



# Engage

Connecting organic cotton farming communities

Issue: December 2011 / January, 2012

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### About Farm Engagement

The Textile Exchange Farm Engagement program helps organic cotton producers build business capacity, access sustainable textile markets, and link to our network of brands, retailers and manufacturers seeking organic cotton.

## Letter from Liesl



Welcome to our December / January edition of Engage. I hope you all enjoyed the holiday season and feeling energised for 2012!

To welcome in the new year we thought we would share with you our memories of 2011 and also our big ambitions for the year ahead. Apologies to those who follow our blog and have heard all this before. We hope you enjoy the 'photo album' as much as we enjoyed putting it together. Photos speak a thousand words and, for me, these images are a heart-warming reminder of how strong our community of organic

cotton has become.

Speaking of strong communities, this year is the International Year of the Coop. What better theme for us to celebrate in combination with Textile Exchange's 10th year anniversary? We will be adding highlights and news about organic cotton cooperatives on our website throughout the year and would be keenly interested to hear any ideas you have for us too.

I'd also like to briefly mention the high-profile Bloomberg report which came out at the end of 2011 featuring illegal child labor discovered in Burkina Faso, supposedly on organic and Fairtrade certified cotton farms. It's a sad and sobering fact that children are exploited on farms, and for all sorts of reasons it's a difficult thing to prevent, but not impossible. Never impossible. We stand by the courageous work producers, brands, and support organisations are doing together to improve lives for poor communities, particularly children, and encourage you to take a balanced look at the report, and response from Fairtrade International and Victoria's Secret. See our Regional Director for Africa, Silvere Tovignan's write up later in this newsletter which outlines the situation and contains links to relevant documents.

With closer working relationships, enough resources, and real dedication, we have seen programs such as organic and Fairtrade work wonders as a tool for changing lives. We encourage all our members to remain courageous and keep building commitments to sustainable development and ethical trade. Remember certification can be the barometer of achievement but shouldn't be a prescriptive top-down

[organic state](#)

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requirement. It's all in the way we use these tools to support our objectives that makes the difference.

As always Engage in 2012 will come out in Spanish and French as well as English. If you have anything you wish to share or communicate via Engage or our website we would be delighted to hear from you. Please do not hesitate to contact me or one of the team. Remember you can access past copies of Engage from our [website](#). We would like to encourage you to forward this link to friends and colleagues, who can find a 'subscribe' button on our Farm Hub as well.

My very best wishes for a fruitful 2012!

Liesl Truscott  
Director, Farm Engagement

PS: For the romantics among us, what better way to celebrate St Valentine's Day than to give a '[Love. Organic Cotton](#)' t-shirt to someone you love... or even a work colleague? We have a special price for the occasion but be quick there's not many left now! Please support our organic cotton farmers and show your love by purchasing a t-shirt this Valentines. Share the Love!



## News on the Farm Hub

Visit the [Organic Cotton Farm Hub](#) for the latest news and to browse our growing learning zone for information and learning materials on organic cotton.

New features on the hub include:



### Fiber to Fashion

Visit the Farm Hub to view our latest learning journey, [Fiber to Fashion](#). Follow the journey of organic cotton fiber from its origins to final product through visual snapshots of production and learn a little about what it takes to produce a fashion statement following organic principles. This is a great introduction to those wishing to find out more about the process of textile production in a simple format, it includes links to further reading, and finishes with a 'catwalk' of stunning snapshots from some of TE's leading brands and retailers!

### Field Diaries

Prabha, Hanna, and Liesl were hosted by Chetna Organic in the Kalahandi District of Odisha (previously known as Orissa).

We visited four of Chetna's organic cotton cluster projects in the region including: a women's self-help group, a new tribal land project in the heart of the Kalahandi forest, and one cluster group accessible only by motorbike and river crossing!

Follow us on our amazing journey [here](#)



### Inspiring moments - send us yours!



Moments in organic cotton that capture our hearts and minds.



[View gallery here](#)

This year at Textile Exchange we are celebrating our 10 year anniversary.

Among other activities, we will be using our birthday to celebrate the pioneers and leaders in organic cotton; including farmers, manufacturers, brands, retailers, and other 'champions' working to progress more sustainable textiles.

[Click here](#) to view our gallery entries to date. January's entry 'Looking back on the

season's harvest at Texas Organic' was submitted by Rita Luppino, Anvil Knitwear, USA. Fresh out for February is 'Mother is the First Teacher, by Jayanti Mishra, Pratibha Syntex Pvt Ltd, India.

We will be growing our gallery of 'Inspiring Moment' snapshots each month, with the pick of the crop gracing our 2013 calendar - a first for TE! To submit an entry, please send your favourite photo and the story behind it (download template [here](#)) to [farm@textileexchange.org](mailto:farm@textileexchange.org)

## Update- Farm and Fibre report 2011 in production

The final components of the 2011 edition of the Farm and Fibre report are now being done. The focus of the report will be on global organic cotton production alongside more detailed insights into the main organic cotton producing regions. New this year will be a special report from Cotton Connect, and the inclusion of production data from other cotton initiatives such as Fairtrade, Better Cotton Initiative and Cotton Made in Africa, and sustainability programs initiated by Cotton Incorporated. We have now made the full Farm and Fibre report from 2010 available [here](#)

For more information contact [Liesl](#) or [Hanna](#).

# The Year in Review

As 2011 comes to a close and we look forward to 2012 for its new opportunities, new challenges, and new achievements, it's a good time to go back over some of the year's headlines.

Also click on the [image](#) to the right for a visual account of 2011 (click will take you to the TE Farm Hub homepage where album is located).



A YEAR IN PICTURES

### JANUARY

**For the first time, Organic Cotton tips 1 Percent of Global Production.** Astounding, considering it was less than 0.1 percent five years ago! Our [Farm & Fiber Report](#) comes out every January with statistics and commentary on the previous year.

### FEBRUARY

**A Record High - Cotton hits \$2 a pound.** This dip in production and the corresponding spike in the commodity market resulted in a trading frenzy, with traders reportedly turning up in the fields with their scales to buy up cotton (some bearing gifts such as coca cola). Many growers kissed good bye to their carefully tended organic (Fairtrade or other 'speciality') cotton to capitalise on the great rate for conventional. This was far from convenient for organic specialists but who could blame them? [The Guardian](#) reports the effect of the price hike on retail [here](#).

**The Peruvian government gives New Expo, an organic textile company and member of Textile Exchange, an Award for Social Responsibility.** This accolade recognises both the company's export business and their contribution to the environment, health and society. Among many things New Expo provide breakfast for 75 children living in extreme poverty every day. See page 5 of Engage [here](#).

**February is Biofach Month.** BioFach, the World Organic Trade Fair, welcomes over 44,500 visitors to the Exhibition Centre Nuremberg from 16-19 February 2011. The Fair provides an opportunity for visitors to explore innovative organic food, textiles, and natural cosmetics all under the one roof. The program of congress events provides a lively exchange of views, including a growing number of textile sustainability panels. Read the full review [here](#).

### MARCH

**On the 28th of March Textile Exchange's new Farm Hub goes Live.** If you haven't paid a visit to our Hub yet now is the time! Go to: <http://farmhub.textileexchange.org/> You will find all you ever wanted to know about organic cotton including our popular 'learning journeys', 'Engage' farm newsletter, farmer visibility tool, video, audio, and a whole lot more.

**The Organic Cluster Roadmap for SE Anatolia is launched.** The Roadmap, 'phase one' of the GAP Organic Agriculture Cluster Development Project, is the first of five main phases of the project and released in March. The Project is implemented by the GAP Regional Development Administration (GAP RDA) and supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The project aims to build sustainable development in the GAP region, through organic agriculture, including cotton. See page 4 of [Engage](#) for more details.

### APRIL

**Textile Exchange in Collaboration, for the first time, with Organic Fashion Izmir holds a 3 day event in Izmir, Turkey.** On the first day, April 14, TE runs a special [seminar](#) on

Sustainable Textiles. OFI was created by the Aegean Clothing Manufacturers' Association, EGSD, to match Turkish producers with foreign buyers interested in organic. The seminar program reflects the growing interest in textile sustainability by manufacturing companies, and is attended by over 200 people.

**The Cotton Industry sees the ban of Endosulfan, an Organochlorine Insecticide used heavily in cotton production.** Endosulfan became a highly controversial agrichemical due to its acute toxicity, potential for bioaccumulation, and role as an endocrine disruptor. Because of its threats to human health and the environment, a global ban on the manufacture and use of endosulfan was negotiated under the [Stockholm Convention](#) in April 2011. Against a backdrop of some controversy, the ban will take effect in mid 2012.

#### **MAY**

**UNCTAD Policy Brief Makes Organic Agriculture a Priority for LDCs.** UNCTAD, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development publishes an official policy brief for the 4th UN Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) held in Turkey (9th to 13th May). The policy brief underlines the importance of sustainable agriculture in addressing hunger and poverty and called for a fundamental shift in national and donor policies. The brief uses the IFOAM definition of organic agriculture and emphasizes the impressive productivity improvements that can be achieved in Africa with organic agriculture. UNCTAD in conjunction with UNEP also releases a short film 'Organic Agriculture: A Good Option for LDCs' at the Conference, which features IFOAM World Board member Moses Muwanga from Uganda. You can access the [Policy Brief](#), [Full Report](#), and a [Short Film](#) here.

#### **JUNE**

**June 21st sees the Signing of the Dhawad Declaration.** In a common declaration, drawn up in Dhawad, concerned stakeholders commit themselves to join forces to promote non-GM and organic cotton through progressing the availability of non-GM and non-hybrid seed development. More information, including a copy of the Dhawad Declaration, can be found [here](#).

**Textile Exchange gets together with Gossypium and Mantis World to produce 'Love. Organic Cotton.' our first fund-raising t-shirt.** All proceeds from sales leading up to our annual conference go to supporting farmer participation. We are proud - and thankful - to say enough t-shirts are sold to cover almost five farmers. But the project continues, we want to raise funds to support training and workshop attendance by organic farmers at significant regional events. Please help by visiting [Gossypium](#) and purchasing yourself, family member, friend, or team mate a fabulous new year's organic cotton tee now!

#### **JULY**

**On July 6th Helmy Abouleish is Released from Detention in Cairo's Tora Prison after 100 Days.** Helmy, CEO of the successful Egyptian company SEKEM which specialises in biodynamic and organic products (including cotton), was jailed during the Cairo uprising for his prominent role in Egyptian public life. On release, Helmy immediately returns to the SEKEM farm and to his workplace. In a conversation with Maximilian Boes after his return, Helmy tells the story of his time in detention and the reasons for his being taken into custody in the first place. He also talks about his plans for his future and that of SEKEM. Read the interview [here](#). Co-incidentally, SEKEM this year was selected as one of 16 new sustainability champions by the World Economic Forum. Find out more [here](#).

**The Textile Exchange Midyear Predictions Report Forecasts a Decline in Organic Production after 5 years of exceptional growth (>500 percent since 2006).** Reasons for decline revolve around India's reduced output (India produces around 80 percent of the world's organic cotton). Our 2011 report will be out shortly but we can say that our early predictions are looking fairly accurate, with a 20-25 percent global decline. Reassuringly, activities in India to improve the situation, including seed availability, are gaining momentum. Overall, TraceNet should benefit the industry by improving transparency, thus rewarding the many diligent, robust organic cotton producers in India. Read the full report [here](#).

## SUMMER

**The Summer of 2011 is remembered in Texas as one of the Driest on Record.** Drought in Texas, alongside other zones across the world, dealt farmers a harsh reminder of how precious water is for life on earth. Whether it is an example of the longer term impacts of climate change, irregular weather patterns, or part of a cyclic weather system, droughts hit Texan farmers hard this year. Dryland farmers (which include most of our organic cotton farmers) gave up on producing much cotton this year. Irrigated cotton is reportedly down by about 60 percent. Take a look at this clever [Global Drought Monitor](#) to see where the drought hit hardest.

Droughts, floods, and other weather events will, as usual, play a role in yields each year. But a changing climate over a longer period of time will bring changes to the global distribution of cotton. This year, Peter Ton, an independent consultant, prepared a report for the International Trade Centre on this very subject. See: [Cotton and Climate Change - Impacts and Options to Mitigate and Adapt here](#).

## AUGUST

**H&M Top the Charts in Textile Exchange Market Report released this Month.** Textile Exchange continues to [report](#) market growth in organic cotton textiles. Global retail sales of organic cotton apparel, home, and personal care products increased 20 percent to just over \$5.16 billion, an increase from \$4.3 billion in 2009. The 'Top Ten' organic cotton-using brands and retailers globally in 2010 were (in order by rank): H&M (Sweden), C&A (Belgium), Nike, Inc. (Oregon, USA), Zara (Inditex) (Spain), adidas (Germany), Greensource (Washington, USA), Anvil Knitwear (New York, USA), Target (Minnesota, USA), Disney Consumer Products, (California, USA), and the Otto Group (Germany).

## SEPTEMBER

**Textile Exchange takes its annual conference to beautiful Barcelona!** This year we held our usual 'Organic Cotton Track' amongst a full suite of textile sustainability tracks. Our panels of world experts and entrepreneurs discussed and debated topics such as community investment, marketing, and value chain partnerships with a markedly maturing wisdom and confidence. We also managed to squeeze in a 'Pre-conference cotton dialogue' before the main event. Three roundtable discussions are held over the course of the day, focussing on non-GM seed availability, models for responsible trading, and sustaining growth. Hear what some of our topic experts had to say on the day. Catch the soundbites [here](#).

This year we were thrilled to see significant number of leading organic cotton producers active in Barcelona. Download our beautiful conference delegates' guide to organic cotton [here](#).

**The 17th Organic World Congress (OWC) is held in Gyeonggi Paldang, South Korea from September 26 to October 1.** TE's Managing Director La Rhea Pepper manages a back-to-back speaking tour, leaving Barcelona behind and heading south for the event. The [IFOAM](#) bi-annual attracted close to 2000 participants from 76 countries. Side events included the organic world fair and festival, and a Pre-Conference Organic Textiles workshop this year, reflecting the growing interest in organic fibres and apparel.

## OCTOBER

**Chetna Organic wins Award for Climate Change Mitigation.** In the ProClimate Challenge, sponsored by HIVOS and Progresso, Chetna Organic Farmers Association won an award for their work in mitigating climate change. Well done Chetna! Read more [here](#).

**BioRe hold their legendary open house in Indore, India.** My colleagues Prabha Nagarajan, Hanna Denes, and I were thrilled to be spending the 24th and 25th of November with Remei clients and other friends. The annual event hosted by Patrick Hohmann, Rajeev Baruah and his wife Ritu is the classic 'Seeing is Believing'. These folk are light-years ahead of the game: pioneers, change-makers, and industry leaders - and now I've seen it for myself! BioRe, and their founding partner Remei AG, turns 20 next year and is living proof of how organic cotton systems, offer social and ecological sustainability in cotton production. Follow their value chain [here](#).

**Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative (TOCMC) holds their annual Fall Field Day.** The event provides an opportunity for all members of the supply chain to learn about the processes behind organic cotton. This year, the event offered an up-close look at the driest year in Texas' history. TOCMC is predicting organic cotton production will drop to less than half of last year's total. In a year like this, farmers selling their cotton on the conventional market face the risk of losing buyers to other markets this year and struggling to get them back in years to come. For the TOCMC, because of the commitment of brands to the organic cotton farmers, the farmers know they will have a place to sell their cotton for years to come. See an interview with members of the TOCMC on [Youtube](#).

## NOVEMBER

**Peru Bans GMOs for next 10 Years...** the rest of the world will be watching, not least neighbouring Latin American countries. The President of Peru, President Humala, signed the 10-year moratorium to the introduction of genetically modified (GM) seed. For a sector escalating in its use of GM seed, this law will prevent the growing of transgenic cotton in Peru and protect the country's biodiversity. It is also expected to increase food exports in the coming years by about one billion U.S. dollars. Read more [here](#).

**On November 21st Pants to Poverty break world record!** Ben Ramsden has broken a new world record with his fairtrade organic underwear brand Pants to Poverty, by managing to fit the largest number of people ever into a pair of pants! Ben encouraged over 50 commuters to strip down to their underwear at Canary Wharf in London this week, and jump inside a giant pair of underpants to help raise awareness of ethical working practices. Read more about the Make Poverty History campaign [here](#).

**The One World 'VIP' Award Goes to the late Wangari Maathai.** The 'Mother of Trees' who passed away only a few weeks prior to the celebration will hold a special place in many hearts. Wangari was chosen for this award as she personifies the One World Award, especially the aspect of 'peaceful community building'. As a tireless campaigner and activist for environment conservation, democracy, human and especially women rights, peace and justice, she has put the objectives of the One World Award into action on a global level and with the greatest of impacts. The partners of the One World Award (including International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and the pioneering German organic company Rapunzel Naturkost) presented the award to Wangari Maathai's daughter Wanjira Maathai at the UNEP headquarters in Nairobi. The fullpress release can be read [here](#).

## DECEMBER

**North Carolina Celebrates its First Harvest of Organic Cotton.** Plus there's a short video accompanying the press release which is fun to watch. It's got a wonderful sound track with banjo toe-tapping feel-good vibes. Watch the short video [here](#) and get those toes tapping.

**Bloomberg address bonded child labor in Burkina Faso by attacking integrity of Organic Fairtrade Cotton systems.** Drawing readers into the story of Clarisse a 13 year old girl, reporter Cam Simpson shows the world the tragedy of illegal child labor. Clarisse's sobering story can be used as a call to action for the cotton industry, and society at large, but should not be an opportunity to make accusations against worthy 'movements' aimed at improving livelihoods. Whether Clarisse was indeed bonded to a Fairtrade organic cotton farmer has not been proven. Furthermore, whether Clarisse is one account or whether she represents many is not explained in the article. Most of us would argue that one account of illegal child labor is indeed one too many, but what we can be sure of is that it's 100fold worse on conventional farms, where there is no training or monitoring. What we do know is, come harvest-time it's very difficult to keep track of who's doing what where. If we want to do something constructive with the Bloomberg report let's go beyond certification and make business relationships even more committed, so we know they are working for all. You can read a deeper analysis of the situation in my earlier blog and please make comment [here](#).

Whether it's the value-addition of organic, the stewardship of the land and rivers, whether it's the element of innovation needed for the 21st Century, or the luxurious boutique quality of the organically produced fiber that appeals, there is much to celebrate the world over. We need organic cotton from Burkina Faso to North Carolina to help us do good in the world, and in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, Be the Change.

## The year ahead - 5 ambitions for organic cotton in 2012

The Farm Team brings you a regular digest of the latest developments in organic cotton farming, sustainability, impacts, and responsible business practice. An extract of the latest blog by Liesl Truscott, director of Farm Engagement, is copied below, visit the [Farm Blog](#) Hub to read the full posting.

*"As I sit back at my desk, breathe in, and think about "what next?" "What now for 2012? And "What do we want to be able to look back on this time next year and feel a sense of satisfaction... of purpose... of really making a difference?"*

We saw 2010 begin to send ripples of uncertainty down many people's spine. Organic cotton production and markets had been increasing beyond our wildest dreams, despite the economic crisis a few years back, the on-going value chain transparency problems, and the patchy investment in capacity building on the ground. Production continued to grow, particularly in India, with the farmers taking pretty much all the risks. Come 2011, some might say our bubble had burst. We saw prices spike for raw materials having a knock-on effect for organic cotton, and an on-going conservativeness in the market (despite the strong placement of 'ethical' products and the increased interest in 'sustainability'). We also saw confusion and competition, rather than seamless collaboration amongst the 'more sustainable' cotton initiators. And possibly worst of all (in my opinion) a relentless message to get prices for sustainable options down to the same price as 'conventional'; all well and good if the conventional price reflects a 'fair price' but stressful for all - except perhaps the more naive of the world's shoppers - if it doesn't.

### **So what now for organic cotton?**

I see 2012 as a year for maturation and stabilisation of the organic cotton sector, ensuring the positive impacts are reaching each and every farmer, and that all organic cotton projects are excelling. Our pioneers and innovators must take a strong leadership role. We need their expertise, experience, and quite frankly their conviction to guide the industry to the place we know it can be.

Below are my top five ambitions, some personal, but mostly aspirations I know I share with my colleagues, and hopefully the industry at large.

1. Seed security
2. Responsible business practice and investment in organic cotton
3. Further establishment of organic as the 'Gold Standard' in cotton production sustainability
4. Promote leadership and continuous improvement
5. More - and smarter - collaboration across the cotton initiatives

To read the full blog posting and find out more about these ambitions and Textile Exchange's plans for 2012 click [here](#).



## The year of the Co-Operative

2012 has been named the International year of Co-operatives by the United Nations. Through the practice of naming any given year as an international year, the UN draws attention to issues of global significance.

The UN's goals for the International Year of Co-operatives are to:

- Increase public awareness about co-operatives and their contributions to socio-economic development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.
- Promote the formation and growth of co-operatives.
- Encourage governments to establish policies, laws and regulations conducive to the formation, growth and stability of co-operatives.



*"Co-operatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility."*

*Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General*

To read more about these goals and events and activities planned for the IYC, click [here](#).

We will be posting news and awareness-raising stories on the Farm Hub. Please feel free to send us information you feel should be posted. We would love to hear how the organic cotton community is participating in the International Year of the Co-operative, if you have a story to tell, please contact us on [farm@textileexchange.org](mailto:farm@textileexchange.org).

### Regional Focus : Africa

## News - The 2nd African Organic Conference - Call for Abstracts

**2nd African Organic Conference  
Lusaka, Zambia. May 2 – 4, 2012**

**Ubuntu!**

The organic conference (AOC) slated for 2 - 4 May 2012 in Lusaka is the second African Organic Conference (AOC2) whose objective is to report and further promote mainstreaming of organic agriculture in African Government policies, in African intergovernmental organizations as well as among development partners. The objectives of the conference are to:

- present successful small-scale organic agriculture projects and case studies in organic production including biodiversity and seed production, livestock, climate mitigation, demonstrating impacts on food security;
- present successful organic agriculture projects and case studies in marketing and trade of organic products, including how organic guarantee systems can be shaped to be supportive of both local, regional and external trade;
- highlight successful initiatives and case studies in public policy, research and sector development. Based on this it will propose ways ahead for organic agriculture to reach its full potential and

contribute substantially to the African Agriculture and development agenda.

For more information, click [here](#) to visit the conference website.

## Feature - Illegal child labor accusations in organic and fair trade cotton farm in Burkina Faso

Cam Simpson visited Burkina Faso during December 2011 made an investigation into child labor in cotton farming. He wrote a report made public on the [Bloomberg channel](#) accusing organic and fair trade cotton promoters in Burkina Faso to having used illegal child labor. The allegations made by the author of the report have been contested by the National Cotton Growers Union of Burkina Faso (UNPCB). [UNPCB](#) (who are supported by the Swiss development NGO [Helvetas](#) in training smallholder families in organic production techniques) went back to the village cited and found people interviewed in the Bloomberg report. UNPCB discovered many contradictions and inconsistencies in the Bloomberg allegation. They have reacted by writing to Bloomberg asking them to retract their report and make an apology to the Burkinabé cotton growers. Bloomberg then stands by their allegations and refuse to retract the concerned report. [Fairtrade International](#), the organization that provides fair trade certification for this cotton has immediately started tracking back the control system and has not yet made public the results of these investigations.

This scenario has put all actors involved in the partnership with UNPCB under scrutiny, including Victoria's Secret, the retail company owned by [Limited Brands](#) that sells organic textiles made from Burkinabé organic cotton, Investigations will be done by the U.S. government's Homeland Security Investigations division.

At Textile Exchange, we are not in the position to point out who is right and who is wrong. We have prepared this short note to raise awareness about the situation within our community. We believe there is never enough that can be done to support producer groups find ways to build capacity in all areas of social and environmental performance and we will be reinforcing this message within our community of organic and fair trade cotton producer groups, trading partners, brands, and retailers, on key issues that potentially affect the sector, including child labor.



Reported by Silvere Tovignan  
Director for Africa  
Textile Exchange

Further links:

Limited Brands comments posted on their website [here](#)

Helvetas response to the report [here](#)

UNPCB letter to Bloomberg embedded in the Africa Guide blog [here](#)

Liesl's blog on this subject [here](#)

## Regional Focus : Latin America

### Feature - Notes on Controlling Pests in Organic Cotton

By Walter Cordova [1], Leslie Nonato (1) & Alfonso Lizárraga [2]

#### Introduction

The Chincha Valley, is characterized by a long history of cotton. Currently there are 8.942 ha planted, of which approximately 120 ha belong to the organic production program of Oro Blanco company. Leslie and Walter are two young students of biology at the Federico Villarreal National University, that evaluate the biodiversity of carabids (Carabidae) and ladybugs (Coccinellidae) in organic cotton farms and conventional cotton farms using Tangüis variety. "There is still 3 to 4 months for harvesting, Leslie Nonato told me, for the time being the *Pterostichus* genus is dominant among the beetles". Likewise, Walter Cordova said "the fluctuation of ladybugs is interesting, they increasing with aphid population". We are interested to know these biological controls are good indicators in an organic cotton system.

#### What is the most important pest that threatens cotton crops in Latin America?

Of all the pests that affect cotton farming, the most important in Latin America are probably the "tobacco budworm" (*Heliothis virescens*), the "pink bollworm" (*Pectinophora gossypiella*) and the "boll weevil" (*Anthonomus grandis*). Of these, the boll weevil is considered to be the most threatening given the difficulty of controlling it, first of all, due to the lack of natural controllers in regions where it has been introduced and, secondly, due to the inadequate use of chemical insecticides, which results in higher costs of production. The vast distribution of the boll weevil populations (between 20 and 95 km) and the decreased crop yield due to the attack of the larvae in the flower buds and cotton buds, and also the damage that the females cause by laying their eggs, represent major obstacles for cotton farmers. The boll weevil is native to the south of Mexico and Guatemala. This pest is important because it is responsible for 20 - 40% of the losses in cotton crops and requires approximately \$143 USD/ha in order to bring it under control.

The boll weevil is spread throughout Latin America in various countries: Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Dominican Republic and Venezuela. This pest is not present in some countries, such as Peru, which is why it is considered a quarantine insect. In countries where the boll weevil is present, such as Colombia and Argentina, control measures are taken in order to avoid its spread to cotton regions currently unaffected by the pest.

In some countries, biological controllers have been used to control this pest. In Colombia, for example, the wasp *Bracon kirkpatricki* (Hym. Braconidae) has been used by the inoculation method. However, it is important to study the adaptation of the native natural controllers when this pest is introduced into a new ecosystem or country. An important aspect in the control of the boll weevil is to monitor the resistance to chemical insecticides in conventional systems and incorporate it as a component in the Integrated Pest Management. However, as an additional component, it would be important to include the effect of these conventional fields on the organic cotton fields. In countries where the boll weevil is exotic, that is, where it is not present and it is considered a quarantine pest, permanent preventive monitoring has to be carried out using pheromones and thus determine immediate control measures when there is the presence of the pest in any given region.

#### Role of predators on organic cotton farms

The term predator describes those insects that eat other insects directly. The importance of the predators is usually a very determining factor, and there are numerous studies that give evidence

of insects and spiders in crops that have not been treated with pesticides, or where, in any case, low-toxicity products are used.

There are various species of predator insects, mainly in the order Coleoptera (ladybugs, beetles), Odonata (dragonflies), Neuroptera (Chrysopidae) and Hemiptera (red spot assassin bugs). As far as the eating habits are concerned, there are two types of predators: masticators (ladybugs) and ground beetles, which simply chew and devour their prey; and those that have oral suction apparatuses that suck the juice from their prey (red spot assassin bugs), chrysopae larvae, etc.

The advantages of biological control are essential in reducing the exposure of the farmers, laborers and the environment to non-biodegradable agrochemicals, and to reducing residues in the final products that are put on the market or consumed, thus lowering the risk of contamination. All things considered, biological control can be more economical than chemical control, because in the case of the latter the farmer has to take into account the cost of the raw material and the time for the spraying-not to mention having to spray quite often. In the case of biological control, the release time is shorter and once an establishment is achieved, the work is done.



*Hippodamia convergens*

The study of the factors that enable the attraction and manipulation of natural enemies must be encouraged in order to favor the different programs for increasing and conserving biological control agents. In the next few years, biological control may be increased due to the concurrence of various factors, such as: increase in the cost of insecticides, increase in the number of pests resistant to pesticides, society's concern for contaminating the environment with pesticides, and the increase of regulations that will limit the use of pesticides.

### **The role of parasitoids in organic cotton farming**

In organic cotton farming, the action of parasitoid insects combined with predators helps to maintain the populations of pest insects. The effectiveness of parasitoids as biological controllers depends on the climate factors that are present in the farming and the availability of food for the adults (floral nectaries). Parasitoids are found among the order Hymenoptera (wasps) and Diptera (flies).



Evaluation of lady bugs

Micro-wasps *Trichogramma* play a key role by feeding upon the eggs of leaf-eating worms, avoiding damage to the larvae. For example, *Aphidius sp.* and *Triaspis vesticida* (micro-wasps of the family Braconidae) feed on the pupas of the cotton aphid and larvae of the Peruvian weevil, respectively. In addition, some species of this family also feed on the larvae of leaf-eating worms. The family Chalcididae includes parasitoids of weevil larvae and other coleopteron. Among the dipterans, representatives of the family Tachinidae feed on the larvae of leaf-eating worms and assassin bug pupae (for example of the species *Dysdercus*), and some members of the family Chamaemydidae feed on mealybugs.

In managing pests that have been introduced, studies are conducted on the time it takes native parasitoids to adapt to these pests and their effectiveness, with the aim of coming up with adequate measures for the maintenance of these native parasitoids in the event that they might be

effective (cultivation of secondary plants as a source of nectaries). When a native parasitism is not observed, parasitoids are introduced in the places of origin of the pests introduced.

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## Regional Focus : India

### Feature - A roadmap to convert Madhya Pradesh into an organic state by 2015

A study titled 'Madhya Pradesh: Inching towards Organic Farming' was released in January 2012 by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM).

The study details the economic benefits that organic agriculture could bring to the state, estimating that organic farming has the potential for significant employment creation and wealth creation. The report sets out a roadmap of recommendations and supporting actions. These include:

- The proposed formation of a National Commission for Organic Agriculture and an Organic Food Council
- Recognition of organic agriculture in central government policies to ensure that the organic sector is addressed in government programmes and budget allocations
- Development of regional action plans for organic farming
- Promoting the concept of organic villages in each district to encourage the use of organic fertilizers
- Creation of development programmes to encourage entrepreneurial skills and support with certification and market access.

Financial success is being carefully considered, with ASSOCHAM planning to organise product fairs and buyer-seller meetings to enable farmers to get premium pricing for their produce, and advocating that the State government plays a proactive role by providing credit through co-operatives, commercial, and regional rural banks, to enhance adoption of organic farming in the state.

Read more about the roadmap here: <http://www.assochem.org/prels/shownews.php?id=3282>



**Above:** veteran organic cotton farmers, bioRe, Madhya Pradesh, India

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We hope you enjoy reading Engage. Please feel free to contact any of the team, we welcome your feedback and ideas for improvement.