

# Why Become a BCI Producer or Program Partner in the US?

Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) is the world's largest cotton sustainability program, transforming cotton production to benefit the environment, producers and the global textile industry. Since 2014, BCI has worked in the United States to tackle challenges like herbicide resistance, soil erosion and water scarcity, while creating economic and social opportunities for cotton farmers and their communities. Since 2015, over 1.6 million metric tons (3.5 billion pounds) of US Better Cotton have been claimed by mills under the mass balance system, reflecting significant demand for sustainably-sourced cotton and the strength of BCI's impact.

As a privately operated program, BCI is completely free for producers with no participation fees for Producers – contrary to concerns over certification-related costs. BCI relies on the commitment of its Members and Partners rather than taxpayer funds, ensuring efficient and focused efforts toward sustainability. Joining BCI as a Producer or Program Partner is the definitive choice for those committed to leading the US cotton industry toward a sustainable and prosperous future. Below, we outline why joining the US Program is the only path to align with global sustainability demands and unlock unparalleled opportunities.

## Becoming a BCI Producer in the US

BCI Producers are certified farmers who implement the Better Cotton Standard to grow cotton that meets global sustainability demands, typically through group certification under a Program Partner, where the group—rather than individual cotton—is certified.

As of the 2024-25 season, over 300 growers across the US Cotton Belt produced 11% of the nation's cotton as Better Cotton. Becoming a Producer empowers you to leverage your group's certification for potential financial and operational benefits while supporting environmental and community goals—all at no cost to you.

## Benefits for Producers

1. **Financial Opportunities through Certification:** BCI group certification, similar to organic certification, allows producers to market their cotton as sustainably produced under the mass balance system, much like organic producers market their crops to buyers seeking certified products. By leveraging your group's certified status, you can negotiate with global buyers, such as retailers and brands, who prioritize more sustainably sourced cotton, accessing growing markets and strengthening your market position to create significant financial outcomes through your own negotiations, not direct payments from

BCI.

2. **Cost Savings:** Producers adopt practices like Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and water-efficient methods that reduce input costs such as pesticides and irrigation, optimizing operational efficiency while maintaining productivity.
3. **Environmental Impact:** Producers implement practices like cover cropping and IPM to enhance soil health, conserve water and reduce pesticide use. These efforts address challenges such as herbicide resistance and drought in areas like California and West Texas. *You may already be employing these practices – which would call for minimal adoption – and BCI certification would help to amplify your efforts.*
4. **Farm Resilience:** By adopting regenerative practices, such as crop rotation and reduced tillage, Producers strengthen soil health and adapt to extreme weather, ensuring long-term farm productivity. North Carolina producers, for example, lead in cover crop adoption, contributing to a national soil health movement.
5. **Access to Resources:** Through Program Partners, Producers gain support for certification and access to BCI's network, enabling them to meet industry standards and market expectations efficiently.
6. **Industry Recognition:** Producers earn recognition for their commitment to sustainable cotton production, building their reputation within the agricultural community. Opportunities like field trips and events, such as those with Quarterway Cotton Growers in Texas, are available to all involved Producers– allowing you to connect retailers and brands directly with your farm. The more you engage, the greater the opportunities for networking and visibility, as you get out as much as you put in.

## Becoming a BCI Program Partner in the US

*Program Partners are the backbone of BCI's mission*, collaborating with Producers to implement the Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS), monitor progress and collect data. Organizations such as producer groups, NGOs, universities or agribusinesses can join as Program Partners to lead transformative change in the US cotton sector while gaining strategic advantages. Responsibilities for Program Partners include a BCI Membership fee and paying third-party certification bodies to verify the credibility of their farms' compliance with BCI standards, as well additional staff time taken into account for their involvement.

## Benefits for Program Partners

1. **Industry Leadership:** As a Program Partner, your organization establishes itself as the vanguard of sustainable agriculture, aligning with major brands like Carhartt, Walmart and GAP, Inc. which prioritize responsibly sourced cotton. This cements your reputation and influence as an industry leader.
2. **Global Network Access:** Connect with over 2,700 BCI members worldwide, including more than 60 field-level partners across 22 countries. Collaborate with national and regional organizations, governments, and initiatives to share expertise and amplify your impact.
3. **Producer Collaboration:** Partners work with farmers to ensure alignment with sustainable practices, such as integrated pest management or soil conservation, helping them meet market demands for sustainability. Your efforts empower farmers to succeed in a competitive global market.
4. **Data-Driven Credibility:** With the BCI program team handling the legwork on data collection and analysis, Partners can showcase the environmental and economic impacts of Better Cotton practices, such as reduced pesticide use or improved water efficiency. This strengthens your organization's authority and demonstrates measurable results without the heavy lifting.
5. **Market Connections:** Facilitating Better Cotton production opens doors to markets that value sustainability and transparency, foster stronger relationships with merchants, mills, and brands, creating financial opportunities through expanded networks driven by your own efforts, not direct incentives from BCI.
6. **Addressing Industry Challenges:** Partners help producers navigate challenges like drought, herbicide resistance, and extreme weather. For example, [BCI collaborates with groups like Quarterway Cotton Growers in West Texas](#) to connect retailers and brands directly with farms, promoting transparency and sustainable sourcing.

## Join the Better Cotton Movement in the US

As a privately operated program, BCI leverages the dedication of its Members to drive sustainability without relying on US taxpayer funds, ensuring efficient and impactful outcomes. Whether you are a producer aiming to leverage your group's certification in global markets or an organization seeking to lead in sustainability, joining BCI as a Producer or Program Partner is a major step toward shaping a sustainable cotton industry, achieving environmental goals and unlocking opportunities through your own efforts.

Contact our team [us.team@bettercotton.org](mailto:us.team@bettercotton.org) or fill out [this brief interest survey](#) to learn more about becoming a Producer or Program Partner and start making a difference today!