



Annual Report 2024-25

BETTER
COTTON
GROWTH &
INNOVATION
FUND



Introduction

The Better Cotton Growth and Innovation Fund (Better Cotton GIF or the Fund) is a field-level grant-maker. It is funded through volume-based fees paid by Better Cotton Retailer and Brand Members, as well as through contributions from donors, and from Programme Partners.

The Better Cotton GIF is designed to further the Better Cotton mission by making grants to partner organisations which work with farming communities. These communities are, in turn, supported to survive, and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment. It comprises three distinct sub-funds:¹ the Small Farm Fund, the Knowledge Partner Fund, and the Large Farm Fund. Each has its own unique objectives which are detailed [here](#).

Photo: Better Cotton Farmer Yogeshbhai Bharatbhai Kidecha with soil on his farm in Gujarat, India.
© Better Cotton/Joe Woodruff.

1. Until 2024-25 there were four sub funds however the Innovation and Learning Fund was stopped though there were some projects from 2023-24 still running in 2024-25.

Small Farm Fund overview²



Farmers

Women:
123,922
Men:
1,244,198
Total:
1,368,120



Workers

Women:
459,374
Men:
1,037,844
Total:
1,497,218



Metric tonnes

1,332,264



Hectares

2,351,881

Small Farm Fund: deliverables



19,935
Demonstration plots
set up or maintained



2,168,743
Trees
planted



61
Farmer Producer
Organisations
supported



1,005
Women-only Learning
Groups established
or maintained



11,008
Bio input/control
centres created
or supported



6,985
Drip irrigation
systems installed

Small Farm Fund: project grants

Contributions

GIF:
€17.8 million

Programme partners:
€6.8 million

Other:
€5.8 million

Total:
€30.4 million



Other funds

Knowledge Partner Fund

5 projects in
Pakistan, Turkey
& India

GIF contribution:
€288,809
Co-funding:
€31,551

Large Farm Fund

4 projects in Brazil,
United States,
Israel & Australia

GIF contribution:
€242,497
Co-funding:
€198,945

Innovation and Learning Fund

2 projects in
Turkey, India
& Mali³

GIF contribution:
€196,376
Co-funding:
N/A

² Figures include only mid-season figures for Mozambique partners due to the seasonal difference. They are excluded entirely from the deliverables.
³ One project spanned both Mali and India.



2024-25 season: Highlights

The following outline some results of each sub fund in the 2024-25 season.

Small Farm Fund

The Small Farm Fund, through which the majority of funding is given, makes grants to partner organisations that work with smallholder and medium-farm cotton communities, BCI's Programme Partners. In the 2024-25 season, partners continued to evolve their projects to bring more tangible benefit to farming communities and the environments they live in.

Water management continues to be a significant focus with all sorts of structures being built or renovated at farm or community level according to the context and need. Where government funding is available, grants have also been used to match GIF funding for micro irrigation units for farmers, which allow year-round cultivation.

Crop protection is also a major point of focus with alternatives to synthetic pesticides (bio pesticides, traps and bio controls) being produced by individuals, and hundreds of women's self-help groups and other collectives. This not only addresses access issues for non synthetics but also brings in additional income to these groups.

Alongside these, projects have made more efforts to reduce cotton residue burning through incorporation of stalks back into soil, as a form of compost, or using as biochar material. They have also encouraged agro-forestry, intercropping, border cropping, and compost use. Others are looking at the safe disposal of pesticide containers (empty containers used for other purposes can be a major poisoning risk) by trialling community collection schemes or talking to pesticide companies about their responsibility to take back their own containers.

The involvement of women has again improved in the 2024-25 season with ratios of women field staff increasing which makes women more comfortable to come to meetings and demonstrations.

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Knowledge Partner Fund

The Knowledge Partner Fund, still fairly new, supported partners with increasing the regenerative approach in Turkey, with working alongside communities to develop biodiversity enhancement plans in Pakistan, and on crop protection in India.

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Large Farm Fund

The Large Farm Fund was paused in 2024-25 but projects funded in 2023-24 continued, setting a pest/predator threshold for large farmers in the U.S. to avoid the use of synthetic pesticides, to trial cost-effective ways to breed parasitic wasps in Brazil, commercial scale regenerative farming in Israel, and improving farmer outreach in Australia.

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Sadly many of our partners' and farmers' efforts are undermined by extreme weather events which have become a regular feature of all the reports GIF receives; cotton production is down and the lives of smallholder farmers are ever more precarious.

Photo, top: A Nongxi farmer planted fructus cnidii (Chinese herbal medicine) in his cotton field. © Nongxi
Photo, bottom left: Northern New South Wales farmer Anna Alison and her family farming business has become myBMP certified through the Cotton Australia Large Farm Fund project. © Cotton Australia
Photo, bottom right: Pilio and SAMA*Verte supported biodiversity enhancement into noncropland habitat creation through their grant with the Knowledge Partner Fund. © Pilio



Case Study

Cotton Connect, Gujarat

This season, CottonConnect, together with its local partner VRTI,⁴ established three manure centres in Khari, Vavdi, and Toda project villages. The centres produce a special, bio-enriched organic manure made from farmyard manure, silt, compost culture, NPK⁵ culture, and Trichoderma.⁶ It improves soil health, saves water and reduces synthetic fertiliser use.⁷

Farmers were given materials, support with making the manure and training on how to manage the centres. Four farmers in each village run the centres as small businesses.

In the 2024-25 season, 16,000 kg of manure was produced. Of this, 6000 kg were used by the 12 farmers who manage the centres. The remaining 10,000 kg was sold to 54 other Better Cotton farmers.

The impact was clear. The 12 farmers who managed the centres saw an increase in yield of 855 kg per hectare, earning just over €632 per hectare of extra income, an increase of approximately 40%. The 54 farmers who bought the manure had an increase of 581 kg per hectare, earning about €400 per hectare more, an increase of nearly 30%. The main variation in increased income between the two sets of farmers stemmed from an added input (vermiwash) that the managing farmers produced and used that was not used by the other farmers. The farmers who managed the centres also had lower input costs having made the manure themselves rather than having to buy it.

Now, the soil in these villages is improving, crops are healthier, and farmers are saving money. The farmers feel more confident and hopeful.



Photo top left: Application of Trichoderma, preparing a bio-enriched organic manure bed. © CottonConnect India
Photo above: Sieving of bio-enriched organic manure. © CottonConnect India
Photo bottom left: Packing of bio-enriched organic manure at natural input centre. © CottonConnect India
Photo bottom right: Experience sharing workshop on use and benefit of bio-enriched organic manure. © CottonConnect India

4. Vivekanand Research and Training Institute
5. Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), and Potassium (K), which are the three primary nutrients essential for plant growth.
6. Trichoderma improves soil health through soil structure improvement, organic matter decomposition, and disease suppression.
7. And therefore GHG emissions (nitrous oxide) in fertiliser production and application.

Finance breakdown

	2023-24 in '000s Euros	2024-25 in '000s Euros
Total income*	29,901	30,467
Grants	(15,060)	(18,542)
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	(125)	(150)
Fund Management	(345)	(275)
Total expenses	(15,530)	(18,967)
Balance ⁸	14,371	11,500
Contribution to reserves	247	302

*Deferred income plus recognized income

Please find Better Cotton GIF's most recent finance statements in the [FAQ section of the website](#).

A huge thank you to all who
contributed to the GIF and
its three funds in 2024-25.

Photo: Better Cotton Farmer Wang Meishuang picking cotton in her field.
Weixian, Hebei, China. © Better Cotton/Yuyang Liu

8. This figure includes the amount committed for ongoing multi-year grants.



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Front cover photo: Dr Adeela Manzoor, WWF Pakistan (left)
and Amina Bibi, cotton farm worker (right).
© Eventrra/Better Cotton.

Photo below: Julia Filipe, Producer Unit Manager for SanJFS in Mozambique.
© Better Cotton/Ivan Serraventoso.

