

Better Cotton Initiative Farm Data Requirements v.1.3

To be used with the Better Cotton Initiative Principles and Criteria v.3.2

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Background

Good quality data is critical for Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) stakeholders to assess field-level impact and inform continuous improvement at the farm level. At the same time, data collection requires significant resources and time. BCI thus aims to make farm and producer level data collection as efficient and purposeful as possible – so that all data informs good decision-making and improvements over time.

About This Document

This Farm Data Requirements document is a key reference for the [BCI Principles and Criteria v.3.2](#), outlining the specific data points at the Producer¹ and/or farm level which are required for compliance with the P&C. This links to Criterion 1.2 and related indicators:

Criterion 1.2 – Effective and relevant data management supports improved decision-making

- Indicator 1.2.1 (all farm categories): *In line with the Better Cotton Initiative Farm Data Requirements Document, accurate and complete Producer-level data is collected, validated and reported.*

¹ 'Producer' in the BCI P&C refers to either the Producer Unit (PU) – which groups numerous Smallholder (SH) or Medium Farms (MF) together under common management – or an individual farm in a Large Farm (LF) context.

- Indicator 1.2.2 (smallholder/ medium farm Producer Units only): *In line with the Better Cotton Initiative Farm Data Requirements Document, the Producer has a system in place to collect, validate and record accurate farm-level data. The Producer ensures that the roles and responsibilities for collection, validation and recording are clearly defined.*

Specific data elements covered under each of the two indicators can be found in the next sections of this document.

Data Privacy

Protecting the privacy and security of personal information is a priority at BCI. This document follows the BCI Data Privacy Policy which is publicly available on the BCI website ([Better Cotton Initiative's Data Privacy Policy - Better Cotton](#)). In case of any further queries on data privacy, please write to data@bettercotton.org.

Required data should be kept for at least two seasons.

Indicator 1.2.1 - Producer level data: Large Farm and Producer Units (PUs)

Data type	Reporting and Timing	Data required	Purpose	Guidance documents
Early Season Producer & Farmer Data	Reported to BCI <u>by end of sowing</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Large Farm or Producer Unit identification information 2. Estimated area of cotton cultivated 3. <u>PUs only</u>: Farmer/ farming household, permanent workers, and sharecroppers' information when applicable (as per farmer list data points) 	<p>To identify farmers participating in the BCI Programme</p> <p>To estimate the land area and potential volumes eligible for BCI certification</p>	Farmer List Data Points Template shared separately
Adjusted cotton area and predicted yields	Reported to BCI <u>by start of harvest</u>	Updated area under BCI Production and predicted yields	To provide an updated estimate of the land area and potential volumes eligible for BCI licensing/certification	Not applicable
Results Indicators Data LF: For each Large Farm PU: for a sample of farmers in a PU	Reported annually <u>12 weeks after the end of harvest</u>	<p>Results Indicator Reporting (RIR) for Farm Results data - this includes inputs (pesticides, fertilisers and water), outputs (yield and profitability) and costs and income from growing cotton (only small and medium farms).</p> <p>It also reports training and capacity strengthening activities attendance and information</p>	To understand impact of sustainability practices at Producer level, and to inform priorities for further improvement	The 'Working with Results Indicators' document can be found here: Demonstrating Results and Impact - Better Cotton

Data type	Reporting and Timing	Data required	Purpose	Guidance documents
		<p>about the activity. This includes the number of registered farmers, household members of registered farmers, non BCI registered farmers and workers receiving training broken down by gender, and by training (including description of training, main and secondary topics and duration).</p> <p>For PUs, some information shall be collected by farmers as part of the farm-level data requirements (e.g. FFBs), but aggregated and checked at PU level.</p>		
Sales records of BCI Cotton	<p><u>No regular reporting required</u>, unless requested by BCI</p>	<p>Records or receipts showing volume of BCI Cotton sold, date and buyer (applicable to all farmers in a PU).</p> <p>For PUs, sales receipts can be kept at farm-level as part of the farm-level data requirement (e.g. FFBs), if the PU can ensure accessibility of the receipts if and when needed.</p>	<p>To enable cross checking or verification of sales of BCI cotton (between farm and gin level), for example if risks of supply chain integrity are raised</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>
Practice adoption data	<p>Maintained throughout the season</p> <p>Reported annually, <u>4 weeks after the end of harvest</u></p>	<p>Farm-level adoption of specific sustainability practices as per the practice adoption guidance</p> <p><u>PUs only</u>: Practice adoption can be maintained for a representative sample of farmers – confirm with BCI Country team.</p>	<p>To assess the extent to which farmers are adopting sustainable practices</p> <p>To evaluate the effectiveness of capacity strengthening and inform future approaches/ activities</p>	<p>BCI guidance on practice adoption</p> <p>(pending, to be uploaded here: Demonstrating Results and Impact - Better Cotton)</p>

Data type	Reporting and Timing	Data required	Purpose	Guidance documents
Self-assessment (exception for US growers- see line below)	<p>New LFs: Self-assessment <u>part 1 submitted by the end of sowing</u> and <u>part 2 submitted 4 weeks after end of harvest</u></p> <p>PU's and all other LFs: Self-assessment submitted <u>4 weeks after end of harvest</u></p>	<p>Data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producer background • Land conversion • Consultation process and findings • Monitoring of improvements • Labour monitoring and remediation (including workers numbers from the labour profile) • P&C indicator level performance • Overall areas of progress and areas of further work <p>For Producer Units: data is gathered through internal assessment from a sample of farmers (at least 10% of Medium Farms or Smallholder Learning Groups)</p>	<p>Ensure that Producer self-monitoring is happening between audits.</p> <p>Support PU's in meeting P1 requirements to conduct monitoring, consultation, and annually review the activity plan (1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3)</p> <p>Support LFs in assessing their level of preparedness for certification (for new LFs)</p> <p>Help auditors assess quality of Producer monitoring (1.1.2 for PU's and 1.1.4 for LFs).</p>	<p>Pending completion of the 2026-27 version. Self-assessment template and overview document will be uploaded to this folder, on the Knowledge Hub: Self-assessment</p>
USA Self-Assessment (applicable to US only)	<p><u>Enrolment version</u> - For any new LFs or LFs starting licensing/certification cycle - <u>Submitted in June</u></p> <p><u>Renewal version</u> - LFs with a Valid License - <u>Submitted in May</u></p>	<p>Data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production Estimate Information • Enrolment in any other programmes/certifications • US Resource Management Plan (Practices) • Info on each principle (Enrolment), info on Pesticide/Chemical use and Labour and DW (enrolment and renewal) • Land conversion • Continuous Improvement areas • Ginner oversight 	<p>Ensure that Producer self-monitoring is happening between audits.</p> <p>Support Producers in assessing their level of preparedness for certification</p> <p>Identify whether any NCs should be resolved before audits occur.</p> <p>Help auditors assess quality of Producer monitoring.</p>	<p>Pending completion of the 2026-27 version. Self-assessment will be uploaded to this folder, on the Knowledge Hub: Self-assessment</p>

Indicator 1.2.2 - Record keeping at the individual farm/ farmer level for Producer Units only

Data type and timing	Reporting and Timing	Data required	Purpose	Reference Documents
Farmer level record-keeping (e.g. Farmer Field Books)	<p>Maintained at farmer level, updated regularly throughout the season and completed by end of harvest.</p> <p>Used by selected PUs for RIR reporting <u>12 weeks after the end of harvest</u></p> <p>Note: For Producer Units who are reporting Results Indicator data for a given season, the farmer level record should include all required data points (e.g. individual applications of pesticide or fertiliser).</p>	<p>Individual farm-level record keeping showing inputs, outputs, and other key activities at farm level.</p>	<p>To enable farmers to track inputs/outputs and key practices at the farm level and identify trends and improvements</p> <p>For PUs, data keeping at the farm level supports Results Indicator Reporting at the PU level</p> <p>Note: Aside from RIR reporting, farmer level records can be more flexible and can be used in different ways by the PU (for example to demonstrate impacts on farmer profitability or yields)</p>	<p>For the data used for RIRs see the 'Working with Results Indicators' document that is available here: Demonstrating Results and Impact - Better Cotton</p>
Sales records of BCI Cotton	<p><u>No regular reporting required</u>, unless requested by Better Cotton Initiative</p> <p>Sales receipts can be kept at farm-level, as long as the PU can ensure accessibility of the receipts if and when needed.</p>	<p>Records or receipts showing volume of BCI Cotton sold, date and buyer (applicable to all farmers in a PU).</p> <p>Note: <i>If receipts are not given by the buyer, another form of written record can be maintained by the farmer or field staff</i></p>	<p>To enable cross checking or verification of sales of BCI Cotton (between farm and gin level), for example if risks of supply chain integrity are raised</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>

Annexe 1: Worker Categories for Labour Profile

Definition of worker: Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) defines workers as all individuals carrying out field-level production work on cotton farms, regardless of gender, background and identity. Workers can be temporary, seasonal or permanent and recruited directly by the farmer or sub-contracted, e.g., through a labour broker. Workers are normally paid for their work but can also be non-wage-earning such as family members or community exchanged labour.

Category of worker	Definition
Family members or family workers	<p>Family members, or family workers in an agricultural context, are persons who help another member of the family run a farm and who are not considered employees.</p> <p>They may be the spouse, daughter or son of the farm owner or other relatives such as a sister or brother, aunt, uncle, or cousin, provided that they live in the same household as the owner or in a house located on the same plot of land and with common household interests.</p>
Migrant worker	<p>Individuals who move to another country or area to engage in a remunerated activity on a cotton farm for a period of time, e.g., seasonal or temporary work. Workers who cannot return to their place of residence at the end of the working day and must be accommodated closer to their place of work are considered migrant workers.</p>
Non-permanent worker	<p>In an agricultural context, non-permanent workers refer to individuals engaged in agricultural activities on a temporary or seasonal basis. This category includes both:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Seasonal Workers:</i> Workers who are often employed during the entire cotton season. These workers tend to be paid by month or in lump sum, or sometimes as a percentage of the yield. They do not have decision-making powers over inputs. • <i>Temporary Workers:</i> Workers who are employed for short durations to fulfil immediate labour requirements, e.g., picking cotton, weeding or other. Temporary workers are normally paid at piece-rate (either for a defined period, e.g., day or hour, or for the volume of cotton picked, the area irrigated or sprayed, etc.). In some countries, such workers may be referred to as 'casual', 'interim', 'contractual' or 'freelance' labour and may have different legal statuses. <p>Unlike permanent workers, non-permanent agricultural workers typically do not enjoy the same level of job security or benefits and are subject to fluctuating employment opportunities depending on the agricultural production cycles and demands.</p>

Category of worker	Definition
Permanent worker	An individual who has a continuous employment with a farm or agricultural enterprise. They typically engage in agricultural activities on a long-term basis, for at least 12 months within a year on an ongoing basis and are paid a regular salary. In the context of Better Cotton Initiative, these workers may support production of other crops within the wider farm area.
Sharecroppers	Better Cotton Initiative defines sharecroppers as individuals who cultivate cotton on land they do not own and compensate landowners through a share of the crop or in-kind labour. Unlike tenants, sharecroppers do not pay fixed cash rents.