic unit are to be considered as Better Cotton farmers, as opposed to a selected list-based approach.

The objectives of the PURE pilot are to improve the effectiveness of the overall Better Cotton programme by supporting more holistic, community-based approaches and hence ensure longer-term and more effective field-level sustainability impact. Such a change however requires key adjustments

on how our programmatic, capacity strengthening, MEL and assurance teams operate. This is what these two pilot projects in 2 separate countries and set-up tested.

A snapshot of the project location and reach is given below. For each partner, 3 PUs are merged to create a single management system under each partner:

Country	State, District	Programme Partner	Producer Units in their conventional form	Reach of PURE management system
India	Telangana, Karimnagar	WWF	INTL01: 3574 farmers, 49 villages INTL02: 3524 farmers, 55 villages INTL23: 3018 farmers, 54 villages	12000 farming Households, 150 Villages
Pakistan	Punjab, Rahim Yar Khan	Rural Education and Economic Development Society (REEDS)	PKRY04: 4000 farmers and 140 villages PKRY12: 3170 farmers and 321 villages PKRY19: 3985 farmers and 338 villages (there was reorganisation and clusterification of villages done for administrative convenience.)	13000 farming households, 155 Mouzas

It is important to note that both programme partners have continued to implement the 'list-based' approach for the rest of their programme. The split of this is below, together with a column sharing what information these PUs collect each year. This is provided as it is felt comparison would be beneficial for some indicators against both a) the pilot project baselines and also b) the data from other Producer Units administered by the same Partners. In addition, the quality of MEL and assurance processes could be compared between PURE and non-PURE PUs.

Programme Partner / Country	Number of PUs not in PURE pilot	Data collected each year from all Producers, PURE & non-PURE
India, WWF	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people trained</li> <li>• Topic of trainings</li> <li>• Area of cotton cultivated</li> <li>• Yield of cotton produced</li> <li>• Budget of PU</li> </ul>
Pakistan, REEDS	21	

Please see a summary of the concept note, and the baseline report from the India pilot in the Annex 1 and Annex 2 respectively. The baseline report of the Pakistan pilot, as well as the midline evaluation report from India are still being worked on and will be shared with the consultants upon hiring.

## Scope of Work

We expect the consultancy to be carried out in a collaborative manner with the Better Cotton Team as well as with our Programme Partners in India and Pakistan who are implementing the pilot project.

The overall objective of the project evaluation are to:

- Evaluate project outcomes and objectives against the KPIs and baseline findings
- Identify the both the drivers of success and the challenges faced
- Compare the cost-effectiveness of the conceptual approaches with the actual ground implementation of the project

Based on the above: Evaluate the feasibility aspects of replicating or scaling up the pilot, including potential recommendations on needed adjustments or next steps.

Domain	KPI	Expected change with cause of the change
<b>Improved staff time allocation to drive impact</b>	1. Time spent on data and administrative tasks by field staff vs. time spent on impact driven capacity strengthening.	The time spent on impact driven capacity strengthening is expected to have increased whilst the time spent on data and administrative tasks will have decreased.  The reason is the reduction in data collection points due to ceasing farmer lists and changes in MEL and assurance processes.
<b>Increased farmer reach with similar project costs</b>	2. Per project cost - Number of members of farming community trained and/or participating in Better Cotton activities, disaggregated by gender	Whilst the costs for the staff and activities of the PURE pilot management system will be similar to the costs of the 3 pre-PURE (conventional) PUs, it is expected the number of farming community members will increased because attendance at training is no longer confined by a participant being on the PU's farmer list. Instead, village level training allows more farmers and other relevant community members to attend training and other events based on their need and interest.

		It is also expected the costs to reach women have reduced, as more women are now attending training.
	3. Per project cost - Number of Women trained and/or participating in Better Cotton activities	<p>The number of women reached per cost is now increased.</p> <p>This is due to the increased flexibility that allowing attendees from outside of the 'farmer list' (often male household head) and also the flexibility in the types of training offered/timing/locations due to the village approach (which helps women's attendance)</p>
Increased area and volume with similar project costs:	Per cost - Area of cotton cropland covered	It is expected that the area per cost will increase because (to be added)
	Per cost - Volume of cotton eligible for Better Cotton licensing	It is expected that the volume of cotton eligible per cost will increase because (improved time with farmers / quality of training/support?)
Increased quality, efficiencies and confidence in the rescoped system's approaches	Quality of capacity strengthening approaches	<p>The increased time field staff can spend with community (due to reduced data/admin time) will increase quality of training (including the satisfaction of farmers)</p> <p>With the removal farmer list restraint, the training can be provided which can responds to community/level issues which can provide a more effective context to support sustainable farming practices.</p> <p>Further, the flexibility in approaches should both increase inclusion and the satisfaction of women with training support offered.</p>
	4. Maintained or increased improvements in farmer knowledge, attitudes and adoption of sustainable farming practices (disaggregated by gender)	The improved quality and relevance of training will lead to increased maintained or increased improvements (beyond those that would have been achieved with the previous PU set up).
	5. Robust assurance approach that people have confidence in	The improved assurance process followed for the PURE project, alongside with just one assessment, instead of three as was required for each of the three PUs,

	6. Relevant MEL data that can be used with other global MEL data, and that provides credible, high- quality data	<p>More secondary data is made use of which reduces the primary data collection time required but maintains the credibility of data collected.</p> <p>In total, a low sample is required for the single PURE project than required for the 3 PUs.</p> <p>Reduction in cost and time needed for production of required quality of MEL data</p>
	7. Supply chain credibility and trust related to claimed volumes	Improved trust/credibility, and reduced costs whilst maintained credibility, or increased volumes

## Methodology

Better Cotton expects the consultant to develop a robust framework (approach, design, and methods) based on the purposes of the full evaluation. The consultant should provide a justification for proposing a particular approach and methodology with a detailed discussion in their proposal. The final decision on the approach and methodology will be done in consultation with the Better Cotton team.

This evaluation is primarily about assessing the effectiveness of organisational structures and approaches (KPIs 1-6,8-10), whilst recognising the quality of these changes will also be seen in the experiences and changes in knowledge and practices of farmers (KPI 7). Indeed, it is a necessary to consider the experience of farmers, but to avoid this being seen as an evaluation primarily focused on changes in practice adoption. The methodology proposed is expected to explicitly consider that.

**Note:** The consultancy is expected to directly consider and evaluate both pilots, in India and Pakistan.

The consultants will be expected to consider this aspect in their methodology and proposal (e.g. work with subcontractors in both countries, partly make use of remote data collection / interviews, etc.).

## Activities and Deliverables

This assignment entails the following two phases, with three deliverables

## **Phase 1: Initial project set-up & consultations – 1 August – 15 September**

Consultation with Better Cotton global and country teams, as well as Programme Partners where needed, to refine the scope of work and timelines, as well as propose a methodology to be used, including the sampling and a draft version of the data collection tools (i.e., surveys, interview questionnaires, etc.).

### **Activities:**

- Engage in discussions with relevant stakeholders and develop a methodology, analysis framework.
- Develop data collection tools
- Identifying and mobilising required resources – secondary research, datasets from Better Cotton, etc.
- Ensure logistics (e.g. subcontracting, etc.) for data collection in both India and Pakistan

### **Expected deliverables due by 15 September**

1. Inception report, inclusive of the methodology, sampling plan, MEL framework, updated timelines
2. Survey and interview tools validated by Better Cotton team

## **Phase 2: Data collection – 15 September 2025 – 15 December 2025**

Based on the methodology and sampling proposed and agreed by Better Cotton, the consultants will carry out the data collection at field level and share preliminary results for discussion with the Better Cotton team. We expect full coverage of all the key stakeholders with relevant data collection methods as agreed during inception phase.

### **Activities**

- Data collection
- Share preliminary results with Partners and adjust
- Share preliminary results in a workshop with Better Cotton Global Team (mid-November)
- Draft preliminary report

We will also expect for

### **Expected deliverables:**

1. Submission of preliminary report, including findings against each evaluation question and recommendations
2. Raw data and notes of qualitative and quantitative research data collection (including surveys, interviews, FGD, etc.)
3. Raw data and conclusions from discussions of preliminary results with partners and Better Cotton staff, and how feedback has been taken into account

### Phase 3: Finalisation of report and recommendation : 15 December 2025 – 28 February 2026

Based on the feedback from the Better Cotton team on the preliminary report and findings, the consultants will refine their final report, add an additional round of data collection for clarification if and where needed, and finalise their recommendations.

#### Activities:

- If needed, engage with Better Cotton team to clarify their feedback on preliminary results
- Final data collection if and where needed
- Finalisation of the report, including at least 3 iterations with the Better Cotton team.

#### Deliverables

- Final report, including all data, findings and analysis, as well as recommendations and next steps, and contains all raw data in the annex
- 2 pages executive summary of the findings and recommendations that can be publicly shared

## High-level Timeline

30 June 2025	Applications deadline.  <i>All applications must be submitted via <a href="#">this form</a>.</i>
15 July 2025	Applications review, shortlisting and interviews.
31 July 2025	Notification of the successful applicant, contract signed and Induction call.  Unsuccessful <u>shortlisted</u> applicants will also be notified.
01 August 2025	<b>Start of the consultancy</b>
15 September 2025	Phase 1 completed and deliverables submitted
15 December 2025	Phase 2 completed, and deliverables submitted
28 February 2026	Phase 3 completed, and deliverables submitted

## Required Skills & Knowledge

Skills, Knowledge and Experience expected in the team
<i>Essential</i>
Relevant academic background in research and evaluation or related fields
The lead consultant to have a minimum of 7 years of professional experience in Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning with both quantitative and qualitative research
Relevant experience in assessing and evaluating efficiencies of organisational, conceptional approaches in Standards System and/or development projects or other relevant fields
Experience in working directly or through sub-contractors in both India and Pakistan
Access to trusted, experienced and reliable field data collection teams with excellent written and oral skills in Telugu and Punjabi
Excellent facilitation, coordination and report writing skills in English
<i>Desirable</i>
Knowledge of Better Cotton and Better Cotton Project Implementation.
Knowledge of sustainable agriculture
Experience working with other Voluntary Standard Systems

In addition to skills, competencies, and expertise, we will consider value for money to evaluate applications.

## 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 sent to respond this Request for Proposals must include the following:

- A succinct, well-documented Technical Proposal of no more than 10 pages that includes:
  - Understanding of the assignment including a summary of tasks and main objectives.
  - Required consortium/JV/sub-contracting for completion of the evaluation
  - The proposed approach and methodology
  - Activities and their corresponding timeline.
  - A clear description of the project team members with details of their relevant experience (with CVs in annex, not included in 10 page limit)

- At least one sample of previous relevant work (the contents of which will remain confidential and will be used for the sole purpose of evaluating the submission).
- A Financial Proposal in EUR: Please provide a detailed budget including the time allocated for each activity and the daily rates per person, respecting the overall requirements and scope of the assignment. Please note that ALL costs must be included in the detailed budget including expenses, traveling costs, and taxes.
- We expect a competitive financial proposal with the overall budget for the assignment not crossing the range of EUR 12000 – 20000)

*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.*

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## Questions & Answers

### Question 1

However, we would like to bring to your attention the current geopolitical situation and heightened tensions in Pakistan, which present significant challenges and risks in terms of on-ground survey operations. Given the safety concerns and prevailing restrictions, it is presently not feasible to undertake field-level data collection or stakeholder consultations within Pakistan.

In view of this, we kindly request you to consider an exemption for the survey component pertaining to Pakistan.

We are aware of the situation and therefore recommend a joint venture with consultants from both geographies. We cannot exempt any country from the scope of evaluation as we look forward to having global level recommendations (based on implementation in both the geographies) for the project. As stated in the proposal, we don't anticipate many in-depth interviews with farming communities, but we do expect several in-depth consultations with PURE project staff in both countries.

### Question 2

Could you please clarify whether consulting firms from both countries are eligible to apply, or if only Pakistan-based consulting firms are permitted to operate at the Pakistan level?

Applications are open to consultants from all geographies. Furthermore, suitable joint ventures or consortiums established will also be considered acceptable.