

Request for Proposals – Producer Unit Rescoping Pilot

Full project Endline Evaluation Consultancy

RFP n#: 2025-5-SI-PUREENDLINE

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

Start date: 10 August 2025

End date: 28 February 2026



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

You may submit questions to tender@bettercotton.org – RFP n# 20255-SI-PURE until the 8th July 2025.

Questions, requests, and applications sent after the deadline 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

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.

Background

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"> • Number of people trained • Topic of trainings • Area of cotton cultivated • Yield of cotton produced • Budget of PU
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
Improved staff time allocation to drive impact	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.
Increased farmer reach with similar project costs	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 – 10 August – 20 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 20 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 – 20 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

10 July 2025	Applications deadline. <i>All applications must be submitted via this form.</i>
20 July 2025	Applications review, shortlisting and interviews.
05 August 2025	Notification of the successful applicant, contract signed and Induction call. Unsuccessful <u>shortlisted</u> applicants will also be notified.
10 August 2025	Start of the consultancy
20 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, conceptual 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.

Annex 1 – PURE Pilot Project – Concept Note

1. About this document

This document provides a proof-of-concept of the PU-Rescoping (PU-RE) approach, which would provide an alternative approach on BCSS implementation, focussing on geographical approach to define Producer Units, as opposed to the current approach based on a farmers list. This is in line with general ambitions to deepen impact as well as on current developments to look at landscape and/or jurisdictional approaches.

This document outlines the proposed adjusted approaches for Better Cotton's Programme Implementation, Assurance/Certification, Capacity Strengthening, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL), and first-mile traceability. The approaches have been co-developed in close collaboration with the different functions within Better Cotton, selected Programme Partners, PU Managers and Field Facilitators, as well as with input from external consultancies. The approaches are pilot tested in India and Pakistan in seasons 2024 to 2026.

The document serves as a working draft, subject to updates informed by ongoing learning and conceptual refinement over time.

2. Background

PU rescoping: Why and What?

Rationale

The PU rescoping project was developed based on considerations around the relevance, purpose, and effectiveness of farmers lists, as well as based on the general strive towards landscape or jurisdictional approaches. It is expected that the shift to a geographic focus of programme delivery and licensing approach will:

- Improving efficiencies in our implementation model to accelerate work towards impact

- Broadening scope and reach under one single management unit (areas, volumes, and people reached)
- Lead to more inclusive capacity strengthening approaches
- Offer potential solutions for first mile traceability

In addition to this, adopting a geographical approach provides learning opportunities on landscape approaches and can help define Better Cottons stake in those. It also provides opportunities to use synergies with other ongoing developments within the organisation (including, for example, efforts to better recognise farming households for their work, considerations around a regenerative landscape standard, and others).

Objectives

- **Improved scope, inclusiveness and effectiveness of capacity strengthening** through supporting more holistic and inclusive community-based approaches.
- **Improved efficiency and scalability of Better Cotton**, through greater participation and volumes under one single management system
- Facilitating improved **first mile traceability** and removing the need for physical segregation of cotton from individual farms

What the PU rescoping is not:

Although being referred to as an alternative implementation model to potentially help us define landscape approaches, it is important to acknowledge what the PU rescoping is not:

- The PU rescoping approach should not be confused with a proper "Landscape Approach", as it has a neither multi-commodity nor multi-stakeholder focus. It solely focusses on the changes in approaches that would be needed if the focus of interventions shifted from a farmers-list to a geographic area. However, it will give Better Cotton key insights to understand better what works and what not, and therewith can help pave the way for Better Cotton's landscape engagement.
- The PU Rescoping approach is not aimed to be an alternative or competing system to the regular implementation model. Instead, it is meant to offer a parallel complementary option for implementation where the enabling environment fits.

Key Performance Indicators

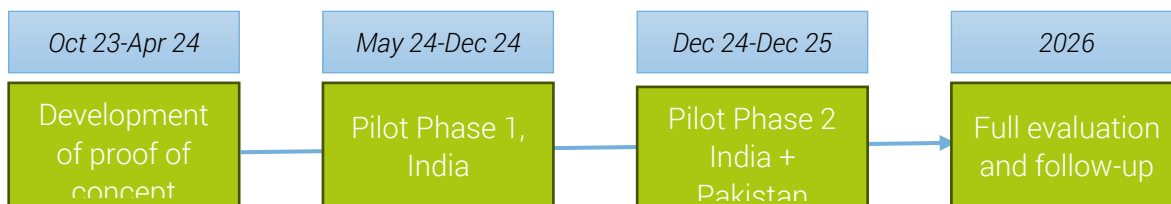
- Increased scope with similar project costs
 - Area of cotton cropland covered under one single management system
 - Volume of cotton eligible for Better Cotton licensing covered under one management system

- Increased reach with similar project costs:
 - o Number of members of farming community trained and/or participating in Better Cotton activities, disaggregated by gender
 - o Women having access to activities and benefits within the Better Cotton System through the pilot
 - o Women attending scheduled training sessions or workshops
- Improving efficiencies to drive impact
 - o Time spent on data and administrative tasks by field staff vs. time spent on impact driven capacity strengthening
- Increased Confidence and efficiencies of the rescoped approaches including:
 - o Robust assurance approach that people have confidence in
 - o Relevant MEL data that can be used with other global MEL data, and that provides credible, high- quality data
 - o Capacity strengthening approaches that accelerate knowledge, attitude, practice adoption among farming communities
 - o Supply chain credibility and trust related to claimed volumes

High-level project plan

Timelines

The PU rescoping project, funded by IDH, will span over 3 years. It is an innovation project with the aim to learn and test new system approaches. It follows the overall high-level timeline¹:



Governance

The Project is led by a core group containing representatives from Standards, Producer Assurance, MEL, Traceability, Supply Chain and Programmes (global and Country Representatives). It's overseen by a Steering Team with senior representatives from the same functions as well as IDH. General project accountability lays within global Standards and Assurance.

¹ The Assurance and Supply Chain approach will be amended between September and December 2024 to align with the certification model

3. Pilot Areas

Pilot area 1: India

The India pilot runs with WWF Telangana, in the Karimnagar district, located in the northern part of Telangana state, India. The rescoped PU, named **INTL-PURE-01**, covers the full district, as well as 34 villages from neighbouring districts Pedapalli and Warangal.



This rescoped PU includes three existing Smallholder Producer Units (implemented by WWF Telangana project) within its boundaries²: INTL01, INTL02, and INTL23, totalling approximately 12,000 cotton producers according to the 2022-2023 farmers list.

Out of the 210 villages in Karim Nagar district, the PU rescoping approach is implemented in 148 villages, that includes expansion of Better Cotton project into 9 new villages in 2024-25 season and withdrawing implementation from the villages that are no more growing cotton crop. Around 30 remaining villages with cotton growing households will be included in phases under rescoping, ensuring careful resource planning.

Participating PUs

Below are the details on the existing 3 Pus.

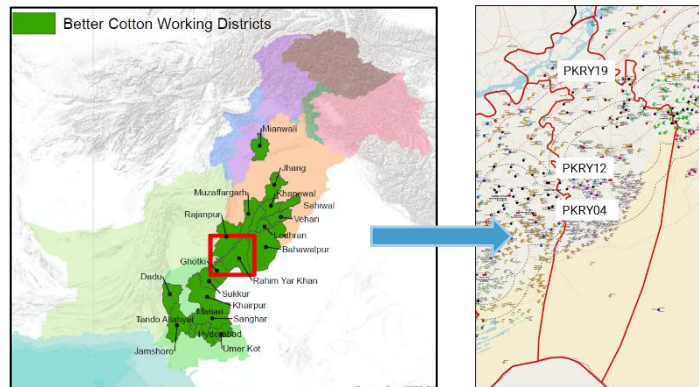
Details	INTL01	INTL02	INTL23
Year of Inception	2012-13	2012-13	2018-19
Total farmers	3574	3524	3018
Female	42	7	81
Male	3532	3517	2937
LGs	98	99	86
Villages	49	55	54
Irrigation Pattern	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Average Area under cotton production	0.44 Ha	0.62 Ha	0.69 Ha

² Spread across a radius of 70 kilometres

Pilot area 2: Pakistan

The pilot will be run with REEDS, in Khanpur tehsil of Rahim Yar Khan district, located in the far South of Punjab Province in Pakistan. The rescoped PU, named **PKRY-PURE-01**, will cover the Tehsil in 466 villages across 155 Mouzas.

This rescoped PU will include three existing smallholder Producer Units (implemented by REEDs Rahim Yar Khan Project) within its boundaries: PKRY04, PKRY12, and PKRY19, totalling approximately 11,170 cotton producers according to the 2024-2025 farmers list. It's important to note that the implementation of the Better Cotton Standard System in the rescoped PU will impact the entire tehsil, including villages previously not involved in the Better Cotton project, as well as cotton producers who have not participated in the project previously or were not reached by the project. In Khanpur Tehsil, the Better Cotton Programme is currently being implemented across 466 villages, spanning over 155 mouzas. While Khanpur Tehsil comprises a total of 570 villages, cotton cultivation is predominantly carried out in 466 of these villages. The remaining 104 villages focus on growing other crops and vegetables, including sugarcane.



4. Proof of Concept: Adjusted Better Cotton Approach

Moving the focus of implementation from individual farmers to geographical level, implies that all cotton farmers within this geographic area will be considered as participating in Better Cotton, and all cotton produced in the region will be designated as Better Cotton. This shift carries several implications for the overall setup and execution of the program.

The subsequent sections outline the proposed adjusted approach on Project Implementation, Capacity Strengthening, Assurance, MEL and First Mile Traceability³.

³ It is important to note that the actual approaches may vary slightly between the pilot implementations in year 1 and year 2, considering the move to certification and new FMT priorities to ensure supply chain credibility. Additionally, a few adaptations to suit the local context in India and Pakistan has been done, mentioned in Annex 1

Pre-conditions & Set-up

Given key risks identified, the PU rescoped approach is likely to only be eligible if/once the following conditions are met:

- There is a strong management system at PU level and strong due diligence processes⁴ at partner level.
- Evidence that information on Better Cotton and what this means has been provided to all cotton households and there is a credible level of commitment (checked initially through readiness check and ongoing through assurance).
- Evidence of an acceptable level of compliance and participation along with low sustainability and credibility risk levels, e.g. based on existing participation with Better Cotton and/or other proof of compliance with Better Cotton standard. Note: this is both a pre-condition but also a requirement for licensing / certification.

In the future, the PU rescoping approach will likely only happen in areas where the request is coming from the Programme Partners themselves; where there is good commitment and ownership; where there is already high saturation of Better Cotton participation (over 80% of the farming households); and/ or where such an approach would make sense based on other opportunities. In all scenarios, it will require a significant set-up period.

PU Governance and Staff structure

While the exact governance and staff structure of rescoped PU's might vary in different contexts, to ensure effective implementation, the staff governance and structure will at minimum have the following characteristics:

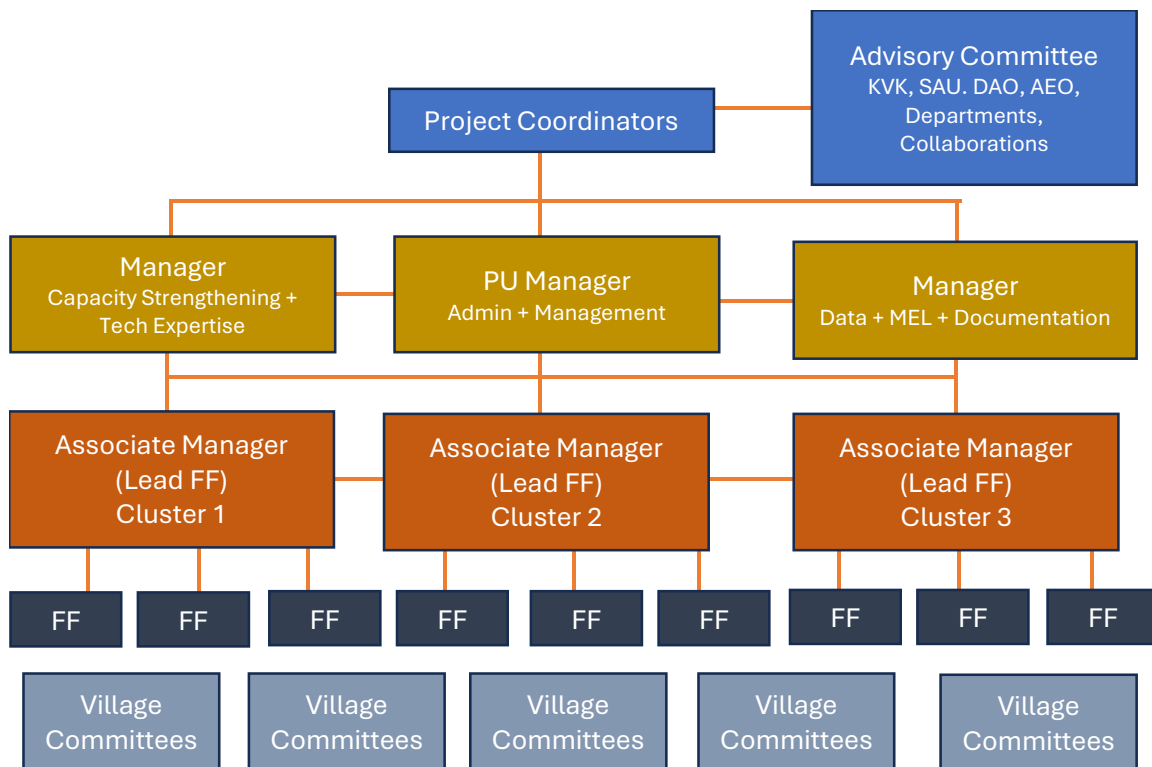
- A rescoped PU will function under a unified management system, with a singular set of administrative and documentation requirements.
- There will be clear roles and responsibilities of PU management staff- with a particular focus on the three areas: Admin/Management; Capacity Strengthening and Technical Expertise; Data/MEL and Documentation.
- As part of the project assumptions, the primary unit of implementation will be a geographic level like "Village" or "Mouza"⁵ as opposed to the Learning Group in the regular implementation model with the SH-PU. Field Facilitators will be assigned geographic units/areas instead of

⁴ Due Diligence requirements mandated by the DD project and GIF

⁵ Mouza is an administrative unit, a specific land area, often synonymous with a village or revenue collection unit. A Mouza contains a cluster of unique villages.

Learning Groups and will be accountable for implementation with all cotton farming households in the assigned villages, rather than solely focusing on farmers listed on the farmers list.

- An example of revised HR structure under a unified management system could be as outlined in the figure below. However, the structure could be modified to suit the context of implementation.
- Existing lead FHH and progressive FFH will play a pivotal role in strengthening capacity and motivating their peers, assisting Field Facilitators (FFs) in mobilization efforts, and identifying and mitigating risks.



Farmers Lists: Knowing who the Cotton Farming Households Are?

- In the PU rescoping approach, all households growing cotton in the geography will be considered Better Cotton households, hence the need for detailed farmers list is redundant.
- However, a list of basic information on the cotton farming households is still necessary for the following reasons:
 1. For Field Facilitators to effectively implement the Programme activities
 2. For MEL as well as farm assurance to draw samples for monitoring and assessments

3. For Supply chain verification and potential future traceability

- This list differs from the conventional farmers list as follows:
 1. It encompasses ALL cotton farming households without differentiation between participating or non-participating households, as such distinction no longer exists in a geographical approach
 2. It doesn't have to be submitted to Better Cotton, but needs to be maintained at FF/project level
 3. It is simplified and only needs to contain the following data points⁶ :
 - Cotton farming households name⁷
 - Gender
 - Spouse/parent's name for identification reference
 - Village name
 - Area under cotton cultivation
 - Number of male and female co farmers engaged in cotton cultivation
 4. The list will be established and/or systematically checked/updated at the beginning of each licensing cycle. Annual updates might occur need-based only.

Note: "Cotton farming households" are defined as those who either currently grow or intend to grow cotton as part of their regular crop rotation cycle, within the respective licensing period.

Capacity Strengthening Approach

The transition in capacity strengthening methods now includes community-level activities, not just individual farmer training, to address broader challenges and create a greater impact. Inspired by the Behavior Change Wheel, this approach focuses on practice adoption and highlights the importance of social interactions in driving change. It identifies barriers and uses Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation to build a solid foundation for the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) methodology to measure behavior change. Nevertheless, individual farming households' meetings and farm visits, conducted on a random or as-needed basis, remain integral to the approach. Villages⁸ will replace Learning Groups (LGs) as the unit for capacity strengthening or training activities. For ease of outreach, however, various subgroups can be established within a village, if necessary.

The Capacity Strengthening approaches under a PU rescoped model show the following characteristics –

⁶ While these data points may be of Better Cotton's interest, project staff could collect more data as per their operational/monitoring need

⁷ Since the project has a wider coverage with a geographic approach, farmers codes will no more be relevant

⁸ Villages and Mouzas will be alternatively applicable depending upon the context.

- There will be stronger focus on peer learning, demonstrations, innovations, AV campaigns, use of IEC and technology, rallies, exhibitions and most importantly collaboration with existing government departments and resources.
- There is a heightened emphasis on inclusivity in capacity strengthening efforts, extending beyond farmers to include household members - such as women, youth, and sharecroppers where relevant.
- Each village will be assigned 2 or 3 Lead farming households to support with the activities, depending on the number of cotton farming households in the village. The selection criteria for the lead farming HHs will remain the same as it was in the conventional approach⁹.
- Risk-based targeted capacity strengthening will also be integrated into the approach to effectively address field-based credibility risks with members of the farming community who may find adherence to sustainability practices challenging.
- Although tracking training participation of every farming household in the rescoped area at trainings and capacity strengthening activities will be challenging, the project must maintain a total count of members of the cotton farming community including workers participating in each capacity strengthening activity, disaggregated by gender, which would feed into the RIR.

Assurance Approach

The Assurance Approach in the PU rescoping aims to maintain integrity and robustness by being more thorough and ensuring proper implementation of corrective actions during the duration of a license. It tackles both the enhanced risk of credibility (covering a much bigger area with a lot more potential freeriders) as well as the risk that non-conformities penalise a larger population of cotton growers to sell their cotton as Better Cotton, and hence also impact bigger amounts of volumes. To do that, it includes 2 main measures:

- Non-conformities are predominantly tackled via the corrective action process and enhanced monitoring as opposed to via license denials, unless very severe reputational risks are found.
- The sample of farmers and workers interviewed as part of assessment is proportionally significantly larger (1%) than in the regular PU model (0.3%)

In detail, the Assurance Approach can be summarised as covered below.

Assurance Requirements

The Assurance activities along with the assessment approach is inspired from the usual approach and processes applicable for usual SH PU, however with adjustments relating to scope and sample to suit the geographic nature of PURE approach. It includes 4 elements.

⁹ The conventional criteria for identifying lead farmers typically include being progressive, interested in experimenting with new practices, able to motivate peers, and willing to support field staff in deepening the impact of program objectives

1. **Early Season Estimate¹⁰**: In a revised template tailored¹¹ to capture village level aggregated farm data along with other information like basic details of the rescoped PU, staff and ginners. In addition to this data which needs to be submitted to Better Cotton, the FFs must have individual farm level granular data as mentioned above.¹²
2. **Internal assessment¹³**: Same template as for (conventional) PU but instead of 10% of LG it will be 10% of villages (for labour profile, look at 20% of villages as opposed to 10%). One internal assessment is required for the whole area. Information gathered feeds into Self-Assessment.
3. **Self-assessment¹⁴**: Same template as for (conventional) PUs but one self-assessment for the whole area based on internal assessment and monitoring activities conducted during the season. Self-assessment also includes labour profile figures. PU staff is required to look at labour force in 20% of villages ensuring to look at the whole of the labour force components (including any outliers) and then extrapolate and report numbers back to Better Cotton for the whole Large PU
4. **Training records**: Individual FHH training participation records need to be collected for a sample of 15 FHH per Village including all the Lead FHH in the village, this sample is the same as that of FFB monitoring. This sample will be pre-determined and shared by Better Cotton. Every training record needs to have details on the total count of participants, disintegrated by gender. A similar approach needs to be followed for maintaining workers training records as well.
5. **Practice Adoption data**: Practice adoption data needs to be collected and monitored for the same sample as that of FFB monitoring, i.e. 15 FHHs per village. The adoption record of the sample FHHs needs to be shared with Better Cotton at the end of every season
6. **3rd party verification assessment**: More information in following paragraph.

3rd Party Verification assessment:

The Assessment team will comprise of total 4 members – 1 Lead Assessor and 3 Supporting Assessors.

¹⁰ Early season estimate is mandated by Better Cotton Assurance before the end of sowing to understand the scale of participating farmers, PU composition, details of PU staff and estimated yield of seed cotton. For more details refer Assurance Manual v4.4

¹¹ Data collection will be done via digital means using commcare application

¹² Page 11 - Knowing who the Cotton Farming Households Are?

¹³ Before completing the self-assessment, the rescoped PU management need to carry out an annual internal assessment to gather feedback from a representative sample of farmers each season. For more details refer Assurance Manual v4.4

¹⁴ All producers are required to submit Self-Assessment before end of harvest, based on the results of internal assessment to ensure that Producer self-monitoring is happening in between external assessments. For more details refer Assurance Manual v4.4

Assessment Structure

An assessment will be conducted in 3 steps –

5. **Pre-assessment** – Remotely – by end of sowing
 - Review of secondary data sources¹⁵ (government database, news articles, etc., general risks existing in the area with respect to BCSS)
 - Review of historical records – external assessment records, existing local source survey results, self-assessment, PU support visit reports and farmer phone surveys if available
 - Remotely reach out to one or two local sources/stakeholders as feasible.
 - This process will help inform the priorities of the assessment and identify key risks to have a particular focus on.

6. **Assessment Part 1: Document Verification** – Remotely – after end of sowing
 - This phase aims to assess the robustness and strength of the management and monitoring system in place.
 - It would last for 1 day and is conducted by lead auditor remotely.
 - It will include rescoped PU’s documentation, including activity plan, monitoring plan, consultation records, labor monitoring and remediation system documentation, training records and records of activities being implemented. In addition, it will include a phone interview with PU manager.

7. **Assessment Part 2: On field Assessment** – In Person (4 days) – Before end of Harvest
 - Opening Meeting and PU staff interviews –
 This phase involves assessing the competence and understanding of PU staff and the quality of implementation. The entire team of assessors will conduct this process, which is estimated to take one day. It will comprise a mix of one-on-one interviews and FGDs with the staff, along with a thorough review of documentation and implementation plans.
 - Field Visits and Interviews with Farmers and Workers¹⁶: villages will be sampled according to the following ranges.

Total Villages ¹⁷	Number of villages to be sampled
250 to 349	18
141 to 249	15
50 to 140	10

¹⁵ Additional potential sources and areas of risk many be notified by Better Cotton close to the assessment dates

¹⁶ The assessment dates will be communicated to the management 7 day in advance and the sample villages will be communicated to the management 24 hours in advance of the interview visits.

¹⁷ Village and mouza are to be used alternatively depending on context. For India, unit of implementation is village as opposed to Mouza in Pakistan

In each selected village, interviews will be conducted with at least 8 farmers (totaling 120 farmers approx.) and 3 workers (totaling 45 workers approx.) Additionally, a minimum of 2 farm visits (totaling 30 visits for the assessment) per village will be completed. The schedule of the assessment is provided in the table below.

The team of assessors would also reach out to interview 1 to 3 local sources during the assessment as per their availability.

The closing meeting, led by the lead auditor, will take half a day. During this session, a summary of key findings will be shared, and field staff will have the opportunity to seek clarification on any findings.

Assessment Day Plan	AM	PM
Pre- Assessment – Lead Verifier only	Doc Review/Verification	Doc Review/Verification
Assessment – Part 1 – Remote-Document Verification - Lead Verifier only	Doc Review/Verification	Doc Review/Verification
Travel	Travel	Travel
Assessment Part 2 – Day 1	Opening Meet + Intro All 4 assessors	Lead Assessor continue with opening meet and 3 Supporting assessors proceed to interview Local sources
Assessment Part 2 – Day 2	Village Visits - 4 (1 each by 4 assessors)- includes farm visits, HH interviews, and workers interviews	Village Visits - 4 (1 each by 4 assessors)
Assessment Part 2 – Day 3	Break - Assessors to regroup discuss observations/ findings so farm and assess the need to structure approach/prioritise risks areas	Village Visits - 4 (1 each by 4 assessors)

Assessment Part 2 – Day 4	Village Visits - 3 (1 each by 3 Supporting Verifier) if case the team of assessors feel the need to interview more local sources and workers, LV can do so using this time, else, Lead verifier visits PU office for triangulation, clarification and preparation for closing meet	Closing Meet + Summary of Key Findings + Discussion/Clarification
Travel	Travel	Travel

Reporting

Reporting will be done using a specific template adjusted to suit the PURE approach.

Assessment Outcome and Non-Conformities

The system for raising non-conformities and closing those will remain the same as in the regular PU context. More detailed information available in the [Assurance Manual](#), section 19.¹⁸

Monitoring Evaluation and Learning

The objective in the pilot for MEL is to determine a simple approach to collect data from the rescoped PU to report on the same indicators that are currently collected for MEL reporting on PUs. It is important to note that the PU rescoping shouldn't introduce new and/or revised MEL indicators, as the intent is that the data can be aggregated with results from conventional PU MEL for Better Cotton reporting.

As outlined in Table 1, there are a variety of categories of data to consider; only some of which will be part of the MEL pilot.

Table 1: Data Considered for Pilot

Part of MEL Pilot	Not Part of MEL Pilot
<i>Reach Indicators</i> (Number of farming households; Number of hectares; Production)	<i>Practice adoption data</i> – programme partner will still collect for their own use (will not be considered for estimation trail)

¹⁸ For Year 1 of the Pilot at India and Pakistan, a mock licensing assessment proposed to test the effectiveness of the assessment approach in a field setting. In Year 2, a full-fledged Certification assessment will be implemented for India and Pakistan, with the outcomes determined in the adjusted Assurance and Certification approach.

<i>Results Indicators</i> (Pesticide Use; Fertiliser Use; Water Use; Yield; Profitability; Gender Inclusion)	<i>Labour Profile</i> – programme partners will collect for assurance – (will not be considered for estimation trail)
	<i>Assurance assessment data</i> – for assurance – (will not be considered for estimation trail)

In terms of collecting the data, there are two main alternative approaches. The data collection could ‘replicate’ the way it is currently collected by PUs, or it could be collected via ‘estimation’ which could involve estimating the data at a broader geographic level rather than per individual farmer.

- **Replication:** The replication approach will look similar to the current approach for data collection for PUs. Necessary results indicator data will be collected by a sample, supported by field facilitators, via farmer field books. Reach data will be determined through a combination of data at the village level, the programme partner level and via extrapolation from the sample farmer field book data.
- **Estimation:** Use different resources such as interviews with local pesticide dealers or GIS data to estimate the data for the rescoped PU.
- **Hybrid 1:** For certain indicators and data points use replication and for others use estimation depending on trade-offs and decisions on which data make most sense to collect in which manner
- **Hybrid 2:** Collect data for all indicators using both the replication and the estimation approach. Then compare the results to help better understand options for the future.

To better assess what MEL approach works best, the pilots will implement both the Replication and the Estimation approach. This approach will help to test data quality and the effectiveness of different data collection approaches for each indicator and to define the solution for MEL for future rescoped PUs.

Sampling in the rescoped PU, outlined in

Table 3 will be similar to that of the existing PUs, outlined in Table 2. Data will be collected from 5 cotton farming HH randomly selected from the super-set of farming HHs sampled for collection of practice adoption data and maintenance of Farmer Field Books¹⁹. In future years, sample size is expected to be revised to adjust better the trade-offs/considerations for more or fewer samples

Table 2: Current approach to Results Indicator Sampling for Existing PUs

Sampling Unit	Sample Size
Farmers	3 farmers from each LG – randomly selected from the pre decided FFB sample (5 farmers per LG, that includes lead farmer)

¹⁹ 15 FHH – including all lead farmers in a village, and the remaining randomly selected.

LG	All LGs – around 90 LGs in a PU
Total Farmers	Approximately 270 farmers per PU

Table 3: Proposed approach to sampling for Pilot Rescoped PU

Sampling Unit	Sample Size
Farming HHs	5 per village – randomly selected from the FFB/Adoption sample Focusing on interviewing females along with male members of the HHs is critical
Villages	Replicating the conventional approach at LG level, samples will be drawn from all villages = 150 villages
Total Farmers	Approximately 750 farming households

The sampled farming HHs will report on the necessary *Results Indicator Data* preferably using Farmer Field books and Adoption records. This process will be similar to how it takes place in the conventional PUs. The programme partner will determine the sample and share it with Better Cotton. In advance of the season, the programme partner will inform the sampled farming HHs of their role and their need to complete farmer field books. They will collect the same results indicator data they currently collect in their field books as outlined in Table 4.

Field Data Collection and Management

All necessary data for the FHH list, RIR, Practice Adoption, and Capacity Strengthening activities will be collected digitally using the CommCare software. Better Cotton will develop and deploy this software for use by the Field Facilitators. The software will enable the project as well as Better Cotton staff to monitor, manage and triangulate data quality and accuracy.

Monitoring of farm-based data and Distribution of FFB

While the rescoped PU approach encourages all cotton farming households to maintain farm-level data for enhanced self-awareness, learning, and continuous improvement, monitoring farm-level data from a sample is crucial for timely risk assessment, identifying support needs, and confidently driving implementation. This monitoring is especially important for meeting the management systems requirements in the revised P&Cv3.0. Therefore, it is recommended to distribute Farmer Field Books (FFBs) to a minimum of 15 farming households in each village, including the lead farming HHs and to monitor the data quality of these FFBs as stipulated by the Better Cotton Farm Data Requirement document. For convenience, the RIR sample can be considered as a subset of the FFB sample.

Table 4: Results Indicator Data Collection Requirements

Indicator	Specific requirements – data collected
Number of Better Cotton hectares	Farming HH enters in field books plot size – total area cultivated, and total area harvested (typically the same) – in hectares

Quantity of Better Cotton produced	Farmer enters total seed cotton harvested – in kg
Pesticide Use	Each sample farming HH records in the Farmer Field Book (FFB) the total amount of pesticide applied to the cotton crop each year per active ingredient, and the concentration of the active ingredient in grams per kilogram or liter of pesticide applied. For multiple applications, the farming HH should note the total number of sprays. Both commercial pesticide products and alternative crop protection methods must be reported. <i>Refer to reporting on results indicators/guidance on pesticides and the RIR template for details</i>
Fertiliser Use	Farming HH record the total amount in kilograms or liters of each type of fertiliser or soil conditioner applied to the field growing cotton either prior to planting or during the season on each farm. Farming HH and Producer Units report on the exact Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium composition of each fertiliser. <i>Refer to reporting on results indicators and the RIR template for details</i>
Water Use	Farming HH enters total water applied (cubic meters) and total area irrigated (ha)
Yield	<i>N/A: Farming HH does not need to report additional information other than what is already provided above</i>
Profitability	Farming HH enters income from sale of SEED cotton; any government subsidies and any other income for the cotton crop; Farming HH also enters cost data for a variety of costs (refer to PU template) – all in local currency

Estimation approach

The idea behind estimation is to be able to collect data at an aggregate level and/or from secondary sources without needing Farming households to report on the specific data. This approach can be useful longer term when considering a broader landscape approach. At the same time, the estimation approach might also bear some risks of limited data quality and reliability and could create additional work/steps that might be more costly. During the pilot, the goal is to determine the level of quality of the data generated and the relative effort involved of the estimation approaches. From this review, Better Cotton can then determine an optimal approach going forward in terms of whether to use replication, estimation or a combination/hybrid approach.

Table 5 provides details on the current thinking regarding the estimation data collection – in terms of how the data can be collected and the potential season to test it.

Table 5: Estimation Approach Overview per Indicator

Indicator	Estimation approach– <i>for geographic areas that include the villages sampled for replication. Additional comments included</i>	Suggested Season for Pilot
Number of Better Cotton hectares	Two approaches: 1) use data from village panchayat on acreage – this is typically available one month before sowing. (Can compare these two estimates and then also compare them with an estimation based on assuming the replication sample is 25% of the total area. This can help compare options to use in the absence of a village list and/or Farming HH sample data)	2025-26
Quantity of Better Cotton produced	Collect data from ginner on how much seed cotton (in kg) purchased from a given set of villages (number of Farming HH sourced from collected if available). (Before implementing this, see if there can be tighter relationships between ginners and villages to make this process and traceability simpler)	2025-26

Pesticide Use	Collect data from pesticide vendors ²⁰ on how much pesticide of each type they have sold to Farming HH (volume/type) in the respective village/geographic area. Collect data on number of farmers customers (if data exists). Then use analysis to estimate what percent of the sales was for cotton cultivation (vs pesticide sales used for other crops). (spend time in 2024 season to develop a simple estimation model to allocate what percent of a pesticide vendor's sales is for cotton farming; Programme partner has relationships with pesticide vendors already). <i>Assumption (which was validated during the March 2024 Programme partner workshop) – pesticides sold in one season are used in that season.</i>	2025-26
Fertiliser Use	Collect data from fertiliser vendors on how much fertiliser or soil conditioner (quantity or volume per type) of each type (in terms of chemical composition) they have sold to cotton Farming HH in the respective village/geographic area; Collect data on number of farmers customers (if data exists). (spend time in 2024 season to develop a simple estimation model to allocate what percent of a fertiliser vendor's sales is for cotton farming). <i>Assumption (which was validated during the March 2024 Programme partner workshop) – fertiliser sold in one season are used in that season.</i>	2025-26
Water Use	This data may be able to be collected via the well monitoring that is currently taking place at the village level; although it may not generate all the details required related to the cotton farming area irrigated (ha) and quantity of water applied (m ³). During the 2024 season, Better Cotton can continue to investigate the well monitoring data and then pilot it in 2025. Further, in 2024 and 2025, Better Cotton can work with the Programme partner to determine what – if anything – may be feasible from the satellite data – although using this data likely may be too resource intensive. After more investigation, Better Cotton can determine if they want to pilot an approach to water use tracking via satellite data in 2026.	2025-26
Yield	<i>Calculated based on hectares and production from estimation</i>	2025-26
Profitability	Profitability data in terms of amount paid to Farming HH for the seed cotton and amount they spend on inputs and transport will require conversations/data collection from a variety of sources – ginners, transport providers, input providers, etc. Data on revenues paid to Farming HH may be gathered by the village panchayat and/or through estimations based on conversations with ginners, middlemen, and understanding amounts paid at market yards. Labor costs may be able to be estimated with input from the village who generally agree informally on wages that will be used throughout the season for different tasks. (Programme partners also will have this information.) The Programme partner also will maintain a worker profile so the combination of the worker profile and wage rates can be used to estimate total worker costs at the village cotton farming level. This data will be compiled to estimate INR paid to all Farming HH in a geographic area (e.g., village) for cotton and the amount spent in a geographic area on seed, pesticides, fertiliser, transport, labor and other costs. Specifics of how to collect the various cost data for the aggregated set of Farming HH need to be further researched in the upcoming season. In addition, as discussions evolve with ginners, there may be opportunities to consolidate purchases from Farming HH and track revenues more easily. Lastly through discussion with different vendors there may be opportunities to streamline data collection on cost. This indicator will be the last one to be piloted – in 2026 season.	2025-26

²⁰ Obtaining crop disintegrated data could be challenging across various data points, as expressed by PP. Other data sources would be explored while working on the approach

Supply Chain / First Mile Traceability

A revised strategy for Supply Chain and First Mile Traceability to suit the PURE approach is currently a work in progress as parallel pilots and advancements are underway to enhance credibility and efficiency in these areas²¹. In season 2025-26, village/mouza based AAV model will be piloted.

5. Annexure : Country Specific Adaptations for the Pilot phase

This section highlights areas where country specific adaptations were made to adjust to the contextual needs and challenges in India and Pakistan.

Implementation and Structure –

India

- In the India pilot, clusters will most likely be amongst the lines of the former PUs. The Lead/Master Field Facilitators (FFs) currently in place are expected to assume the roles of Associate Managers. Associate Managers will provide needed support on a regular basis to FFs in their respective clusters, facilitating project implementation and field activities.
- Field Facilitators will largely retain the same responsibilities as in the regular implementation model, shouldering the significant responsibility of capacity strengthening and executing field activities in the allotted villages.
- As the PURE model shifts away from the individualistic farmer-based approach to embrace a broader perspective, an idea brought forward by the Field Facilitators themselves was that village level committees could be established. These committees may include lead farmers, progressive farmers, demonstration farmers, and other relevant members to facilitate peer learning, mobilization for field activities, and support in data collection and monitoring efforts.

Knowing who the cotton HH are –

In the India pilot a basic list will be prepared based on previous years early season estimate and vetting it –

- List of farming households developed and maintained by the village panchayat can serve as a foundation for this list or act as a secondary source. The main challenge here is that the list may include the names of landowners rather than the farmers who would actively engage with the program (in some cases the landowners may have leased out their farms to other

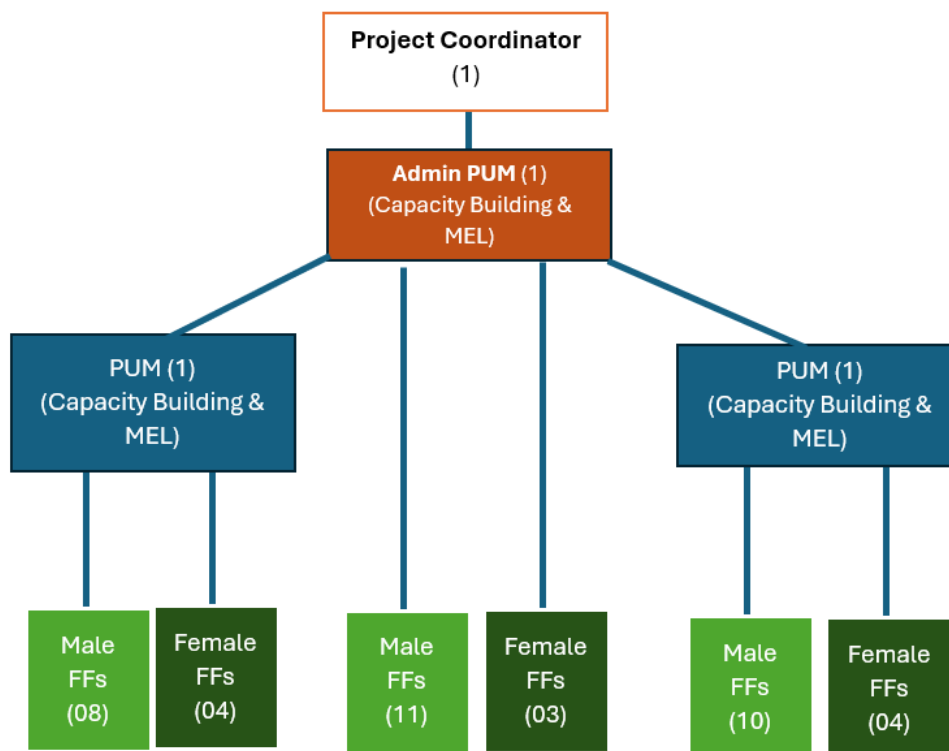
²¹ Check Annex 1 for country specific adjustments

farmers). The FFs can use this base list and make necessary edits/additions to make the list relevant to PURE approach

- For the ongoing pilot, the WWF Telangana team prefers to compile a basic list of cotton farming households, including essential details such as name, village name, and contact number for ensuring confidence in the implementation process and facilitating better logistical convenience.
- For villages with up to 70 HHs, there will be 2 lead farming HHs, while those with more than 70 HHs will have 3 lead farming HHs.

Pakistan

- In the Pakistan pilot, REEDS plans to accommodate the existing staff in a slightly different structure as indicated below –



- The primary unit of implementation will be the "Moza". Mozas are considered a more suitable level for implementation as villages are often smaller units with fewer farming households. In Khanpur Tehsil, the Better Cotton Programme is currently being implemented across 466 villages, spanning over 155 mouzas. While Khanpur Tehsil comprises a total of 570 villages, cotton cultivation is predominantly carried out in 466 of these villages. The remaining 104 villages focus on growing other crops and vegetables, including sugarcane.
- To streamline implementation in the field, unique villages within each Mouza will be designated to prevent duplication of areas and farmers. FFs will be responsible for implementing activities across all cotton farming households within their assigned Mouzas/villages, rather than

- focusing solely on farmers listed in the official records. Additionally, the same Mouza may be assigned to multiple FFs in case of bigger Mouzas, provided they oversee different villages.
- The Admin PUM has added responsibility of administering the Rescoped PU in addition to the prior responsibilities of overlooking Capacity Building and MEL.
 - The Other 2 PUMs are responsible for managing Capacity Building and MEL in their regions. Additionally, they will support the Admin PUM by balancing the workload through collaboration in planning unified management plans and on-field implementation efforts.
 - The FFs report to their region-specific PUMs. Field Facilitators will largely retain the same responsibilities as in the regular implementation model, shouldering the significant responsibility of capacity strengthening and executing field activities in the allotted Mozas.
 - As the PURE model shifts from an individualistic, farmer-focused approach to a more inclusive framework, establishing village-level committees can enhance collaboration and efficiency. These committees, comprised of lead farmers, progressive farmers, demonstration farmers, and other key stakeholders, will facilitate peer learning, mobilize communities for field activities, and support data collection and monitoring. In areas with low farmer density, a single village committee can be strategically structured to serve multiple villages or mouzas, ensuring optimal resource utilization.

Knowing who the cotton HH are –

In the Pakistan pilot a basic list will be prepared based on previous years early season estimate and vetting it –

- In the Pakistan pilot, data from Pulse, along with the list of farming households maintained at the local level, can serve as a foundation for this list or act as a secondary source.
- For the ongoing pilot, the REEDS team will compile a basic list of cotton farming households, including essential details such as name, Mouza name, village name, and contact number to ensure confidence in the implementation process and facilitate better logistical convenience.
- There will be one lead farming household for up to 50 FHH. If the number of farming households exceed 50, two lead FHH will be assigned. In cases where 2–3 villages collectively have no more than 50 FHH and are within a 1.5 km radius, a single lead FHH will be designated. The selection criteria for the lead farming HHs will remain the same as it was in the conventional approach. During regular training sessions, lead FHH will actively share their experiences and knowledge with the community. They will be involved in planning and executing demonstration plots, while other farmers will gain exposure through visits to these sites, fostering collaboration.

Assurance Approach –

India

In season 2024-25 the rescoped PU Assurance approach will be tested via a 3rd party (mock) assessment of the rescoped PU but will not impact licensing. The three PUs part of the rescoped area

will keep their
license active,

unless massive reputational risks for the organisation will be found in the rescoped area. They will then receive AAV codes as usual and be able to sell their produce as Better Cotton once again in 2024-25. The results of the mock assessment will not inform licensing decisions. However, the license could be cancelled in case severe reputation risks will be found during the mock assessment, which will result in no cotton yield from the rescoped area eligible to be sold as Better Cotton.

In the 2025-26 season, the approach will be revised based on mock assessment learnings. The rescoped PU will undergo a surveillance assessment, which will affect the possibility of further license extensions. Looking ahead to the 2026-27 season, the PURE approach is planned to be integrated into the certification model.

Pakistan

During the Year 1 of the pilot, specifically in the 2025-26 season, the rescoped project unit in Pakistan will also undergo a mock licensing assessment. This assessment will be informed by the lessons learned and process improvements identified through the mock assessments conducted in India. The results of the mock assessment will not inform licensing decisions. However, the license could be cancelled in case severe reputation risks will be found during the mock assessment, which will result in no cotton yield from the rescoped area eligible to be sold as Better Cotton.

A key change in the assessment sampling method will be that samples will be drawn from Mouzas, not villages as stated earlier in the assessment plan. However, the number of samples will be constant.

Looking ahead to the 2026-27 season, when the PURE approach is planned to be integrated into the certification model, PKRY-PURE-01 will be subject to certification audit.

MEL Approach –

India - None

Pakistan

A significant modification to the MEL field data monitoring sampling methodology is the shift from village-based sampling to Mouza-based sampling.

Specifically, for farm data monitoring, that would include FFB, practice adoption, and CS activity participation, the sample will comprise of 15 randomly selected FHH from each Mouza (covering various villages within) in addition to all lead FHH within that Mouza.

For RI reporting, a random sample of 7 FHH from the field data monitoring samples will be drawn from each Mouza.

Supply Chain Approach –

India

During Year 1 of the pilot (2024-25), supply chain and First Mile Traceability will operate in the usual manner. This entails clustering each of the 3 constituting PUs into 3 geographical sub-units, with one AAV issued for each geographical sub-unit, and as mentioned in the previous sections, the AAV is based on the yield estimation of the current season and will be result of extending the licenses of the 3 PUs for one season, i.e. till June 2025.

However, considering the potential credibility risks associated with the blanket extension of licenses for one year without conducting a licensing assessment and with the addition of new farming households to the scope of the licenses, the following conditions will be implemented:

- The rescoped PU will collect separate data on farming households newly included in Better Cotton implementation as a result of rescoping, in addition to those already existing in the three constituent PUs.
- **Following the existing protocol and practice, a threshold of 33% of increase of farming household will be applied upon the extended licenses²² –**
 - If the increase in total farming households recorded or included in the current season exceeds 33% of the total farmers in the three constituent PUs, the ginners will be instructed not to procure cotton from these new households or villages as Better Cotton. Consequently, the uptake volume will not reflect these additions.
 - If the increase in farming households recorded or included in the current season is below 33%, they will be eligible to sell their produce as Better Cotton, and the ginners will be guided accordingly on procurement.

During Year 2, season 2025-26, a village-based AAV will be piloted. This will involve unique AAV codes assigned to each village, determined by yield estimations aggregated at the individual village level using data from early season estimates.

Pakistan –

In Pakistan, for the initial year of the pilot project (2025-26), the established procedures for supply chain and First Mile Traceability will be maintained. The sole modification will be the piloting of a Mouza-based AAV, where volume estimations will be aggregated at the Mouza level based on data reported by FHH. As already mentioned, the licenses of the 3 PUs will be extended for one season, i.e. till June 2026.

²² With total existing number of farmers in all the 3 PUs as the comparison base

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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.

Answer

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.

Alternatively, if the above isn't feasible for you, please draft a global evaluation proposal. This proposal should include sampling and methodology details for both countries. Within this, please specify which country you can take responsibility for data collection, and request that Better Cotton arrange a consultant for data collection in the country that presents challenges for you. We "may" facilitate this request considering the challenging environment between both the 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?

Answer

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

Alternatively, if the above isn't feasible for you, please draft a global evaluation proposal. This proposal should include sampling and methodology details for both countries. Within this, please specify which country you can take responsibility for data collection, and request that Better Cotton arrange a consultant for data collection in the country that presents challenges for you. We "may" facilitate this request considering the challenging environment between both the countries

Question 3

We are very excited to apply for the subject RFP and wanted to check if the proposal needs to be submitted for both India and Pakistan? Considering the political climate it will be difficult if even possible for us to access farmers in India and therefore want to confirm if proposals will be considered separately for both countries or will it have to be one single firm bidding for both countries.

Pakistani banks cannot pay directly to Indian nationals and thus we legally cannot form JV with Indian firms. This will preclude Pakistani firms from participating in the tender altogether. We thus request some roundabout around the issue that at least provides us with the opportunity to participate.

Better Cotton has been doing remarkable work with cotton farmers in Pakistan in working to counter the declining cotton production. As such their voices is amongst one of the most critical components that can be a direct indicator of the impact achieved. Indirect data obtained from secondary sources will not be same as direct data achieved through on-field conversations with farmers?

Answer

We have no intention of excluding input from either country, as insights and learnings from both geographies are crucial for developing global recommendations for this pilot project. One possible approach would be a joint venture of 3 consultants – a lead consultant, along with a consultant from outside India and Pakistan, that subcontracts a local consultant in one of the countries specifically for data collection, while the lead consultant handles the analysis and recommendations.

Alternatively, if the above isn't feasible for you, please draft a global evaluation proposal. This proposal should include sampling and methodology details for both countries. Within this, please specify which country you can take responsibility for data collection, and request that Better Cotton arrange a consultant for data collection in the country that presents challenges for you. We "may" facilitate this request considering the challenging environment between both the countries

Question 4

Is your expectation that the data collection in India and Pakistan will be carried out by the lead (i.e. appointed) consultant, or a subcontractor/subcontractor, or either/both?

Answer

Any arrangement that works in terms of feasibility for you. We expect the lead consultant to engage the data analysis and providing global recommendations. The data collection can be done in any arrangement that seems feasible to the bidder.

Alternatively, if the above isn't feasible for you, please draft a global evaluation proposal. This proposal should include sampling and methodology details for both countries. Within this, please specify which country you can take responsibility for data collection, and request that Better Cotton arrange a consultant for data collection in the country that presents challenges for you. We "may" facilitate this request considering the challenging environment between both the countries

Question 5

Does your stated budget range of EUR 12000–20000 include the cost of any subcontractor(s), or will additional budget be available for data collection?

Answer

The given range of budget is inclusive of whole scope of RFP – no additional budget for subcontractors or delegated tasks is available.

Question 6

While we understand that the consultant should suggest a sampling methodology, do you have any broad expectations in terms of # of PUs/farming households to be surveyed?

Answer

The RFP details out the cotton farming household coverage for both India and Pakistan. And as already mentioned the endline evaluation seeks strategic level learnings and scaling up recommendations from the pilot, 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. We would like the consultants to come up with an appropriate sampling strategy that cover the project KPIs. For more guidance on sample coverage please refer to the concept note detailed above

Question 7

Do you have any expectations in terms of overall # of stakeholder interviews?

Answer

Same as answer of Q6

Question 8

Who will the consultant be working with as the Better Cotton project team for this assignment? Are those individuals all based in India, or in various locations?

Answer

The primary coordination and planning for the end-line evaluation will be handled by the Project Manager based in India. As mentioned in the RFP, the pilot implementation field teams based in both India and Pakistan will facilitate and support the consultant in field data collection.

Since, this is a global pilot evaluation, the invoice payment will be handled by Better Cotton's global secretariat at Geneva.