



Assurance Outcomes Report 2024-25

January 2026

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Introduction

Following the closure of the 2024-25 season, the Assurance outcomes analysis has been completed and compiled into a report. In this report you will find an overview of the results from the 2024-25 Assurance season, with a focus on participating numbers, assessment and licensing outcomes, and non-conformity occurrences. The following results were gathered through the analysis of data from direct Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) programmes, which does not include any results from benchmark countries.

During season 2024-25, all Producers - except those in Mozambique - were assessed against the Principles and Criteria (P&C) v3.0. In Mozambique, Producers were instead assessed against v2.1 as the country's cotton production cycle is one season behind compared to the others. Therefore, this report will be referencing P&C v3.0 for all countries except Mozambique. Details of the P&C versions can be found on the BCI website [here](#).

It is also important to note that BCI became a certification scheme in January 2025, which means that Producers still followed the licensing model during season 2024-25. Only 3 Large Farm Groups in the USA (i.e. Quarterway Cotton Growers, Staple Cotton Cooperative Association and Plains Cotton Cooperative Association) received a certification audit and were granted a certificate in season 2024-25 as part of a pilot. Therefore, this report will primarily refer to the licensing model and use licensing terminology.

Details on BCI's Assurance Programme, including its third-party certification scheme, can be found on the organisation's website [here](#).

Glossary

BCI Assessments	Assessments conducted by BCI assessors.
3PV	Third-Party Verifier. 3PV can refer to an approved 3PV organisation or a licensing assessment carried out by an approved 3PV.
PP	Programme Partner. BCI's PPs are organisations with local expertise who oversee the set-up and management of PUs under the Assurance model. Prior to the 2021-22 season, they were referred to as Implementing Partners.
LA	Licensing Assessment. Every Producer receives a LA before being issued with their first license and again before each license renewal (typically every 3 years). LAs are conducted by trained BCI assessors or by approved 3PVs.
LF	Large Farm. In the context of the BCI Assurance model, a LF is characterised as a farm comprised of about 200 ha of cotton and that

	either uses mechanised production or is structurally dependent on permanent hired labour.
MF	Medium Farm. BCI defines medium farms as Producer Units where farmers are structurally dependent on permanent hired labour. The typical farm size of such Producer Units is between 20 and 200ha of cotton.
NC	Non-conformity. NC on a P&C core indicator. This can be Incidental (INC) or Systemic (SNC).
P&C	Principles and Criteria. The BCI P&C v3.0 was valid during the 2024-25 season, except for Mozambique where P&C v2.1 was still followed. The P&C includes 6 Principles covering the most significant global sustainability issues associated with cotton production. The 6 BCI Principles are further defined through 28 criteria and a subset of 76 indicators. Details of the P&C v3.0 can be found here , along with the updated P&C v3.1, which was launched in season 25-26.
Producer	In the context of the BCI Standard System, Producer refers to either an individual LF or a PU (group) of Smallholders (SHs) or Medium Farms (MFs). Licenses to sell BCI Cotton are administered at the Producer level.
PU	Producer Unit. A group of Smallholder farms or Medium farms who participate in the BCI programme through a group model. Each PU is overseen by a dedicated PU Manager and has an optimal size of 3,500 to 4,000 farmers for SHs and 100 farmers for MFs.
SH	Smallholder. BCI defines smallholders as farms where farmers are not structurally dependent on permanent hired labour. The typical farm size of smallholders does not exceed 20ha of cotton.
SVA	Surveillance Assessment. SVAs are conducted on a small sample of PUs with valid licenses based on risk or changes in farmer composition. LAs are conducted by trained BCI assessors or by approved 3PVs.

Producer participation summary

In the BCI system, participating Producers are Producers who engage in BCI activities from the beginning of the cotton season, including training and capacity building as well as Assurance.

- In the 2024-25 season, there were 869 participating Producers across 11 direct BCI countries (as seen in figure 1).
- There were 505 participating PUs (SHs and MFs), which made up 58% of total Producers, and 364 LFs (42% of total Producers).
- 49 were set-up PUs.¹

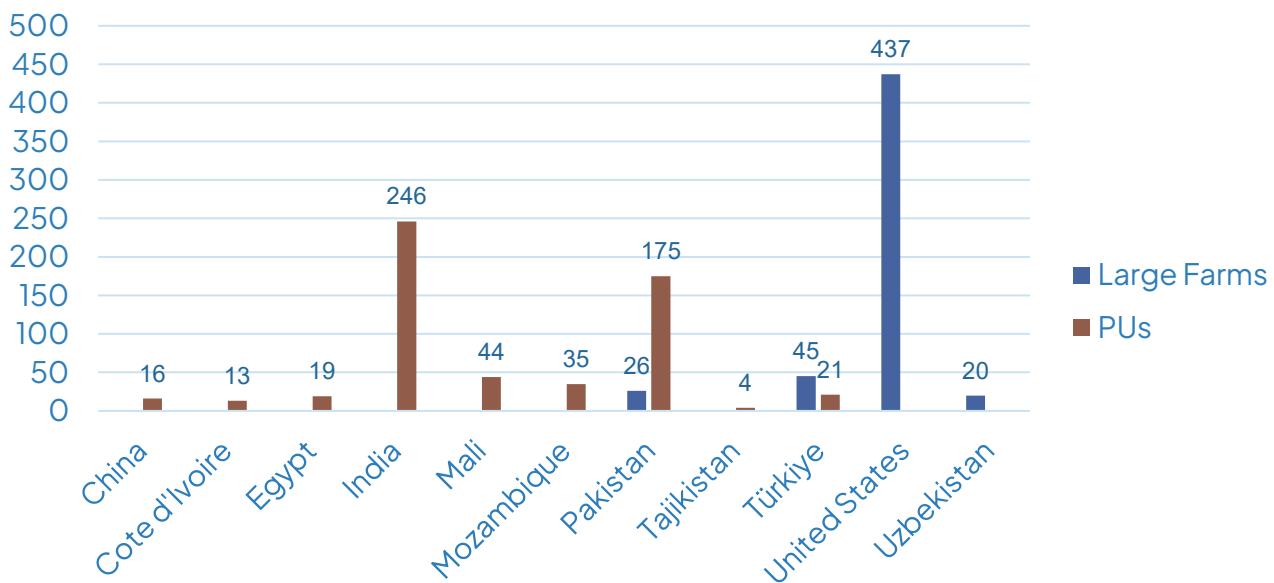


Figure 1: Participating Producers across BCI direct countries in 2024-25.

¹Set up PUs are SHs or MFs that are in their first season, in which they focus on farmer outreach and training before being assessed for licensing, typically in their second season. The concept of set up phase does not apply to LFs.

BCI Licenses

In the BCI Assurance model, in season 2024–25, the Assurance team is responsible for making licensing decisions, whose outcome determines the license status of the Producers. This is relevant for licenses awarded or retained from previous seasons, or cancelled when the Producer is non-compliant with the P&C or fails to fulfil other administrative requirements (more details on this can be found within the [BCI Assurance Manual for Licensees](#)).

The list of BCI license holders in season 2024–25 can be found [here](#).

Number of assessments

During the 2024–25 season, assessments took place between May – November 2024 for Northern Hemisphere countries and from May – June 2025 for Southern Hemisphere countries. As per the BCI Assurance model effective in season 2024–25, assessments were conducted by BCI assessors (BCI) or Third-Party Verifiers (3PVs). Assessment types included Licensing Assessments (LA) for Producers due for licensing or, in the case of PUs, those could also be Surveillance Assessments (SVA) for valid license holders.

Additionally, 3 certification audits were conducted in season 2024–25 as part of a pilot. These covered 3 Large Farm Groups in the USA (i.e. Quarterway Cotton Growers, Staple Cotton Cooperative Association and Plains Cotton Cooperative Association), who all received a certificate as outcome of the audits.

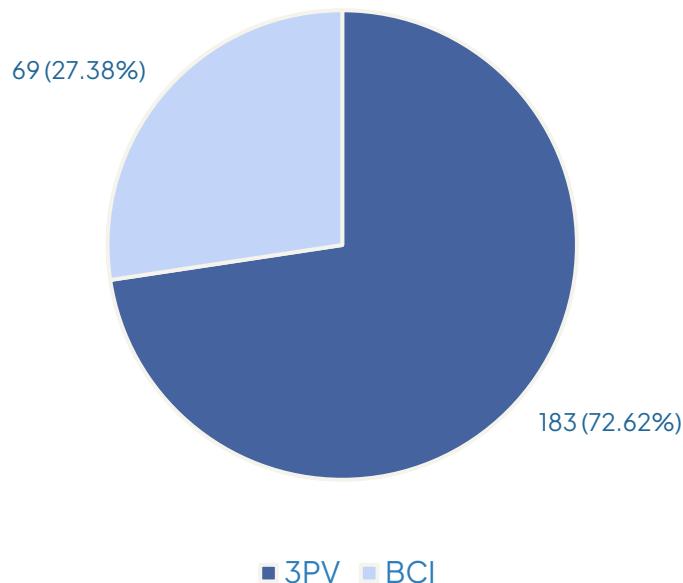


Figure 2: Total number of assessments per assessor type in 2024–25.

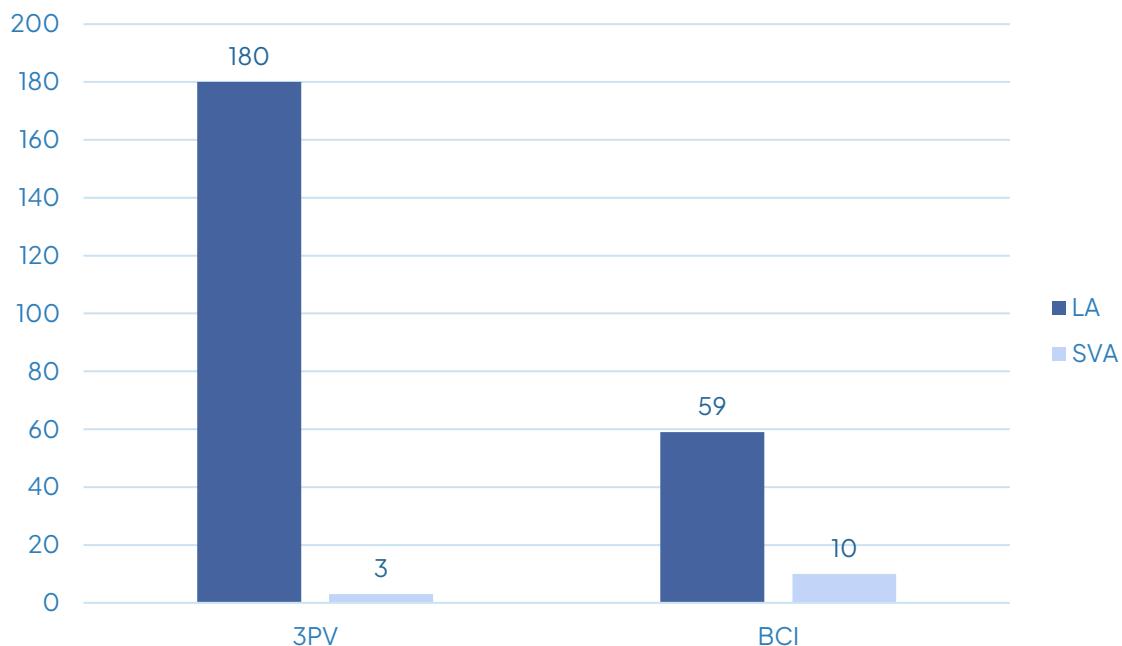


Figure 3: Number of LA and SVA per assessor type in 2024-25.

Assessment outcomes

The overall outcome of each assessment can fall into three categories:

- Compliant - denotes that the Producer is compliant in all indicators.
- Compliant with Incidental - an assessment with one or more incidental non-conformities but no systemic non-conformity.
- Systemic - an assessment displays one or more systemic non-conformities. This outcome leads to license cancellation.

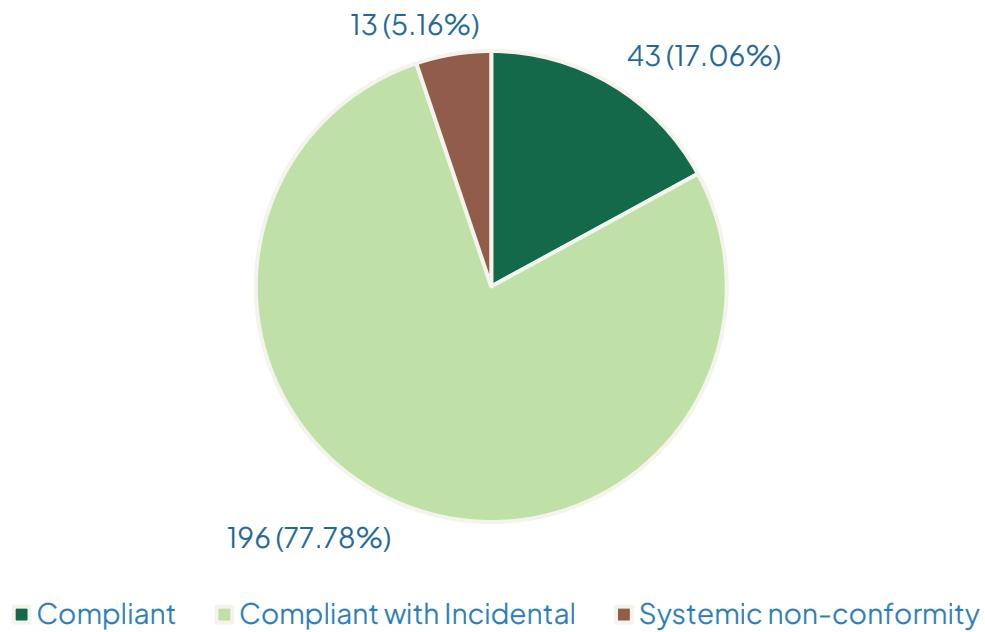


Figure 4: Global assessment outcomes in 2024-25 in all BCI direct countries.

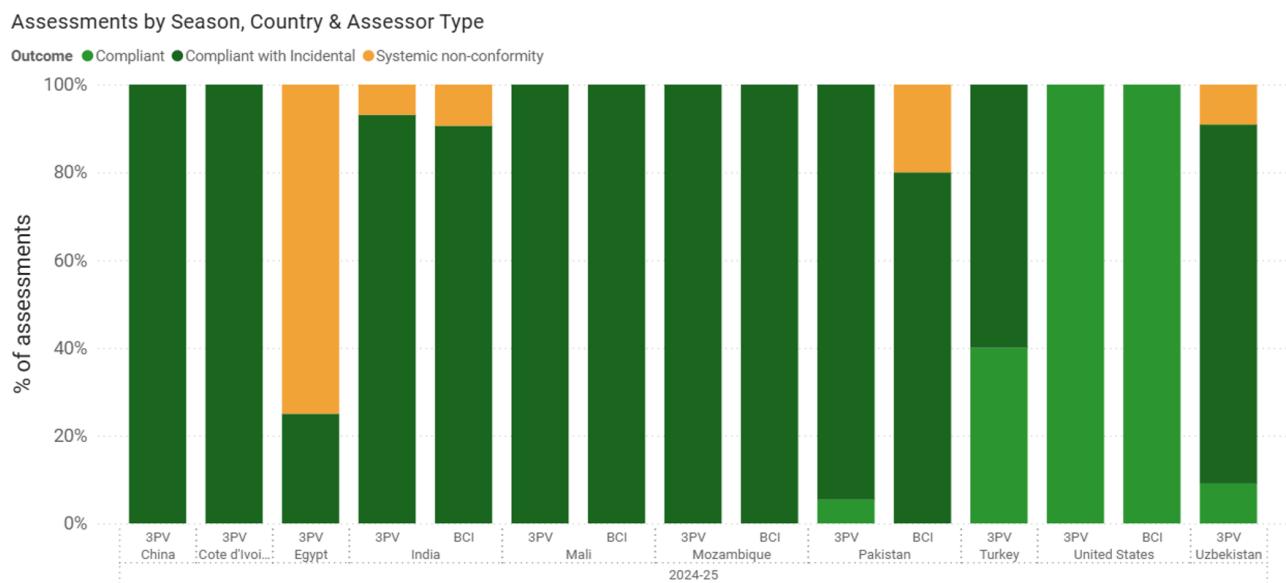


Figure 5: A graph showing assessment outcomes per country and assessor type in 2024-25.

Top areas of non-compliance (NC)

Table 1 below illustrates the top areas of non-compliance in all countries excluding the USA (due to there being no NCs found in the 24-25 season for USA).

These top NCs occurred in >35% of assessments (raised as incidental or systemic NCs).

Principle	Indicator	Description summary	Frequency of occurrence
1	1.1.2	A monitoring plan is developed and implemented.	55.49%
3	3.5.3	Minimum Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is correctly used while handling pesticides.	46.9%
5	5.1.1	A system is in place to regularly monitor risks and incidents of labour rights violations.	44.21%
1	1.2.2	Accurate and complete farm-level data is recorded.	42.17%
3	3.1.6	Pesticides are only used if a certain threshold of pest level is reached. If pesticides are used, low toxicity active ingredients are preferred, and they are selected and applied in a way to mitigate resistance.	42.07%
5	5.3.1	Children and young workers carry out	39.27%

Principle	Indicator	Description summary	Frequency of occurrence
		only safe and age-appropriate tasks.	
1	1.1.1	A clear and locally relevant activity plan is developed and implemented for the Producer Unit.	37.58%

Table 1: Top NCs that occurred in >35% of assessments in all countries excluding USA.

Since this is the first season that P&C v3.0 is implemented, it is not possible to directly compare the NCs raised to each indicator number in season 2024-25 to the ones raised in the previous seasons. This is due to the fact that all indicator numbers and some indicator content are different between v2.1 and v3.0 of the P&C. However, some comparisons can be made:

- In season 2024-25, 1.1.2 (a new indicator introduced in P&C v3.0) emerged as the top NC, in contrast to the previous 3 seasons where the top NC was 1.7.2 of P&C v2.1 (minimum PPE use). Occurrence of NC's relating to minimum PPE fell from 57.24% of assessments in season 2023-24 to 46.9% in season 2024-25.
- Common top NCs across the past three seasons involve minimum PPE use and farm-level data recording.
- In the past three seasons, the majority of the top NCs have fallen under the principle concerning management systems (i.e. Principle 1 in P&C v3.0 and Principle 7 in P&C v2.1).

You can learn more about the outcomes and impacts of the BCI programme by visiting this page on our website [here](#).

Full details and associated documents on the BCI Assurance Programme can be found on our website [here](#).