



# Engage

Connecting organic cotton farming communities

Issue: October / November, 2011

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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 the October / November edition of the Engage Newsletter. I hope you are enjoying the new format!

This bimonthly Issue brings you an update on an emerging Global Seed Movement. A growing number of individuals and organisations are reaching out and making contact 'organically' across the cotton growing world. This grassroots movement is set to create change and holds all the ingredients for success: a diverse mix of experts and stakeholders with a common cause, and a strong desire to see change. Please take some time to read the co-authored 'special feature' later in this Issue. Please have your say on the [Global Organic Cotton Community Platform](#) currently running an online dialogue on this topic now! Or contact me directly to find out how you can get involved.

From Africa, Silvere reports on work by OBEPAB and the ministry of agriculture in the elimination of endosulfan in Benin. Our colleague, Lazare Yombi also reports from West Africa on how organic cotton growing is bringing the Peulh ethnicity out of isolation. Alfonso highlights Peru's recently acquired commitment to being GMO-free and a rising voice in Paraguay. The Peruvian government has recently declared that it's too early to tell if genetically modified crops are the way to go, instead opting for the precautionary principle for the next 10 years as the Country focuses on safe, healthy, and prosperous agricultural growth and livelihoods. From India, Prabha reports on the 2011 BioFach.

As always Engage will come out in Spanish and French as well as English. If you have anything you wish to share or any feedback on our new style e-newsletter please do not hesitate to contact me or one of the team.

My very best wishes,  
Liesl Truscott, Director, Farm Engagement

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## New Welcome to our new TE Farm Blog

Alongside Engage, the TE Farm Engagement Team will be bringing you regular bite-size chunks of news and views on all things 'farm'. Through the Blog we hope to provide you with more timely information, shaped by topical events, and your requests!



We continue to produce our in-depth farm newsletter 'Engage'. However, we have converted our monthly to a bimonthly release and are buffering our newsletter with regular Blog entries.

We remain just as committed to Engage and will still be providing you with the same well researched and comprehensive articles from across the organic cotton growing world; in English, French, and Spanish. Back-dated issues can be found here (<http://farmhub.textileexchange.org/farm-library/newsletters>). From time-to-time regional messages from Latin America will also be in Spanish, and from West Africa will be in French.

As always, we look forward to your feedback and hope you enjoy our new Farm Blog. We would be delighted to hear your questions - and answer them through the Blog. Please send questions or suggested topics into us (by emailing [farm@textileexchange.org](mailto:farm@textileexchange.org)) and we will publish our answer in the next Blog entry.

To take a look at our first few Farm Blogs click [here](#)

## 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.

### Featured news items include:

- The California Apparel News interviews Liesl Truscott, Farm Engagement Director, Textile Exchange to dig deeper into the different approaches to 'sustainable cotton'. Read the interview [here](#)
- World Cotton Research Conference held in Mumbai discusses new pests in Bt cotton. read more here
- Participatory cotton breeding for organic and low input farming in India. read more here

- Chetna Organic Farms Association wins the ProClimate Challenge. [read more here](#)

**TRADING POST:** As reported in the last edition of Engage, the [Trading Post](#) is now up and running. As you will see there is more work to be done here. Textile Exchange is working closely with Jesse Last at [Root Capital](#); [Graham Burden](#), Sustainable Textiles Consultant; and Keith Tyrell, [PAN UK](#) (alongside some of our leading member brands and producer groups) to better explain not only the ingredients of establishing sound and responsible trade, but also the benefits or 'shared value' of doing so. We shall report back as this part of our website evolves and welcome any thoughts you might have. Please contact [hanna@textileexchange.org](mailto:hanna@textileexchange.org) to join.

## Update- Farm and Fibre report 2011 in production

Data collection is in progress for the 2011 edition of the Farm and Fibre report. 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 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 Inc. We have now made the full Farm and Fibre report from 2010 available [here](#)

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

### Out and About

## Texas, USA - Fall Field Day

Textile Exchange's Ashley Gill attended the Fall Field Day this year and reports back... At the end of October, the Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative (TOCMC) held their annual Fall Field Day. Forty-five people attended this year's tour which included a visit to the classing office, a cotton gin, a compost supplier, and several area farms. The annual event provides an opportunity for all members of the supply chain to learn about the processes behind organic cotton and see the specific challenges and opportunities that organic cotton farmers encounter. This year, the event offered an up-close look at the driest year in Texas' history. The effects of the drought have nearly devastated cotton production. 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 Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative, their relationship with their buyers extends beyond the present year. 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. The business relationship is one built on people, and not commodities.

Kelly Pepper, General Manager of TOCMC, said that the Fall Field Day presents "*an opportunity for people interested in organic to see first-hand the farms and the infrastructure, and to have a chance to meet and get to know farmers and their families*".

See an interview with members of the TOCMC on [Youtube](#).



Fall field day

## Brussels, Europe - Organic agriculture proving to hold key to mitigating and adapting to climate change

On the 18th October 2011 TE's Liesl Truscott attended the meeting of the Round Table on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change RTOACC (RTOACC) held in the European Parliament in Brussels. She reports back here about the significant advances in understanding the role organic agriculture plays in addressing climate change.

Over a number of years research into the role organic agriculture plays in mitigating the effects of climate change have been carried out. The Brussels meeting was a report to the European parliament members presenting results and findings. It's clear from the presentations that organic agriculture has an extremely promising role in sequestering carbon through the biological activities of organic soil matter. Potential schemes for promoting carbon sequestration, were tabled, and include 'carbon farming', carbon trading, and other incentivising schemes which would allow organic farmers to capitalise on their soil fertility investments even further.



In addition, research into the role of organic agriculture in helping farmers adapt to climate change is also showing promising results. It's well understood that organic agriculture performs well under extreme climatic conditions, with crops surviving better in floods or droughts, and usually providing higher yields than conventionally produced crops. It's also evident that farmers in marginal growing areas, when investments in organic farming systems, are rewarded with higher yields. One of the next steps for the RTOACC is to look at ways the group can contribute to supporting small scale or marginalised farmers in resilience farming techniques to better adapt and thrive in a changing climate.

The RTOACC is a multi-stakeholder initiative, which was founded in 2009 in Copenhagen, at the

United Nations Climate Change Conference. The activities are supported by the Food and Agriculture Organisation FAO. Andreas Gatterer of FiBL chairs the Group, and members include IFOAM, Louis Bolk Institute, Soil & More, Naturland, Soil Association, Textile Exchange, Agroecologica, Hivos, among others.

To find out more about the RTOACC and its work to date please visit:

<http://www.organicandclimate.org/rtoaac-home.html>

For more reading on the subject please take a look at <http://farmhub.textileexchange.org/learning-zone/environmental-impacts/climate-change>

IFOAM [http://www.ifoam.org/growing\\_organic/1\\_arguments\\_for\\_oa/environmental\\_benefits/climate\\_change.html](http://www.ifoam.org/growing_organic/1_arguments_for_oa/environmental_benefits/climate_change.html)

FiBL <http://www.fibl.org/en/themen/climate-change.html>

and the [Rodale Institute](#)

## Special Feature - Global Seed Movement grows 'organically'

**By Prabha Nagarajan and Liesl Truscott, Textile Exchange, Monika Messmer, FiBL, Bo van Elzakker, Agro Eco-LBI, Rajeev Baruah, bioRe India, Arun Ambatipudi, Chetna Organic, Jane Dever, AgriLife Texas, Damien Sanfilippo, Fairtrade International, and Ben Ramsden, Pants to Poverty**

Obtaining non-GM / low input cotton seed is becoming increasingly difficult. This is a problem affecting organic cotton growers globally. It is also an issue for Fairtrade farmers, and conventional cotton farmers wishing to use 'high performing' but 'low input' cultivars since choice is restricted and the majority of R&D goes into GM seed which are significantly more expensive. Also, in some smaller producing countries, the development of new cultivars has practically come to a standstill as public funds for breeding have been drying up. This in its turn is preparing the ground for the entry of commercial seed companies. These companies usually come with hybrid seeds for high input cotton farming. To counterbalance these developments, a Global 'Low Input' Seed Movement is growing.



### Background

This issue of non-GM seed shortage is well known to stakeholders within the organic, Fairtrade, and smallholder cotton communities. Positive steps are now being taken in India to address seed supply on a collective basis, benefiting Indian production - at least 80 percent of the world's organic cotton, and a significant proportion of the world's Fairtrade. Other countries, particularly in Africa, are either experiencing or beginning to experience problems with the seed supply of non-GM and/or high-performing (non-GM) cultivars. There is increasing, often political pressure by GM cotton stakeholders to introduce GM cotton to currently GM-free countries. Organic cotton projects in Mali and Burkina Faso are also beginning to generate their own non-GMO seeds.

A discussion on the [Global Organic Cotton Community Platform](#) in November 2009 about 'Seed availability in organic cotton production' concluded that:

- The majority of available cultivars are not adapted to organic production. Most 'improved' cultivars are selected for responsiveness to fertilisers and hence do not perform well in most organic situations
- The available (non-GMO) cultivars are not further improved (bred) anymore and therefore are not adapted to changing climate conditions
- Seed companies prefer not to provide chemically untreated seed
- Large seed companies are no longer offering open pollinated or non-GM cultivars

Two years later the situation in India is most alarming with 90% of the conventional cotton production is

based on Bt-cotton and the non-GM cotton seed chain totally collapsed. In addition, the organic cotton production is severely threatened by genetic and physical contamination of GM cotton. In West Africa, particularly Burkina Faso GM cotton is advancing very fast, in some cases leading to the de-certification of sizeable groups. In Texas, organic cotton farmers are saving seed from older cultivars. In Uganda many farmers lost their certification when seed was treated with an unauthorised chemical (and DDT was sprayed in storages in an anti-malaria campaign).



Counting the bolls

As a result, organic cotton producers are forced to find their own solutions:

- Cultivar trials to identify useful current available cultivars for the short term
- Maintenance strategies to prevent degradation of existing cultivars
- Continuous development of cultivars suitable for organic cotton growing conditions (participatory breeding), after identifying traits for improvement
- Seed multiplication, storage, alternative seed treatment, and timely distribution at reasonable cost

### **What has happened so far?**

Some initiatives are already underway. In different countries, organic cotton groups are getting together to communicate with cotton seed providers.

In India, there is an increasing number of programs in place, attempting to address this issue. Programs range from institution-led research (specialising in improving non-GM seed breeds, and also working on indigenous cotton species) through to seed bank collections (preserving local cultivars of rare and endangered indigenous cotton) and early seed multiplication projects (producer groups working to build seed supply capacity and commercially viable distribution).

FIBL (a private Research Institute of Organic Agriculture) is working with Indian cotton farmers and breeders to improve non-GM cotton options. Organic cotton farmers are facing increased difficulties in finding suitable cultivars in India. Participatory plant breeding (PPB) offers a great opportunity for developing locally adapted cultivars as well as for maintaining and increasing genetic diversity. The close collaboration of farmers with breeders and extension agents in cultivar development allows the identification of cultivars that suit the actual circumstances of the resource-poor farmers where marginal production systems prevail.



Emasculation or cross pollination of parental lines (photo Ben Ramsden, Pants to Poverty)

Another project in India, as part of an organic and fair trade cotton program, the Child Labour Free Seed Project has been established and supported by Pi Foundation - a charity set up by Pants to Poverty to develop social businesses in textile value chains. Further, CottonConnect and C&A are partnering EcoFarms and Pratibha, Vasudha Organic in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra in India, to develop a large scale three year organic cotton seed programme.

In Burkina Faso, the organic cotton producers set up a breeding program in 2008. In India and Uganda trials were started in 2009 to compare the performance of cotton cultivars. More needs to be done; a concerted effort must be made to secure the future of organic cotton growing.

Dr Jane Dever is heading a team at the Texas AgriLife Research, Lubbock, TX, USA looking at traits of non-

GM seedbreeding varieties for use in Texas organic production, and have been involved in developing protocols for maintaining purity in classical breeding programs in a country dominated by GM traits. More can be read [here](#).

### Landmarks this year:

**The India National Workshop, Dharwad 21 June 2011.** A national workshop in Dharwad was led by bioRe India Ltd, the Research Institute of Agricultural Science Dharwad, and FIBL Switzerland. This event attracted farmers, seed breeders, NGOs, and other stakeholders in non-GM seed supply throughout India. The 'Dharwad Declaration' is the first formal agreement by stakeholders to work collectively to improve availability of well-performing non-GM seed (including an emphasis on progressing non-hybrids) and to bring actions to scale. The Declaration was signed by 32 individuals representing farming, breeding, and NGO communities in India.

**Textile Exchange pre-conference dialogues, Barcelona, 18 September 2011.** The global pre-conference dialogues were held on the Sunday before the Textile Exchange annual conference, hosted by Helvetas Swiss Cooperation, Textile Exchange and funded by ICCO. Attendees were mainly members of the Global Organic Cotton Community Platform (a virtual community of organic cotton stakeholders) but also included Textile Exchange members and other TE conference goers. There were three round-table dialogues over the course of the day, including a discussion titled: "Shaping the future of non-GM seed". The dialogue was moderated by Prabha Niranjana, Textile Exchange, and supported by topic leaders: Dr SS Patil, Research Institute Dharwad, Jane Dever, Agrilife Research, Texas, and Ben Ramsden, Pants to Poverty. The event was attended by over 60 stakeholders. The Dialogue resulted in recommendations for a Global Seed Movement to promote and coordinate alternatives to GM seed.

### What is happening now?

We are now at a point where the individual activities can benefit from becoming part of a global 'movement'; i.e. a global network of all stakeholders. This will help strengthen and reinforce the good work already done, encourage more investment, and help shape policy in the various countries. All organic and Fairtrade cotton producing countries will benefit from a closer connection with other initiatives (at the level of policy, advocacy, research, and practical action). Awareness of the 'seed crisis' needs to be raised and confidence installed that practical action at a grass-roots level is possible to save us from this crisis, so that future supplies of organic cotton are guaranteed.

**A grassroots 'Global Seed Movement' is growing:** Post- TE conference, an informal group has been communicating via email. The group includes many of the stakeholders who were present in Dharwad and/or Barcelona, or have joined in via the Global Organic Cotton Community Platform. Online exchanges have been informal yet energetic and illustrate a growing body of thinkers and

doers ready to take this network to the next level. If you are interested in being part of this 'movement' please contact Textile Exchange ([farm@textileexchange.org](mailto:farm@textileexchange.org)) or better still sign up to the Global Organic Cotton Community Platform and take part in the current community dialogue based on this subject.

### **What is the desired outcome?**

A 'movement' or network of stakeholders connected across the globe, across disciplines, and across sectors, with the common goal of shaping the future of non-GM cotton seed supply:

- improving access to information, people, and resources
- identifying and joining up work already in place
- learning from each other (not each country re-inventing the wheel),
- allowing free seed exchange and replication in other countries
- identifying opportunities for development, investment, and contribution to new and existing initiatives contributing to policy and advocacy (zoning of GM-free regions, contamination prevention, etc)

The vision is to ensure confidence in local supply of non-GM seed suited for low input farming conditions as an alternative to the dependency on global seed companies and their GM cotton seed. Better adapted cultivars will result in higher yield stability and thus securing the income of small holder farmers. This vision will only be achieved by bringing alternative seed supply to scale (including seed quality), helping shape policy that protects the right of farmers (and consumers) to non-GM cotton, and by financial support along the whole market chain including the cotton customers

For more information please visit:

[Research Institute of Organic Agriculture \(FiBL\)](#)

[Louis Bolk Institute](#)

[Textile Exchange Farm Hub](#)

[Global Organic Cotton Community Platform](#)

[AgriLife Texas](#)

## **Regional Focus : Africa**

**Feature** - Eliminating obsolete endosulfan from Benin: OBEPAB and the ministry of agriculture are engaged in sensitizing rural populations. OBEPAB reports:

Since the reintroduction of endosulfan in Benin in 1999, many reports from different sources revealed the human and environmental disaster that occurred in Benin. Successive Governments have resisted in taking action against endosulfan despite human deaths and injuries caused. Even Sahelian surrounding countries were more proactive and have banned endosulfan since 2007 from their territories. It was only in October 2009 that the Government of Benin decided in to ban endosulfan.

This official decision was not sufficient to stop pesticide contaminations in Benin. Farmers and grain and dried cassava and yam dealers are still in contact with endosulfan. Some of them are still keeping old stock and other are still getting endosulfan supply from illegally from the neighbor Nigeria. This happen frequently with farmers living in area that are bordering with Nigeria. Officially identified stock is estimated to more than 4000 liters of obsolete endosulfan. The mis use of endosulfan continues to create human death in Benin. Even during 2011 about four intoxication cases implying many people happened and one cannot identify pesticides that caused such problems.



Sensitization meeting in progress

The Government has asked officially for the assistance of FAO and JICA (Japanese Cooperation) to clean obsolete endosulfan from Benin and make effective and more enforce the decision to ban endosulfan. The elimination process comprises three successive actions: sensitization of the population, collection and destruction of obsolete stock and promotion of alternatives. OBEPAB has been involved with the Government service in charge of crop protection (DAGRI) in this process. The sensitization stage has started in October 2011 and big popular meetings (of about 80 participants) have been organized

in each of the nine districts the departments of Borgou-Alibori (the biggest cotton production area of Benin). Participants were from different professional origins: cotton farmers, pesticides dealers, extension agents, communication professionals, local and traditional authorities. In each assembly, the exercise has been done to ask people who have witnessed or used endosulfan on food crops and for food storage to raise hand. The answer was surprising; about half of participants raised their hands.

The general director of the official agricultural extension service of the northern cotton Basin in Benin took part personally to the sensitization activities. In his address to the population, he said: *"Each one of us should act responsibly. We have to denounce people who use endosulfan for storing cerea*

*ls and dried cassava and yam. If someone knows such people and does not inform anonymously concerned authorities, he is as guilty as they are. If all of us know something about such criminal use of endosulfan and keep quiet, we are all criminal."*

Farmers claim compensation before giving back obsolete endosulfan they are still keeping in their houses. Some of them look confident talking about endosulfan *"it is a highly efficient*

*pesticide that cleans everything from the farm, I have never come across such pesticide since I have been producing cotton. It worth keeping at least a small quantity with me to tell its story in the future"*



Endosulfan sold alongside food

It is difficult to understand how such strange behaviours have been developed over the time towards a highly toxic poison. In order to reduce farmers' resistance during the further stage of collection and destruction of obsolete endosulfan, traditional and local authorities took the engagement to continue the sensitization in each single village that is under their responsibility. They have urged the Government to reinforce the control at the borders to avoid entry of non authorized pesticides in Benin and have also advised that army or police accompany the further phases of the operation to dissuade possible resistance.



Article by Silvere Tovignan  
Regional Director Africa  
Textile Exchange

## Feature - In West Africa, organic cotton helps to bring the Peulh ethnicity out of isolation

Several tribal populations inhabit the West African sub-region, among them the Peulh ethnic group. This ethnicity is characterised by their involvement with ruminant livestock breeding (bovine, sheep and goats). The Peulh are becoming more and more settled. As they become more settled, they are growing more crops, practicing traditional agriculture without the use of synthetic chemical inputs, improved production materials, or mineral fertilisers. Their main source of fertiliser is the animal manure coming from their livestock. In this respect, the Peulh could be classified as "passive organic" players.

For numerous West African countries, cotton is the main source of export. It directly sustains the livelihood of millions of rural families. The production of conventional cotton typically requires a high usage of (expensive) synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilisers. In numerous locations, conventional cotton production has increased dramatically, which has increased the social fraction and isolation of the Peulh people. The outcome from several surveys carried on in the Peulh communities in Mali, in Burkina Faso, and in Benin demonstrated that the rejection of conventional cotton production by the Peulh is the result of their conscious choice to preserve human health as well as the health of their animals; the importance of a Peulh member in his community is determined by the size of his herd.

For many decades, the main and important source of revenue for the Peulh was the trade of their animals. The introduction and popularisation of organic cotton in the West-African sub-region has been beneficial for the Peulh and for rural development agents from the Ministries of Agriculture and livestock breeders. For the Peulh the introduction of organic cotton has stopped cases of intoxication for both humans and animals, of suicides (using pesticides), of miscarriages, and premature births. It has considerably reduced the number of contaminated water points and pastures, the numbers of young calf deaths and cows prematurely giving birth, and has reduced the vet's bills. The female populations, which traditionally were not involved in the agricultural activities, are becoming more and more involved. In the organic and fair-trade cotton program promoted by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, it becomes easier to account for the women involved in the projects. The highest number is registered in Benin.



Peulh producers

The community of producers from Peulh origin carry-on increasing. In Burkina Faso, in several groups in the regions of Banfora, Ioba, Tenodogo and Fada, a net increase in the number of newly registered Peulh producers has been noticed (on average 15 per organisation) according to the statements of the regional managers. In the Wassoulou in Mali, Yanfolila region 14 Peulh cooperatives are currently

producing. In Benin for the 2011-12 campaign 495 Peulh producers are counted, compared to 395 for the 2010-11 season, in the Banikoara, Gogounou, Péhunco, Kérou and Kouandé communities, without of course neglecting the Tanguiéta and Matéri community.

This infatuation of the Peulh with organic cotton has made BIO DEMO, technician at the Benin Union of Organic Producers Coopertives declare: " ... because of the advantages offered by organic cotton, I cannot detect any loss of interest from my peers, even if today's market disadvantages the producers. .. Organic cotton has helped to get our community out of a difficult situation... Because of the organic and fair-trade cotton the Peuls community can now live as the other villagers, without stress..." .

From an economic perspective, the livestock is now sold slowly during periods when their price increase. The Peulh children of school age now go to the same school as the other children in the villages. Bani Bunyo an organic cotton producer from the Kabaré cooperative in the Kouandé district in Benin adds: "...the opportunities offered to me through the organic cotton production are limitless, and I need to take advantage of these opportunities if I want my children to go to school as the other kids and in the same schools. My daughter is going to the village collage and is in Year 10..." .

The cotton is certified fair-trade and this has helped the Peulh producers to get involved just as much as their fellow producers from other ethnicities to the different aspect of the life of their communities. Thanks to organic cotton, in Benin for example, the official recognition of the Peulh Producers' Organisations (PO) is achieved increasingly without problems. In several communities of the Alibori and Atocora districts, more than 30 Peulh organisations had thus been formally recognised. In that respect, organic cotton could be perceived as a tool for mediating the legal recognition of the people of marginal ethnicities. The developing countries in Africa could gain a lot by following this example.



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## Regional Focus : Latin America

### News - Peru's Congress approves 10-year GMO ban

**AFP - Fri, Nov 4, 2011**

Peru's Congress announced Friday it overwhelmingly approved a 10-year moratorium on imports of genetically modified organisms in order to safeguard the country's biodiversity. The measure bars GMOs -- including seeds, livestock, and fish -- from being imported for cultivation or to be raised locally. Exceptions include the use of GMO products for research purposes in a closed environment, but those will be closely monitored, the legislature's official news service said.

The bill, approved late Thursday, now goes to President Ollanta Humala to be signed into law. Humala, who has been in power since late July, has repeatedly said he opposes GM programs. According to the Agriculture Ministry, Peru is one of the world's leading exporters of organic food, including coffee and cocoa, with \$3 billion a year in revenues and 40,000 certified producers. Congress approved a similar 10-year moratorium in June, but outgoing president Alan Garcia, who was seen as being favorable to GM, did not ratify the ban. There was friction over GM in the previous government's ministries of agriculture and environment. The head of Peru's Consumer

Agency, Jaime Delgado, said the moratorium is long enough to learn from scientific studies that will emerge on the effects of GMO products. The country's leading group representing farmers and ranchers, the National Agrarian Convention, said that by this measure Peru "*defends its biodiversity, its agriculture, its gastronomy and its health.*"

Source: <http://news.yahoo.com/peru-parliament-backs-10-gm-moratorium-180330394.html>

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## Feature - A report from Paraguay

Paraguay is a major cotton-producing country. A few years ago, a project was started which, after putting a lot of effort into building strategic alliances, led to the development of a program in various areas of the country. The production of organic cotton in Paraguay is also associated with other crops such as sugar cane and sesame seed. That is, there are very interesting systems of crop association and rotation that create an environmental and economic balance for the benefit of the farmers. The government of Paraguay is interested in introducing genetically-modified cotton seeds. In response, the NGO, Altervida, is promoting a campaign to stop this initiative which would create difficulties for organic cotton producers. Aratex Organica, a company that has been developing an organic cotton program, has drawn the attention of the local actors to the risks of introducing genetically-modified seeds without a comprehensive analysis to examine all of the disadvantages that have been observed and which could be counter-productive to all of the organic cotton projects.



By Alfonso Lizárraga  
Regional Director for Latin America - Textile Exchange

## Regional Focus : India

### Feature - Country of the Year, India takes centre stage at the 2011 BioFach

Some years ago I was having a conversation with an organic farming veteran in India. Among several other topics we started a discussion about Biofach and I asked him "have you been?" He responded with a passion that astounded me. "Every year" he said, "it's my annual pilgrimage". My respect for Biofach went up by a few notches, more so, since I'd heard that Nuremberg in February with snow and rain could be a nightmarish experience weather wise for a visitor from sunny South India.

Most readers of Engage would know that Biofach is the world's largest trade fair for organic agriculture and food, held each year in the month of February, in Nuremberg, Germany. It is the biggest annual bash of the Organic sector, and continues to enjoy high popularity despite the fact that BioFach has five other Fairs in Japan, China , USA , Brazil and India . India is the latest addition to the list and this year the Biofach and India Organic is being held at Bangalore between the 10th to the 12th of November 2011.



The BioFach website states that the footfall at Biofach Nuremberg is about forty four thousand plus visitors from 128 countries with 8601 Congress participants and 1142 journalists from 37 countries. 2544 exhibitors occupy 42,385 square metres of net display area, showcasing food, natural products, medicinal products, gifts and toys, textiles, marketing services and green technology among others.

Biofach 2012 is being held from February 15th to the 18th at Nuremberg and will attract global organic enthusiasts. This event will be a very special one for India for it has been chosen as the "Country of the Year." APEDA, the Agricultural Produce Export Development Authority, which is the nodal body of the Ministry of Commerce overseeing organic agriculture in India, is justifiably proud of having been the first Asian country to have been chosen, despite some stiff competition. APEDA has been hard at work to mark the event successfully. They hope to consolidate "Brand India", establishing India as a committed and reliable player of the Global Organic Industry, and have invited the organic entrepreneurs from India to come together under one umbrella.

India will mark its presence in tastefully done up Pavilions in Gold in Halls 5 and 8. All stalls in the Food Area of 875 square metres in Hall 5 have been sold out. India is one of the world's largest producers of organic tea, medicinal herbs, fresh fruits and vegetables, spices and cereals especially rice, with Basmati taking pride of place. Hall 8 will host the participants from the textile industry in an area of 207 square metres. A booth of 9 square metres here will cost approximately 4000 USD (2 lakh Indian rupees) . Out of 12 spaces in the Textile area, 6 have been booked by Chetna, Pratibha, JharCraft, Appachi, Paramshinde Dye Producers and designer Wendell Rodrigues from Goa who will also be co-ordinating the Fashion show at BioFach, according to APEDA. Participants can be assured of great footfall, free entry passes, publicity, free display of 2 sets of garments at the Fashion show, which would otherwise cost 200 Euro, and a discount of 5 E on the decoding charges. They can also avail of the services of a hired common interpreter, opportunities to speak to International Press and media persons from India and avail Hotel discounts.

The Indian presence will be marked right from the Registration point, where delegate name tags will be

strung on an organic cotton cord dyed in the Indian Tricolour of Orange, white and green, a welcome change from the synthetic cords seen usually. Delegate bags will also be made from Organic Cotton carrying the "India Organic "logo on both sides. Jharcraft from the state of Jharkhand have been commissioned to produce the bags and cords.



Delegate name tags

The India venue will be well worth visiting. You will get a wonderful glimpse of the warmth, diversity and vibrancy of India from the tattoo and Henna artists, the folk, classical

Bharatanatyam, and Bollywood style dancers. The Indian restaurant in the India Pavilion has a seating capacity of 70 plus and standing room as well. Organic Basmati Biryanis, organic mango juice and a plethora of Indian delicacies await you.

APEDA, on behalf of the Government of India, will also host the official dinner for 1800 guests , an event that is being planned to meticulous detail. Make sure you wangle an invitation to this fun filled evening where Bollywood beats will set your feet on fire!

The textile value chain and the role of the farmers in organic cotton production will be showcased in hall 8 at the India Pavilion. With India's continued role as the world's leading organic cotton producer and her dynamic role as processor, BioFach 2012 is a rare, valuable and a once in 25 years

opportunity to showcase India's rich textile traditions, strength, commitment and entrepreneurial spirit.



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## Your Farm Engagement Team

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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.