



EXPERT'S INSIGHT - INDIA

Biocoton: Working for multiple benefits in India.

Himshikha Development Project (HDP) is a sustainable cotton project established to provide overseas market linkages to the farmers in India on a long term relationship basis. Our ethos is to be compliant with the principles of fair exchange but also to consider the factors which build market acceptance.

The current project is based on research conducted in a pilot project in India between 2006 and 2009, in which a total of 400 farmers and their families participated. Data was collected from the farmers' families including education and health. In addition to complying with all Organic and Fairtrade standards, HDP has undertaken several other sustainable initiatives such as organizing health camps, distributing free pumps, utensils, pre-financing and so on.

Our work is based on an understanding of what farmers need and what customers need. Often the needs coincide, and can be seen as two sides of the same coin.

- Farmers need a minimum support price, and buyers need the best, stable price.
- Farmers need a sale guarantee, and buyers need reliability in the supply chain.
- Farmers need good health and access to medical facilities; buyers need pride in being part of a noble initiative.
- Farmers need education and training; buyers need education for them and their customers.
- Farmers need insurance; buyers need transparency, stability and compliance with regulations.
- Farmers need independence; buyers need competitive advantage
- Farmers need recognition; buyers need a one stop shop.

When looked at in a holistic manner, these needs can coincide, or be met for both parties. Today the HDP can celebrate success in a number of areas. We had 100 mt of orders booked in 2009 for 2010-11 - the majority of our clients have stuck with the project and remain faithful despite the poor economic conditions. A commitment to procure 150 mt of seed cotton has already been made this year (2010) with the farmers, and we forecast 750 mt for 2011-12.

Most clients have visited the project in India, and farmers are benefitting from the responsible community created by the project. We are working on the best sustainable market price through the HDP method described above, and adding to economic sustainability through long term contracts with the farmers. Our objective remains to focus on the global market, including developing consumers' price acceptance, and to extend the project to different countries.

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