

# Request for Proposal Decent Work Monitoring in Programme Clusters in Uzbekistan to Identify Opportunities for Improving working conditions

RFP n#: 2025-8-PR-UZDWM  
Location: Uzbekistan  
Start date: To be agreed on contract signing  
End date: 1st December 2025  
(or as near to as possible)

**Better Cotton key contact:**  
Randiv Bayjumanov  
Decent Work Coordinator



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

You may submit questions to [tender@bettercotton.org](mailto:tender@bettercotton.org) - RFP n# 2025-8-PR-UZDWM" until 25<sup>th</sup> August 2025

Questions, requests and applications sent after the deadline for queries (25<sup>th</sup> August 2025 6pm Tashkent Time) will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. The deadline for submission of applications is 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2025.

## **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.**

## Description

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Better Cotton is the world's largest cotton sustainability programme. Our mission: to help cotton communities survive and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment. In difficult times, we are meeting the challenge head on. Through our network of field-level partners we have provided training on more sustainable farming practices to more than 2.9 million cotton farmers in 26 countries. More than a fifth of the world's cotton is now grown under the Better Cotton Standard and our membership network includes more than 2,400 members.

More information about Better Cotton can be found on our website: [www.bettercotton.org](http://www.bettercotton.org)

## Background

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A critical component of the Better Cotton Standard System is the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria (P&C), which lay out the global definition of Better Cotton through six guiding principles and 2 cross-cutting priorities. By following these principles, Better Cotton Farmers produce cotton in a way that is better for themselves, their communities and the environment.

The 6 principles are: Management, Natural Resources, Crop Protection, Fibre Quality, Decent Work and Sustainable Livelihoods. The 2 cross-cutting priorities are: Gender Equality and Climate Change.

Better Cotton's assurance programme verifies that producers have met the P&C Indicators of the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria before they are certified to sell Better Cotton. Further, once certified, producers are supported to continue making progress against their continuous improvement priorities and receive adequate capacity strengthening support.

## Scope of Work

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Following years of systemic forced labour in the cotton sector, the Government of Uzbekistan, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Cotton Campaign, civil society institutions, and human rights advocates have made significant progress in advancing state-led labour reforms. According to ILO findings, Uzbekistan has successfully eliminated systemic child labour and forced labour in cotton production.

Following these large-scale reforms, Better Cotton launched a programme in Uzbekistan in 2022 and opened a branch office in Tashkent in May 2023. Over the past three years, the programme has contributed to enhancing environmental, social, and economic sustainability practices across the cotton sector.

Decent work is one of the foundational principles of the Better Cotton, ensuring the protection of workers' rights, fair conditions of employment, and safe workplaces. Grounded in the ILO's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, this principle is central to fostering responsible and sustainable labour practices in cotton production.

To support this commitment, Better Cotton is helping cotton clusters in Uzbekistan establish systems that ensure decent work through a strengthened approach to field-level verification. In addition to standard assurance procedures, such as self-assessments and certification assessments against the Principles & Criteria, farms also undergo Decent Work Monitoring (DWM).

Initially introduced in 2021 with input from labour rights experts at Impact Ltd. and developed in consultation with key stakeholders including the Cotton Campaign and civil society organizations, the DWM method was first piloted in three cotton-textile hubs. In 2022, it was expanded to five large agricultural enterprises within the first year of the Better Cotton Programme in Uzbekistan. In 2023, the methodology was refined with advanced tools, including comprehensive reporting templates and structured interview guides designed to address identified risks, and was implemented across 12 farms. In 2024, the DWM approach was further scaled up and applied to 14 farms.

In the 2025–2026 season, considering the integration of Decent Work Monitoring into audits conducted by certification bodies on licensed farms, a simplified version of the Decent Work Monitoring system will be implemented on a sample basis across three licensed clusters. The sampling will be guided by risk indicators developed by Better Cotton. The objective of this monitoring is to identify compliance gaps and risks vis-a-vis the Better Cotton Standard's Decent Work Principle.

Selected organisations and experienced specialists will conduct Decent Work Monitoring of the selected farms operated by cotton clusters participating in the Better Cotton Uzbekistan programme. This monitoring is part of Better Cotton's risk-based approach in Uzbekistan and contributes to the assessment of working conditions and the identification of opportunities for continuous improvement.

## Conditions

The decent work monitoring comprises field visits and direct interviews with workers and management to assess labour practices and identify risks of labour rights violations and non-compliance with the Decent Work indicators of the Better Cotton Principles & Criteria v3.1. This monitoring is conducted during periods of high labour risk, typically when the production process is most labour-intensive and the demand for labour is highest. Additionally, the monitoring includes significant input from external stakeholders and local community interviews to capture concerns or incidents that might occur outside the peak labour periods or might not be immediately observable during field visits.

The selected monitors are accountable for maintaining the confidentiality of the data gathered. It is imperative that the monitors exercise the highest level of diligence to protect the privacy and safety of those interviewed. Sensitive subjects should not be broached by the monitors if they cannot guarantee security and privacy, with additional notes indicating compromised conditions during the interview being included in the report.

The monitors are expected to know of the appropriate referral channels in case any labour rights violations are detected that require a timely action or require an investigation which may be out of scope of the Better Cotton assessment. If any such violation is found or suspected, the monitors should escalate it to the appropriate channels as necessary, report it to Better Cotton at [complaints@bettercotton.org](mailto:complaints@bettercotton.org) at the earliest opportunity, and flag the finding in the monitoring report.

The monitors are fully responsible for disclosure and accuracy of the information presented to Better Cotton. They shall not accept any offers from Cluster staff to cover expenses, including for transportation, meals or gifts. The monitors shall not accept any personal favours, utilise Cluster-provided staff or vehicles for any work outside of the scope of the present assignment or for their personal needs.

## Assignment details

The Decent Work Monitoring will include the following elements:

1. Recruitment and training of qualified Decent Work Monitors:
  - The Lead Monitor will select a team of monitors and train them on the monitoring methodology ahead of the field visits based on the training materials shared by Better Cotton. Their details should be shared with Better Cotton ahead of the monitoring visits.
  - Virtual training will be provided to the Lead Monitor and their team by Better Cotton in September 2025 on the Decent Work Monitoring methodology and templates (1 day).
2. Scheduling and planning monitoring visits including:
  - Scheduling of semi-announced visits during the second and potentially third cotton harvest passes in coordination with Better Cotton.
  - With Better Cotton's support, communicate with the Clusters to arrange the logistics, explain the objectives of the visits, and expectations around required documents, etc.
3. Pre-assessment: The aim of the preliminary identification of risk factors is to analyse hiring or labour management practices for potential risk factors for labour rights violations, and thus determine the focus for the onsite assessment.
  - Consult external sources on the known risks of labour rights violations. The sources can include key informant interviews, media reports or relevant Telegram channels.
  - Review the Self-Assessment responses as well as any previous monitoring outcomes or licensing assessment outcomes.
4. Monitoring visits, including the following elements:
  - Opening meeting (During the opening meeting, the assessor should introduce the team and explain the purpose of the assessment).
  - Management interviews.
    - Documentation reviews (including documents received before and during the assessment.
    - Wage verification (it's necessary for verifiers to triangulate the wages recorded by brigadiers and accountants with the amounts reported directly by the workers)
  - Field visits and observation.
  - Farmer and worker interviews and focus group discussions – see sample sizes below under 'Scope and timing'. Where possible, the monitors will need to arrange interviews around the workers' rest breaks, or off-site to ensure privacy and confidentiality.
  - Where necessary, and in the case of high-risk findings (e.g., severe labour rights violations like child labour or forced labour), the monitors will carry out follow up consultations with experts or key informants at community level to triangulate collected information.
5. Documentation and reporting of findings:

- Following each monitoring inspection, the Lead Monitor is responsible for gathering the monitors' observations and completing the reporting template provided by Better Cotton. The assessor will fill out a standard Excel-based reporting template featuring a section labelled P5 Checklist. While the assessors have the flexibility to record notes in their preferred manner throughout the evaluation process, they must ensure that the final report provided to Better Cotton adheres to the provided format.
- The Lead Monitor will participate in calibration and review meetings with Better Cotton to discuss the findings, evidence and grading vis-à-vis the Decent Work indicators of the Better Cotton Standard.
- The Lead Monitor will also participate in a final workshop or series of calls to discuss lessons learned from the monitoring season.

## Scope and timing

The Consultant and their team selected for this task will need to complete Decent Work Monitoring of the farms listed below. The schedule of the visits will be confirmed with the Better Cotton Team:

Region	Interview Sample	Start and end date (to be confirmed)
1. Samarqand region	110	9–10 Oct
2. Kashkadarya region	110	20–22 Oct
3. Fergana region	110	6–7 Oct

The monitors will be provided the cluster organogram to give an idea of the management structure and the workforce at the farms. The worker sample only includes field workers; farm management employees are not included in the sample. The monitors will need to ensure that the sample of interviewed workers is diverse and representative of the farm's labour force composition, including by gender, worker categories/types of contracts (e.g. brigadiers and pickers), residential status (local or from another regions), etc. The interviews will be conducted with both the directly and indirectly recruited workers.

Where possible, worker interviews and onsite visits should be scheduled to coincide with the second pass of harvesting. Where third passes are confirmed, additional worker interviews will be arranged as an addendum to the present agreement outlining the additional scope of work.

Draft reports and supporting evidence are to be provided to Better Cotton within 7 working days of the completion of each monitoring visit. Final reports with Better Cotton's comments addressed are to be provided within 5 additional working days of receiving feedback from Better Cotton. This will enable the findings to inform overall assurance and licensing outcomes in a timely manner.

## Deliverables

	Description of deliverables	Technicalities (specific tools, software, number of pages, language, etc.)	Date of delivery
1.	Profile of selected Decent Work Monitors, including CVs and summary of experience	English/Russian or Uzbek	No later than 25 <sup>th</sup> August 2025
2.	Participation in the Decent Work training	Russian language knowledge Access to Teams	15, 22 September 2025
3.	Providing the necessary documents for the execution of contracts	Constituent documents, details, addresses, etc.	At the time of request for documents
4.	Pre-assessment of the monitored farms, including key informant interviews and review of relevant materials	Notes in Word or Excel per each region or farm visited	No later than 25 September 2025
5.	Field visits, including interviews with management and workers, documentation reviews, field observations, and consultations with community stakeholders (e.g., mahalla representatives, trade unions) to triangulate information and comprehensively assess working conditions against Better Cotton's Decent Work indicators.	Word/Excel format; supporting evidence in the form of appendices (photographs, notes); brief summary for each farm; triangulation sources indicated.	According to the schedule of visits
6.	Filled out reporting template for each monitored farm, including any relevant supporting evidence (documentation, notes, etc.)	In the reporting template with the evidence as attachments when necessary	Drafts: 7 working days after each visit Final: 5 working days after Better Cotton comments received
7.	Participation in the calibration meetings	Russian/English language knowledge	Early November 2025
8.	Participation in the final workshop and contributions (verbal / written) on the lessons learned	Russian/English language knowledge Access to Teams	By the end of November 2025

## Conflicts of interest

Should there be a detection of an actual or apparent Conflict of Interest involving the monitors and the evaluated cluster, it is mandatory to disclose this to Better Cotton in writing. If this is known during the RFP process it should be submitted as part of the proposal. If it is identified after contracting it must be submitted in writing to the Contract Sponsor, for formal review in line with Better Cotton procedures.

## Required Skills & Knowledge

The Consultant must have hold following experience, skills & competencies:

### Experience:

1. Experience conducting social auditing, monitoring and assessing of working conditions in Uzbekistan's agricultural sector.
2. Familiarity with the labour rights issues in Uzbekistan's cotton production.
3. Knowledge of the key stakeholders in Uzbekistan's cotton production.
4. Familiarity with the Better Cotton's Standard
5. Understanding of established grievance mechanisms and referral services in Uzbekistan.

### Skills & competencies:

6. Proficiency in Uzbek (mandatory), Russian and English (preferable).
7. Ability to present complex information in a clear and concise way.
8. Analytical thinking.
9. Ability to work to tight deadlines without compromising on the quality of the output.

## Getting to know you

Company Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full Legal Name</li> <li>• Address</li> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Background</li> <li>• Vision and Mission</li> <li>• Contact person &amp; email address</li> <li>• Telephone number</li> <li>• Your customers</li> </ul>
Experience	We'll ask you to tell us about previous assignments
Certifications & Credentials	What certifications and/or credentials do you have? How do these relate to your area of work?
Technical Skills	What relevant skills and expertise do you have ? What methodologies have you used in past projects/assignments?
Data Security (Optional for individuals and smaller organisations, but mandatory for larger firms, and Traceability and Data Teams)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Technical Security</u> – We'll ask a technical overview of how your keep data secure in your tool(s), including details of any technical security certifications you hold.</li> <li>• <u>Data Protection</u> – Describe your approach to complying with data protection legislation from distinct parts of the world</li> </ul>

Fees	Tell us about your fee structure and what it includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hourly or daily rate / per head (if applicable)</li> <li>Fees per specific tasks/deliverables</li> </ul>
Company Commitments	What policies do you have in place (as applicable) on sustainability, inclusion and decent work?

## Application Requirements

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

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

Proposals responding to this Request for Proposal should meet the experience, knowledge, skill and competencies stated above.

- Detailed CV of the Consultant
- Fee structure, preferably in EURO
- Documents to confirm work similar work done previously
- At least 1 reference from international companies/organisations that you have previously worked with.

## High-level Timeline

INDICATIVE TIMETABLE	
2nd September 2025 (6.00pm Tashkent Time)	Applications deadline  All applications must be submitted via this <a href="#">link</a>
3 <sup>rd</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2025	Evaluation of submitted applications
By 9 <sup>th</sup> September 2025	The successful applicant(s) will be notified
By 12 <sup>th</sup> September 2025	Service contract(s) issued

## Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

### Technical Evaluation Criteria

- Demonstrated understanding of this RFP
- Quality and clarity of the proposal
- Relevant professional experience of the Consultant
- Quality and relevance of the proposal submitted

Financial Evaluation Criteria

- Value for money

**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.**