



# Standard Setting and Revision Procedure

# Contents

Introduction	3
Standard Development and Revision Procedures	5

<b>Document Title</b>	Standard Setting and Revision Procedure v.2.2
<b>Approval and Effective Dates</b>	Approved by Better Cotton Council in June 2025 Effective from 1 July 2025
<b>Previous Versions and Key Changes</b>	<p>This version 2.2 replaces the previous Better Cotton Standard Setting and Revision Procedure, which was approved by Council on 21 January 2025 and effective until 31 June 2025. Main updates relate to feedback from accreditation bodies and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added processes for urgent substantive changes to the standard</li> <li>• Added clarification on transition timelines</li> <li>• Streamlined the document</li> </ul>
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# Introduction

## Purpose and Scope

- Better Cotton is the world's largest cotton sustainability initiative. Our mission: to help cotton communities survive and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment.
- This document specifies the procedure to be followed by Better Cotton for the development of a new standard and when changes to an existing standard are made. More precisely, it includes: the Better Cotton farm-level standard, the Principles and Criteria and the Better Cotton Chain of Custody Standard.
- The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the credibility of all standards developed by Better Cotton, by incorporating the values of transparency, participation, and fairness into the processes for their development and revision, and through compliance with ISEAL international good practice for standards development.
- All aspects of this Procedure are normative, including the scope, effective date, references, terms and definitions, tables, and annexes. As part of the Better Cotton Normative Framework, this Procedure is subject to the review and revision cycle as described in this Procedure.

## Definitions

**Standard:** A document that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for products or services, or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory.<sup>1</sup> In the context of this document, 'standard' refers to Better Cotton's production standard for sustainable cotton (The Better Cotton Principles & Criteria); as well as the Chain of Custody Standard applicable for Suppliers and Manufacturers and Retailers and Brands.

**Member:** Better Cotton membership is made up of the following categories: Producer Organisations, Civil Society, Retailers & Brands, Suppliers & Manufacturers, Associate Members. All members can attend the General Assembly, at which time a [Council](#) is elected and any proposed changes to the Better Cotton statutes are voted on.

**Council:** The Better Cotton Council is an elected board whose role it is to ensure that Better Cotton has a clear strategic direction and adequate policy to successfully fulfil its mission. Council Members are organisations representing the different membership categories: Civil Society, Producers, Retailers & Brands, and Suppliers & Manufacturers. Council members are elected or nominated from the 'General Assembly' which consists of all Better Cotton members; up to three additional independent Council members can also be appointed by the Council for external expert view.

**Secretariat:** The Better Cotton Secretariat supports Better Cotton's CEO in executing the decisions of the Council and working with partners, members, and other stakeholders to carry out our mission

and objectives. The Secretariat, and specifically the Standards System Integrity Function play a key role in coordinating the development and revisions of the Better Cotton standards.

**Interested party:** Any person or group concerned with or directly affected by a standard – used synonymously in this procedure with the term ‘stakeholder.’

**Revision:** Any change to existing standards or normative framework.

**Full substantive revision:** A full review and revision of all sections of a standard, resulting in significant modification or change of the standard structure, intents, contents, and/or application. Usually it is triggered at least every 5 years after a mandatory ISEAL compliant review process and entails a participatory process that involves all relevant stakeholders.

**Partial substantive revision:** Any substantive amendments to an existing standard and/or substantive changes in some sections of the standard in between the formal 5-years review period, without changing the overall structure, intended outcomes, and/or application of the standard. This can be triggered if changes are required for the standard to remain effective and relevant, based on external or internal changes in the enabling environment or critical stakeholder feedback or learning (e.g. adjustments of organisational strategy, changes in legislation, unintended negative effects of a standard, major feasibility challenges, etc.). Partial substantive revisions can be urgent or regular and follow different procedures respectively.

**Non-substantive revisions:** Any changes to the language, structure, definitions and/or non-normative elements of an existing standard that aim to add more clarity and/or align to recent developments, without changing the scope, application, and/or intent of the standard or its requirements (e.g., clarifying/refining terminologies and definitions; adjusting indicator guidance; etc.). Also includes copy-edits and/or administrative changes.

## References

The following referenced documents are relevant for the application of this document:

- ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems (v. 1.0, December 2023)
- By-Laws of the Better Cotton Council, 2 July 2009 (last amended June 2014)

# Standard Development and Revision Procedures

## 1. Standard Purpose and Format

- 1.1. At the outset of a standard's development or revision, the objectives of that revision process shall be clarified and where required, the Terms of Reference of the Standard shall be developed or adjusted (see Section 5).
- 1.2. The social, environmental, and economic objectives of the standard shall be clearly specified in the standard itself or in the explanatory document accompanying the standard document.
- 1.3. In defining the content of a standard, consideration shall be given to regulatory requirements, market needs as well as scientific and technological developments. The standard requirements should address all the intended sustainability outcomes.
- 1.4. Standards shall be structured to allow for monitoring and evaluation of progress toward achieving the standard's objectives.
- 1.5. A standard shall avoid language and structure that may create ambiguities in interpretation. Consistent interpretation will be sought by setting criteria that are clear; auditable, verifiable, or measurable; and easily understood.
- 1.6. A standard shall not favour a particular technology or patented item.

## 2. Summary of Decision-making and Process

	Decision to launch the process	Adjusted TORS of the Standard	Standards Committee	Technical working groups	Internal Steering Team	Stakeholder mapping and targeted consultations	Public consultation	Approval of final standard
New Development or Full Substantive Revision	Better Cotton Council	Mandatory	Mandatory	Optional	Mandatory	Mandatory	At least one round of 60 days mandatory	Better Cotton Council
Partial Substantive Revision - Regular	Executive Group	Mandatory	Optional	Optional	Mandatory	Mandatory	At least one round of 30 days mandatory	Better Cotton Council
Partial Substantive Revision – Urgent	Senior Director of Standards System Integrity	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Mandatory	Optional	Better Cotton Council
Non-substantive Revisions	Senior Director of Standards System Integrity	None	None	Optional/needs-based	Optional/needs-based	Optional / needs-based	Optional	Executive Group

### 3. Review of a Standard

- 3.1.1. Better Cotton standards shall be reviewed on a regular basis, with the period of the next review not exceeding 5 years from the effective date of the previous version of the standard.
- 3.1.2. A review process shall consider:
  - The standards continued relevance, effectiveness, unintended negative effects, conformity;
  - Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) activities, including assessments of the effectiveness of the standard, that include sustainability performances of the standards clients and occurrence of unintended negative effects;
  - Assessments of standards clients' conformity to or performance against the standard;
  - Analysis of feedback received from the standards, assessment personnel, and other stakeholders, particularly with respect to the standard's effectiveness, implementation, and scope;
  - Any urgent substantive revisions implemented since the last revision of the standard;
  - External research and industry best practices, including assessments of emerging sustainability risks and opportunities;
  - Changes to relevant legislation across the full scope of the standard.
- 3.1.3. After the review, the Council, based on the recommendation of the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity, shall define whether and what type of revision is necessary.
- 3.1.4. If the review determines that a revision is necessary, the standard revision process will be launched as per the procedures outlined in this document and following the ISEAL Code of Good Practices.
- 3.1.5. If the standard is reaffirmed without any revisions, the Secretariat will communicate publicly about the decision and rationale, and confirm the time for the next formal review.

### 4. Decision to Develop or Revise a Standard

- 4.1. A development or revision of a standard can be triggered based on the results of a review of the standard (See Section 3) or based on relevant reasons in between formal reviews.
- 4.2. Reasons why a development or revision may be triggered include:
  - Stakeholder feedback or data evidence on effectiveness, feasibility, and relevance of a standard
  - Elements of a standard that are not understood or implemented in a way that leads to the expected impacts
  - New scientific developments
  - Change in legislation or regulatory frameworks
  - Updates or changes in Better Cotton's strategy or priorities
  - Unintended negative effects of standard requirements

- Significant change in the cotton production or supply chain
- 4.3. After formal reviews, the final decision on the type of the revision rests with Council, based on the recommendation of the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity.
- 4.4. In the case of any revision to the standard in between formal reviews, decision-making rests with the governance bodies as outlined in this document, based on the recommendation of the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity.
  - 4.4.1. The decision to launch a partial substantive revision rests with the Executive Group.
  - 4.4.2. The decision to launch a non-substantive revision rests with the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity.

## 5. New Development or Full Substantive Revision of a Standard

- 5.1. The decision to initiate a full substantive revision of a Better Cotton Standard rests with the Council, based on the recommendation of the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity.
- 5.2. If the revision process is approved, the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity shall collaborate with relevant teams to establish governance structures and timelines for a transparent, credible, inclusive, and impartial process, in accordance with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice and this document.
- 5.3. The Secretariat shall update the Terms of Reference (TORs) of the Standard (see section 10).
- 5.4. Governance
  - 5.4.1. The Secretariat shall develop the TORs and initiate the process for establishing the Standards Committee (SC) (see Section 11).
  - 5.4.2. The Secretariat shall develop the TORs and form an Internal Steering Team comprising relevant functions and/or country representatives to support the process.
  - 5.4.3. The Secretariat shall determine whether technical working groups are needed, depending on the scope and focus of the revision (see Section 12).
- 5.5. Timelines
  - 5.5.1. The timeline for the revision process shall take into account necessary transition periods, including potential consultations with relevant stakeholders, to ensure the effective date of the revised standard is feasible for both Certificate Holders and Certification Bodies.
- 5.6. Stakeholder Consultation
  - 5.6.1. Stakeholder mapping and public consultations are mandated as per Section 13 of this document.
- 5.7. Approval
  - 5.7.1. Approval of a new or fully revised standard rests with the Council, based on the recommendation of the Standards Committee (see Section 8).
- 5.8. Communication
  - 5.8.1. Communication during and after the revision process shall follow the requirements as outlined in Section 14 of this document.

## 6. Regular Partial Substantive Revision of a Standard

- 6.1. The decision to initiate a Regular Partial Substantive Revision of a Better Cotton Standard rests with the Better Cotton Executive Group, based on the recommendation of the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity.
- 6.2. If the revision process is approved, the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity shall collaborate with relevant teams to establish governance structures and timelines for a transparent, credible, inclusive, and impartial process, in accordance with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice and this document.
- 6.3. The Secretariat shall update the TORs of the Standard (see Section 10).
- 6.4. Governance
  - 6.4.1. The Secretariat shall determine whether to establish a Standards Committee (see section 11) and/or technical working groups (see section 11), depending on the scope and focus of the project.
  - 6.4.2. The Secretariat shall develop the TORs and form an Internal Steering Team comprising relevant functions and/or country representatives to support the process.
- 6.5. Timelines
  - 6.5.1. The timeline for the revision process shall take into account necessary transition periods, including potential consultations with relevant stakeholders, to ensure the effective date of the revised standard is feasible for both Certificate Holders and Certification Bodies.
- 6.6. Stakeholder Consultation
  - 6.6.1. Stakeholder mapping and public consultations are mandated as per Section 13 of this document.
- 6.7. Approval
  - 6.7.1. Approval of partial substantive revision of a standard rests with Council, based on the recommendation of the Standards Committee or, if no Committee was formed, the recommendation of the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity (see Section 8).
- 6.8. Communication
  - 6.8.1. Communication during and after the revision process shall follow the requirements as outlined in Section 14 of this document.

## 7. Urgent Partial Substantive Revision of a Standard

- 7.1. Urgent partial substantive revisions include partial substantive changes to the standard in between the formal review period.
- 7.2. Urgent partial substantive revisions may follow different standard setting procedures than regular partial substantive revision.
- 7.3. An urgent partial substantive revision must be justified by time-sensitive reasons that preclude the use of the regular process without causing negative impacts on any affected stakeholders or Better Cotton itself.
- 7.4. Reasons for urgent partial substantive revisions may include:

- 7.4.1. Legislative or regulatory developments that render a requirement inappropriate, unimplementable, or obstructive to the legal compliance of certificate holders.
- 7.4.2. Necessary changes to maintain or achieve compliance with regulatory, legislative, or standard-setting requirements (e.g., ISEAL Code of Good Practice, ISO standards, accreditation criteria, or similar frameworks).
- 7.4.3. New structural developments or unforeseen circumstances that make a requirement no longer appropriate or feasible to implement.
- 7.4.4. Identification of unintended negative consequences resulting from a requirement.
- 7.5. The decision to initiate a Regular Partial Substantive Revision of a Better Cotton Standard rests with the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity.
- 7.6. If the revision process is approved, the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity shall collaborate with relevant teams to establish governance structures and timelines for a transparent, credible, inclusive, and impartial process, in accordance with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice and this document.
- 7.7. If deemed necessary by the Senior Director of Standard System Integrity based on the nature of the proposed changes, the Secretariat shall update the TORs of the Standard (see Section 10).
- 7.8. Governance
  - 7.8.1. The Secretariat shall determine whether to establish a Standards Committee (see Section 11), Internal Steering Team and/or technical working groups (see Section 12), depending on the scope and focus of the project.
- 7.9. Timelines
  - 7.9.1. The timeline for the revision process shall take into account necessary transition periods, including potential consultations with relevant stakeholders, to ensure the effective date of the revised standard is feasible for both Certificate Holders and Certification Bodies.
- 7.10. Stakeholder consultation
  - 7.10.1. While a public consultation is not mandated as part of an urgent partial substantive revision, the Secretariat shall identify individuals or groups likely to have a stake or interest in the changes and, depending on the scope and focus of the proposed changes, ensure they are given the opportunity to provide feedback.
- 7.11. Approval
  - 7.11.1. Approval of urgent partial revisions of the standard shall be made by the Council, based on the recommendation of the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity or the Standards Committee (see Section 8)
- 7.12. Communication
  - 7.12.1. General communication during and after the revision process shall follow the requirements as outlined in Section 14 of this document.
  - 7.12.2. The approved final standard shall be published on the Better Cotton website within 30 days of approval, alongside a justification and rationale for the level of urgency and a summary of the revision process.
  - 7.12.3. The Secretariat shall communicate to all stakeholders directly impacted by the changes the date that the new version of the standard becomes effective, along with any information on transition periods and related guidance documents.

7.13. The changes made in the urgent update shall be logged by the Secretariat for consultation in the next review or revision process.

## 8. Approval of a New Development or Substantive Revisions of a Standard

- 8.1. A new development as well as all substantive changes made in a standard (full revision, regular and partial substantive revision) must be approved by Council.
  - 8.1.1. No decision shall be made by the Council unless a quorum as defined in the Council By-Laws is present.
  - 8.1.2. The Council shall confirm that the standard-setting or revision process has followed requirements as defined in this document (Better Cotton Standard-Setting & Revision Procedure v.2.2).
  - 8.1.3. The Council shall seek to make all decisions by consensus (absence of sustained opposition).
  - 8.1.4. In the case where the Council is unable to reach consensus, the Council shall resort to a vote as determined in the By-Laws of the Council.
  - 8.1.5. In the case the Council does not approve the draft standard, the reasons for objection shall be clearly documented so they can be further discussed and reviewed by the Secretariat and, where applicable, the Standards Committee, Internal Steering Team, and technical working groups.
  - 8.1.6. After further revision the draft standard may be re-submitted to the Council for approval, with an explanation of how objections have been addressed.

## 9. Non-substantive Revision of the Standard

- 9.1. The decision to initiate a non-substantive revision of the standard rests with the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity.
- 9.2. If a revision is approved, the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity shall collaborate with relevant teams to establish governance structures and timelines for a transparent, credible, inclusive, and impartial process, in accordance with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice and this document.
- 9.3. Governance
  - 9.3.1. The Secretariat shall determine whether to establish technical working groups and/or Internal Steering Teams, depending on the scope and focus of the project.
- 9.4. Timelines
  - 9.4.1. The timeline for the revision process shall take into account necessary transition periods, including potential consultations with relevant stakeholders, to ensure the effective date of the revised standard is feasible for both Certificate Holders and Certification Bodies.
- 9.5. Stakeholder Consultations

- 9.5.1. While stakeholder consultations are not required as part of non-substantive revisions of a Standard, depending on the scope and focus of the changes, the Secretariat shall identify individuals or groups likely to have a stake or interest in the changes and ensure they are given the opportunity to provide feedback where relevant.

#### 9.6. Approval

- 9.6.1. Approval of non-substantive revisions shall be made by the Better Cotton Executive Group, based on the recommendation of the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity.
- 9.6.2. The Executive Group shall seek to make all decisions by consensus (absence of sustained opposition).
- 9.6.3. The Executive Group shall confirm that the standard-setting or revision process has followed requirements as defined in this document (Better Cotton Standard-Setting & Revision Procedure v2.2).
- 9.6.4. In the case the Executive Group does not approve the draft standard, the reasons for objection shall be clearly documented so they can be further discussed and reviewed by the Standards Team. After further revision the draft standard may be re-submitted to the Executive Group for approval, with an explanation of how objections have been addressed.
- 9.6.5. The Senior Director of Standards System Integrity may also propose non-substantive changes for approval by the Council as follows:
- A written proposal for the recommended changes shall be prepared by the Secretariat and shall be circulated to the Council for a 30-day review period.
  - After this 30-day review period the written proposal may be amended to take account of any comments received.
  - The final written proposal as amended shall be submitted to the Council for approval.
- 9.6.6. The changes made in a non-substantive update shall be logged by the Secretariat for stakeholders to be made aware of it during the next substantive review process.

#### 9.7. Communication

- 9.7.1. Communication during and after the revision process shall follow the requirements as outlined in Section 14 of this document.

## 10. Terms of Reference (TORs)

- 10.1. If the change requires the development or updating of the TORs, the Secretariat shall do so as appropriate. These TORs shall at the very least include:
- The intended scope of the standard;
  - Intended sustainability outcomes of the standard, consistent with the Better Cotton strategy (does not apply where the standard does not have sustainability outcomes, e.g. chain of custody standard);
  - A justification of the need for the standard, including how the standard complements existing external standards with overlapping scopes;
  - The intended sustainability claims that the standard will substantiate as relevant;

- An assessment of risks in implementing the standard and how to mitigate for these, including identification of risks of unintended adverse effects.
- 10.2. The TORs shall also have provisions to ensure that any standard cites or attributes the intellectual source of content and includes requirements that
  - 10.2.1. Are auditable, verifiable and easily understood;
  - 10.2.2. Address the standards intended sustainability outcomes and are relevant to meeting those outcomes;
  - 10.2.3. Are not related to assurance, claims, or labels;
  - 10.2.4. Are at least as stringent as existing regulatory requirements.
- 10.3. The TORs shall have a date and version number and be publicly accessible on the Better Cotton website.

## 11. Composition and Role of the Standards Committee (SC)

- 11.1. The Standards Committee, where required, is the key governance body of a standard development of revision process, and oversees good standard setting procedures, budget and timelines as well as advises on key content areas. The Standards Committee also recommends approval of the new or adjusted standard to Council.
- 11.2. The set-up of a Standards Committee can be required as part of Better Cotton's internal procedures or recommended by the Secretariat and shall be approved by Council.
- 11.3. The Secretariat shall develop or update the Terms of References for the Standards Committee, outlining roles and responsibilities, working modalities, and decision-making.
- 11.4. The TORs of the Standards Committee shall be approved by Council.
- 11.5. Membership of the Standards Committee shall include a diverse set of stakeholder groups, including those who are directly affected by the implementation of the standard, and represent expertise across key technical areas covered by the standard.
- 11.6. Wherever possible, an equal number of members from each stakeholder category should be represented.
- 11.7. There are a maximum of 10 seats available, and a minimum 6 seats is needed for the Standards Committee to be operational.
- 11.8. A minimum of two and maximum of five Council members should participate in the SC, to ensure that progress and outcomes of the standards development/revision are well-represented and understood within the Council.
- 11.9. Members of the Steering Committee shall be recruited through a call for applications open to all stakeholders.
- 11.10. Members will be selected based on the following criteria:
  - Expert knowledge and/or experience of the issue(s) under consideration;
  - Capacity to contribute a wide range of viewpoints, for example from different socio-economic, geographic, cultural, gender, and organisational backgrounds, and representative of different sizes of farms;
  - Representation of affected stakeholders;

- Understanding of Better Cotton's mission and vision, including knowledge of the Better Cotton's systems and procedures.
- 11.11. Final membership of the SC will be confirmed by the Council, and membership along with the Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee will be publicly available on the Better Cotton website.
- 11.12. The work of the SC will be coordinated and supported by a designated Project Manager and/or project team from the Secretariat.

## 12. Composition and Role of Technical Working Groups

- 12.1. Where external subject matter expertise is required in the development or revision of a standard, technical working groups shall be formed, comprising of selected individuals with specific content expertise.
- 12.2. Technical working groups act as technical advisory boards for the standards team.
- 12.3. Participants in a technical working group may be Members but can also be external subject experts.
- 12.4. Where technical working groups are formed, clear Terms of Reference for these working groups shall be developed, including their objectives, member selection criteria, and expected working format and timeframe.
- 12.5. Membership of technical working groups will be approved by the Standards Committee. If there is no Standards Committee in place, the Internal Steering Team and Senior Director of Standards System Integrity will approve membership of the Working Groups.
- 12.6. Membership and TORs of technical working groups shall and made publicly available on the Better Cotton website.

## 13. Stakeholder Consultation

- 13.1. General stakeholder consultation
  - 13.1.1. For any development or any type of revision of a standard, the Secretariat shall identify individuals or groups that likely have a stake or interest in the amendments proposed through a stakeholder mapping process.
  - 13.1.2. For any new development or substantive change to the standard, feasibility of implementation and auditability of the proposed changes shall be assessed by field-level stakeholders and auditors.
  - 13.1.3. In all development and revision types, key internal and external stakeholders that have an interest and/or will be affected by the implementation of the new or revised standard, shall be pro-actively reached out to, to ensure alignment, relevance and feasibility of the proposed additions or changes.
  - 13.1.4. Within these groups and as relevant, the Secretariat shall proactively seek contribution from under-represented stakeholders or disadvantaged groups, using consultation mechanisms and tools that are accessible and culturally appropriate for the stakeholder groups in question.

13.1.5. The Secretariat shall consider other standards that have similar requirements to support in the refinement and ensure alignment.

#### 13.2. Public consultation

13.2.1. Urgent substantive and non-substantive do not require a public consultation but can be recommended by the Senior Director of Standards System Integrity.

13.2.2. The development of a new standard will include at least two rounds of public consultation.

13.2.3. Full and partial substantive revisions to an existing standard will include at least one round of public consultation.

13.2.4. Each round of consultation shall normally include a period of at least 60 days for the development and full revision of the standard.

13.2.5. Each round of consultation shall include a period of at least 30 days for partial substantive revisions or if a justification has been established for a reduced consultation period.

13.2.6. The launch of a public consultation shall be officially announced on the Better Cotton website, and shared via email, webinar, newsletters, etc. with interested parties.

13.2.7. Complementing and emphasising the general information shared on the website as per section 10, the announcement shall include at least a brief and clear description of the scope and objectives of the consultation, the timelines of the consultation, details on how to provide feedback, how the feedback will be used, and contact details.

13.2.8. The Secretariat shall ensure that the consultation process is open to all stakeholders and gathers balanced and diverse inputs from all stakeholder groups interested or affected by the standard.

13.2.9. The Secretariat shall proactively seek contribution from under-represented stakeholders or disadvantaged groups, using consultation mechanisms and tools that are accessible and culturally appropriate for the stakeholder groups in question.

13.2.10. After each public consultation, the Secretariat shall develop a synopsis of the consultation feedback, including statistics on stakeholder representation as well as a summary of comments received and how they have been addressed. The synopsis shall be made publicly available and shall be sent to all parties that submitted comments.

13.2.11. The Secretariat together with other revision governance groups as applicable and appropriate, shall review the consultation feedback received and amend the draft standard considering feedback.

Where substantive, unresolved issues persist after the consultation rounds, or where insufficient feedback was received in total or from specific stakeholder groups, additional public and/or targeted consultation shall be carried out, as necessary.

## 14. Communication and Publication

14.1. Throughout a standard development, or partial or full substantive revision process, a summary of the process and its progress shall be publicly available on the Better Cotton

website, including scope and intended sustainability outcomes as per the TORs (See Section 5), the objectives of the development of a standard (see point 1.1.1), a clear timeline, including opportunities to for contribution by different stakeholders, the governance of the process, including decision-making procedures.

- 14.2. Consultation draft and final versions of all standards shall be made freely available and easily accessible in English.
- 14.3. The following information shall be made publicly available for any standard
  - 14.3.1. Date by which a standard comes into effect and planned date for any subsequent revision;
  - 14.3.2. Any translations of the standards;
  - 14.3.3. Procedures for standard-setting and revision;
  - 14.3.4. Terms of References of the Standard;
  - 14.3.5. The synopsis of comments received during the last consultation;
  - 14.3.6. If applicable, the justification and details of any urgent revision done since the last revision.
- 14.4. The Secretariat shall keep at least for five years a file of all records made during standards development and revision activities (consultation comments, how they were considered, list of stakeholders, interested parties involved, draft and final versions of the standard, etc.), and these shall be made available on request.
- 14.5. The Secretariat shall communicate to all stakeholders directly impacted by the new or revised standard and shall specify the date that the new version of the standard becomes effective, along with any transition period and related guidance documents.
- 14.6. The Secretariat shall provide a channel for stakeholders to submit comments and feedback or to seek clarification on the standard on the website and log this feedback in its issue log for the next revision.

## 15. Alignment of Benchmarked Standards

- 15.1. Sustainable cotton standards that have been benchmarked with the Better Cotton shall be considered key stakeholders in the standards development and substantive revision process.
- 15.2. The Secretariat shall make every effort to engage them directly in the technical development and stakeholder consultation processes.
- 15.3. Once a standard has been approved by the Council, benchmarked standards (with support of the Secretariat) shall carry out an updated realignment exercise to ensure alignment between the Better Cotton and partner standards in line with the Better Cotton Benchmarking policy.

## 16. Complaints Mechanism

- 16.1. All complaints on issues related to standard-setting and revision procedures will follow the grievance management process which is publicly available on the Better Cotton website.