



# Engage

Connecting organic cotton farming communities

Issue: August / September, 2011

## Feature Articles

Interview: Helmy Aboulesh, Sekem

Africa: Global Cotton Production in West Africa

Africa: Use of Images in Training

Latin America: Crop rotation

Nicaragua: Organic Cotton with a vision of Sustainability

India: University of Agricultural Sciences Dharwar, an introduction

## In This Issue

[Letter from Liesl](#)

[Trading Post ready for business](#)

[Pre-conference cotton dialogues](#)

[Remei sponsorship](#)

[Barcelona conference update](#)

## 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 the August edition of the Engage Newsletter. I hope you are enjoying the new format! This month we have a round up of upcoming events - preparing for the 2nd face to face meeting of the global organic cotton community and the Textile Exchange conference in Barcelona has kept us busy this month.

Following on from the mid year predictions report released last month, in this issue of Engage Silver provides us with a more detailed insight into the global organic cotton production in West Africa. We are also thrilled to provide an in depth interview with Helmy Aboulesh about his experience during detention and his plans for the future. This months Latin America features examine rotation crops as well as providing an insight into organic cotton in Nicaragua.

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

## New Trading Post ready for business

New this month on the [Farm Hub](#) is the Trading Post. The Trading Post is an online marketplace for the exchange of organic cotton (fiber, cotton products, and other farm products). Producer groups are able to actively market their product availability in real-time - and those interested in procurement can search availability or post a notice

[Source Expo 2011](#)

[Africa Fashion Guide](#)

[Talking with Helmy  
Aboulesh](#)

[Global cotton  
production in West  
Africa](#)

[Using images in  
training and  
awareness raising](#)

[Crop rotation in Latin  
America](#)

[Nicaragua: Organic  
Cotton](#)

[University of  
Agricultural Sciences  
Dharwar, an  
introduction](#)

[Your Farm  
Engagement Team](#)

## Quick Links

[Register Now  
Farm Hub](#)  
[More About Us  
Textile Exchange](#)

## Follow us



[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

## Our Sponsors



expressing their interest. Ideally, longer-term trade relationships are encouraged. However, this will be a space for producer-led trading to take place and procurers to source directly. The first posting comes from BioSustain Tanzania Limited.

# ~TRADING POST~

Visit the Farm Hub for more information, to post a listing contact [Liesl](#) or [Hanna](#).

## Pre-conference cotton dialogues, Barcelona, Spain



Textile Exchange and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation are jointly hosting a Pre-conference Cotton Dialogues event on Sunday September 18th at 10AM in Barcelona Spain before the start of the TE Sustainable Textiles conference (19-20 September 2011).

Cotton dialogues will provide the opportunity for the [www.organiccotton.org](http://www.organiccotton.org) virtual organic cotton community to take part in face-to-face meetings and help improve the future sustainability of organic cotton production and trade. Three 'roundtable discussions' are being planned for the day to be facilitated by world experts. Visit the new dedicated webpage on the [Farmhub](#) to find out more.

To find out more or to register your interest please contact Ashley Gill [ajill@TextileExchange.org](mailto:ajill@TextileExchange.org) or visit: [Organic Cotton Community Platform](#)

## News - Remei sponsorship of the Farm Hub



**REMEI AG**

The Textile Exchange Farm Engagement team are delighted to announce that Remei have joined ICCO as a sponsor of our work. Their financial contribution mean that we will be able to further develop the Farm Hub to provide even more useful information and services for the

whole organic cotton community. Whether you grow it, sell it, wear it or are interested in the role organic cotton plays in global sustainability there will be something for you on the Farm Hub!

For more information on Remei click [here](#). To visit the Farm Hub click [here](#).

## Textile Exchange Barcelona Conference Update

With only a few weeks to go until the Textile Exchange conference in Barcelona there is still time to register. This year's conference will feature sessions on Apparel and Textile Impacts in areas such as:

- Water
- Energy / Carbon
- Waste
- Toxics
- Biodiversity

Of particular interest to the organic cotton community will be plenary and workshop sessions on:

**Putting Values in the Value Chain** - This plenary will introduce three organic cotton partnerships - all based on different models but all achieving 'winwin' results

**Organic Agriculture: Farming With a Vision** - Patrick Hohmann of bioRe will share his stories of setting up the bioRe Foundation, explain the ideas behind the vision, and relate his experiences (both good and bad) over the past 20 years of organic agriculture in India and Tanzania.

**Building a Greener Cotton Portfolio... How to Decide Upon the Right Cotton Strategy...** - With more and more choices on ways to "clean and green" your supply chain how do you develop the right strategy for your business? Ask the experts about the different approaches and more importantly how the different initiatives might work together to provide your company with an integrated greener, and more ethical cotton solution.

**"This Product is Made from Organic Cotton"... How to Tell the Story...** - The 'everyday person' understands why they should buy organic food. But how do we get customers to connect with the benefits of organic cotton textiles? Come along and join our lively discussion, learn about successful communication techniques and how some of the world's leaders are exciting their customers.

For more details go to the Textile Exchange webpage <http://www.textileexchange.org/event/2011-sustainable-textiles-conference-impacts-integrity-and-innovation>

## Coming soon - Source Expo 2011

Now in its third year, the SOURCE Expo continues as the only international fashion trade showcase with a focus on ethical sourcing.

Taking place from 17th-18th October in London, the 2011 SOURCE Expo is once again set to showcase international suppliers and manufacturers alongside emerging design talent within the ethical fashion sector, linking them directly with important buyers, press and brands.

For Textile Exchange members, the SOURCE Expo is offering a special 20% discount on exhibitor stand prices and accompanying promotional packages, until 1st September 2011.

For suppliers and designers alike, the Expo offers access to a more diverse audience with a genuine interest in ethical fashion, including guaranteed representation from across the high street and large retail sector, ensuring that all exhibitors get adequate opportunity and exposure to connect with buyers.

Each year, the Expo brings together hundreds of fashion businesses, saving time and money by connecting suppliers, producers, designers, retailers, press and buyers with one another. The SOURCE Expo is open to any supplier of products, components or services to the fashion industry who meet the exhibitor mandate, including suppliers of fabrics and components, alongside agents and representatives of factories, production units, co-operatives and fair trade suppliers.



Previous exhibitors include Animana, Continental Clothing, Do U Speak Green, Eden Studios, Offset Warehouse Jacobs Well and the Soil Association, all of whom are confirmed exhibitors for 2011 alongside new exhibitors Sacred Childhoods and AVANI - Kumaon Earthcraft Self Reliant Cooperative.

The SOURCE Expo is run in partnership with some of the most respected and pioneering companies and organisations within the area of sustainable fashion, including Textile Exchange and the World Fair Trade

Organization.

The event includes a number of expert-led seminars taking place over the two days, debating key issues within the sustainable fashion industry as well as a designers' pavilion, showcasing some of the most cutting edge, design-led collections pioneering in sustainable sourcing, from around the world.

To register your interest in the event find out more at <http://ethicalfashionforum.com/source-expo-2011>.

## Coming soon - Africa Fashion Guide

Regular readers of Engage will remember Jacqueline Shaw, a professional fashion designer and eco-entrepreneur who was featured in Engage in February 2011. Jacqueline conceived Africa Fashion Guide with the focus to promote the African fashion and textile industry to the greater global textile industry. It is a one stop shop and platform for fashion professionals, students, retailers, magazines, bloggers and all those interested in African fashion and textiles as a way to promote this industry and bring links between African

designers, craftspeople, manufacturers and textile designers with UK and EU fashion design companies and consumer markets, as well as with retailers worldwide. The Africa Fashion Guide will be launched in London on the 9th of September, 2011. To find out more, visit <http://africafashionguide.wordpress.com/about-africa-fashion-guide/>

**AFRICA//  
FASHION  
GUIDE**

## Interview - Talking with Helmy Abouleish

Reprinted from Sekem Insight with the kind permission of SEKEM.  
Questions posed by Maximilian Boes and Soraya Abouleish.

Recorded by Bijan Kafi.



**On 6 July 2011 Helmy Abouleish was released from detention in Cairo's Tora prison after almost 100 days. He has in the meantime returned to the SEKEM farm and to his workplace as CEO of the SEKEM companies. In a conversation with Maximilian Boes immediately 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.**

### **Your arrest came as a huge surprise for all SEKEM friends and you yourself...**

Yes, especially when you consider the circumstances of my imprisonment. The complaint that led to my eventual arrest was in fact submitted at an extremely early time, namely on 8 February. On 11 February only Hosni Mubarak stepped down. At that time there was still chaos all over the country. And although the Egyptians in those days were still demonstrating in the streets of Cairo, one person is supposed to have found the time to lodge a complaint against me and many other people in public life. I've never considered this process very credible. I think it might well have been one of the last attempts of the Mubarak administration to appease the Egyptian revolutionaries by cracking down on allegedly corrupt and well-known people.

It is also important to understand that already 6 years have passed since I worked for the IMC. The fact that these charges are brought now seems to me to be hardly a coincidence either. Of course, this would also be a great way to distract from Egypt's real domestic problems. Hosni Mubarak's successor, Defence Minister Hussein Tantawy, has always been critical towards any public engagement of the local private sector. Plus, the military generals, the Attorney General, and many judges were also appointed during Mubarak's times. One also has to keep the "pressure of the street" in mind, which is also aimed directly against public officials. They have already promised to hand the 720 billion Egyptian pounds allegedly misappropriated by Mubarak's regime back to the

people. When you consider all of this, I think it does cast a special light on the circumstances of my arrest. However, I have never seen myself as a "victim" of the revolution, but rather of the old regime.

**How have you kept your motivation strong during the nearly 100 days of your detention?**

It may sound hard to believe, but I have not found it a particularly difficult time. For me the inner peace that came over me in the very moment when the prosecutor read out the charges was a very special experience. This moment brought me tranquillity and peace of mind and the strong conviction that whatever Allah may still have in store for me, it would first and foremost be an opportunity that might turn out to make me stronger. In fact, I was never fearful.

In prison, I have tried many times to alleviate other people's suffering through extensive talks. Not all could always be drawn out of their misery, but I think they have taken away more hope from our conversations. I have tried to strengthen our collective optimism and at the same time to preserve my sense of humour. It was known, for example, that I would not participate in any "negative" conversations. Many have told me over the time that they would pray for me. This also gave me confidence.

I myself gave me a rigid daily schedule. I decided to walk at least 5,000 steps every day and always had a pedometer on my belt. I also founded a "Salon Sakafi" ("culture club"), in which we talked every night one and a half hours about certain topics I had suggested, to get us out of our constant brooding and gloomy moods. We spoke, for example, about the freedom of man, the connection between the public good and the economy, or the economic rules prescribed by the Quran. It was wonderful to see how the moods of many lightened during these talks at least for a short time.

**For many it is difficult to understand how, despite your commitment, you could be convicted in the first place...**

In essence, case is all about the question which set of rules should govern the activities alleged by the prosecutor. According to the regulations of the IMC, to which I was CEO and later management board member have always kept, any support that ever went to the SEKEM companies has always been perfectly legal. Of this I remain firmly convinced, and this interpretation has also been confirmed by independent assessments many times. The many instruments of control of the IMC and the European Union, which have verified my work on a regular basis, have confirmed also this. The court, however, eventually opted for an interpretation that is not consistent with this. This is why I have decided to appeal the sentence.

**What do you personally think of the sentence?**

When you consider the severe punishment of others who are currently being sentenced one must consider the ruling as to be extremely mild. I still think it is wrong, of course.

**You were also sentenced to the payment of a penalty. What is that about?**

Besides the one-year suspended sentence, to which I was sentenced, I have also been ordered to repay funds disbursed to SEKEM companies and pay an additional penalty in the amount of the value of these funds.

However, it is important to add that SEKEM firms have never actually received this money. Funds from the IMC always go to third party suppliers and providers of the services from which companies like those of SEKEM may then benefit.

**How did the public respond to your arrest and the sentence?**

In advance of the trial, there had been lots of speculation. I was positively equated with the person of Rashid Mohamed Rashid, the former trade minister. He should have been taken to prison together with me but was later convicted to a long prison sentence in absentia.

Later, the press mostly reported fairly and in a generally differentiated fashion. Given the current situation, the incited public mood, the many provocations, and the constant criticism of public figures, that was not to be expected. Eventually, it is still the press of the days of the Mubarak regime.

### **Why did you decide to engage yourself in public affairs in the first place?**

I originally wanted Egyptian businesses being held responsible for the sustainable development of the country. We can not leave positive change only to the governments and civil society. Companies also need to contribute to the common good. Because of their financial and practical means they are also potent players in the game who can change a lot and that relatively quickly. In fact, much of what I initiated during these times still is a part of the political debate in Egypt. Today, the popular project "Vision for Egypt 2030" that I had cofounded in 2004, the Egyptian strategies for greater economic competitiveness, better industrial and agricultural development and the fight against climate change, which I all initiated together with others are still part of the daily political discourse in the country. That I find very satisfying.

### **Is the impact of your work and that of SEKEM sufficiently known in Egypt?**

As we all know, we only ever hear the answers to questions we ourselves have. Many people in Egypt still have quite different, much more elementary priorities. Against the backdrop of the current difficult situation in the country this is very understandable. SEKEM already publishes a lot on its own projects, but it is not so easy. I see the biggest challenge in doing more for awareness raising and the actual multiplication of our existing, successful initiatives.

### **If you looked back, would you do something differently?**

I would certainly try again to realise the things for which I personally want to stand in just the same way. But I do see that I became involved on too many sites at once. I have been active in approximately 50 national and international committees! I would now put more emphasis on visible results rather than pure activism and a more fruitful balance between my public engagement, the needs of SEKEM, and those of my family.

### **What would you like to focus on now in your own work?**

The intellectual and spiritual understanding of my own actions has become more central for me over the past weeks. In Egypt, I would like to continue to commit myself to the sustainable economic development of the country and its businesses. Internationally, I would like to concentrate myself primarily on SEKEM's International Association for Partnership in Trade and Ecology (IAP) (see SEKEM Insight 06.11). These are also the areas where I can currently see that SEKEM could have the biggest impact in terms of positive and sustainable change. But the most important thing is that SEKEM continues to work on itself, to remain a living example and positive role model for others. I would like to continue the work for SEKEM to stay a good example of how to make it better.

## **Regional Focus : Africa**

### **Feature - Global cotton production in West Africa: events that confirm the drop back for the next harvest**

Global cotton production for the next harvest (season 2011-12) in West Africa will not reach the historical volume of 1.120 million obtained during the season 2003-04. Two major reasons that are common to all West African CFA zone cotton producer countries explains this situation. First, the rainfall started late in all countries, causing the majority of farmers to sow late. As late as 15th July some farmers were still planting. The second reason is related to anti food shortage emergency measures which have been adopted since 2008 by most Governments and some civil society organization that are still showing their effects. Farmers are highly supported to produce cereals (maize, rice and sorghum) for local consumption. Among others, the two major policy measures that make cereals compete with cotton are: subsidized mineral fertilizers being made available at village level and the marketing that is organized to buy the cereal production from the farmers for cash.

In addition to these reasons, each country has some specific circumstances that contribute to decreasing cotton production volume. In Burkina Faso, farmers protested by deciding not to plant cotton, because they didn't succeed in reaching an agreement with the SOFITEX and the

Government on price increases. They want the price to be increased like in Benin to 250 F/kg of seed cotton and 255 F in Mali and found the amount proposed to them insufficient. Unfortunately, some farmers planted during the protest. Farmers who did not plant consider that a disloyalty and went to destroy their seedlings. The Police and the army were sent in the fields to discourage farmers in protest in Koudougou and Kenedougou. More than 100 ha of cotton seedlings have been destroyed reported the daily newsletter SIDWAYA (of 15th July 2011).

In Mali, the GM cotton introduction in the country is very advanced with the CMDT taking the lead of this initiative. The issue is actually a source of much misunderstanding among stakeholders of cotton sector, who are living in an environment of suspicion with very little trust.

In Benin, the increase of cotton price and input price subsidies was announced very early before planting and did not lead to much change in achievements in terms of land area planted with cotton. The highly ambitious objective of 600 thousand hectare set by AIC (Association Interprofessionnelle de Coton) was far from the real achievement of 160 hectares (mid July situation). Some inputs are ordered late and farmers are still awaiting some of them, particularly pesticides. With pesticide reduction measures adopted by the government by promotion the LEC (Lutte Etagée Ciblée) all over the country, inputs dealers are not happy because of reduction of pesticide volume as the direct effect of the LEC technique. All these reasons together do not lead us to expect an increase of cotton volume for the next harvest.



Article by Silvere Tovignan  
Regional Director Africa  
Textile Exchange

## Feature - The use of images, a technique for training organic cotton producers and raising awareness in Burkina Faso.

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation strongly encourages the development of organic agriculture with a focus on cotton production in the countries of West Africa, especially in Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin and Senegal. Six years ago in Burkina Faso the project for organic and fair-trade cotton in cooperation with the National Union of Cotton Producers in Burkina (UNPCB) was established. Each year thousands of cotton producers register with the project. However, the project is facing many challenges

such as GMO. Burkina Faso, is one of the nations in the West African sub-region, which is very favourable to growing genetically modified crops. Since 2008, the areas producing transgenic cotton has continued to grow. For the 2010 campaign, 475,000 hectares producing Bt cotton were forecasted. The growing of Bt cotton is encouraged in all the regions favourable to cotton production. The expansion of GMO cotton is a real risk for the development of organic cotton projects in Burkina Faso as well as in the other countries of the sub-region, including Mali and Benin and is forcing an unwilling cohabitation. To address the various

issues faced by organic production, the non-governmental organisation HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is supporting their partners in different technical aspects such as: the development and improvement of the tool for quality management which is the Internal Control



System (SCI), improvement of the curriculum of the training programs for the support teams and the producers to allow them to adapt better to the changing context.

To enhance the knowledge, the NGO has produced and supplied to UNPCB posters dedicated to the training of the producers and raising awareness on how to reduce the risks of contaminations of organic cotton. All the support teams working in the area covered by the organic cotton production were trained before using this technique with the producers.

After a year of using this type of visual support tools, the different beneficiaries found that the approach is innovative and efficient. To be precise, for them the training using pictures, which is based on the principle that adults learn easier by hands-on practice, by watching other people doing it or with images, is a method that:

- Encourages producers to get involved the raising awareness/ training;
- Helps understanding the explanations provided by the support team;
- Allows the producers to assimilate better different points in the training process;
- Reduces the time of the training/raising awareness (an advantage for both sides);
- Helps achieve easier the desired goal set by the training;
- Focus better the attention on the main issues.

In the East region, Onadja Daberga, president of the Organic cotton producer group (GPCB) Palamanga in the Fada area says: *"... for us adults, we understand a lot better with a picture support than with words only..."*.



For Diallo Inoussa, producer in the GPCB Yamvenegre in Warda and his partner Simane Souleymane; Dimbone Alidou, president of the GPCB Passpenga; Diallo Boukari, producer from the GPCB in Benewende and Sonde Beral a producer in Manegtaba in the area of Tenkodogo in the Centre-East region.

*"... Everything that our support team has been teaching us in the past about how to avoid contamination of our production by GMO for examples, it is only now with the help of the posters that we have fully understood, and we are able to apply the techniques to obtain a result..."*

And Diallo Mandé, chief advisor of the area of Ioba in the South-West, added *"... after I received the new training kits, and supervised my collaborators when teaching the producers during the workshops and then after observing how producers engaged in the training process, I quickly realised that this method is the future..."*.

Sawadogo Mahamady, chief advisor of the Fada area in the East declared *"...This method helps to raise awareness and training of the producers. This is very useful as the numbers of organic producers are continuously increasing. It will be good if we use it for other themes as well..."*.

In agreement with Diallo Mandé and Sawadogo Mahamady, the other members of the support teams and the producers think that it is time to use this support for the communication on a large scale.



Written by Lazare Yombi  
Regional Technical Advisor  
Organic and Fair-trade cotton program  
HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation  
Tel.: +226 76 94 48 28.

*Photos from the training/rising awareness workshop for producers in the village of Kopper in the Ioba area.*

## Regional Focus : Latin America

### Feature - Crop Rotation in Latin America

There are several critical aspects of producing organic cotton, namely: obtaining organic seed, adequate natural fertilization, efficient control of major pests, and choice of the rotation crop. The criteria used for choosing a rotation crop can be examined from various angles. The main criteria for choosing a rotation crop are: the type of ecosystem, the availability of seeds, the expertise and/or familiarity with how to manage the crop, the cultural relationships with the final product, the diversity of the use and the byproducts to be obtained, and of course, the amount of nitrogen that it can contribute to the next cotton crop.

- a) Ecosystem:** The primary rotation crops used in the organic cotton programs in Latin America are beans, corn and sesame. These and other crops are focused on the relationship with the ecosystem where they are grown, which is vital in order not to adversely affect their growth. Throughout the world, there are 103 ecosystems. Of them, for instance, there are 83 ecosystems in Peru alone. This gives us an idea of how important it is to consider the specific conditions of each region. Given the diversity of the ecosystems in Latin America, it is possible to obtain many different types of agricultural products. Organic agriculture promotes respect for the natural cycle of the ecosystems. That said, it is best to choose local plants.
- b) Seeds:** It is not easy to obtain organic seeds from the rotation crops, which is a requirement for organic certification. In many cases, this involves developing a special strategy for choosing and growing the rotation crop. The organic cotton production programs feel pressure from the certifying companies on this point, which is why strategic alliances with local organizations (research institutes, seed production companies, etc.) are necessary in order to fill this gap.
- c) Management of rotation crops:** The farmers must manage the rotation crops that exist in their regions. Otherwise, planting a new crop—due to a better economic performance—requires investing in a training process that probably won't pay off until the medium and long term.
- d) Cultural relationships and types of use:** The farmers respond, first of all, to their environment and cultural context. A rotation crop should anticipate that the farmers use these crops for various purposes. At first glance, these characteristics may not seem to be very marketable or cost-effective, but they may have an implied meaning that has to do with surviving in a cultural context that is governed by its own laws.
- e) Use of the rotation crops:** The farmers make various uses of it, some for food (some used immediately and others can be stored), feed for livestock or smaller animals, barter with the members of the community, local trade, selling to intermediaries for a regional sale, and also for improvement of the soil. In some cases—with sesame seeds, for instance—the companies that promote the production of organic cotton and its respective rotation crops stockpile in order to sell a larger volume.

Organizing a program to sell the organic rotation products requires evaluating these and other aspects in order to set up an offer and satisfy part of the market demand. In some cases, cotton may not be the most important crop and the rotation crop is actually the important crop for the farmers.



By Alfonso Lizárraga  
Regional Director for Latin America  
Textile Exchange

## Feature - Nicaragua: Organic Cotton with a Vision of Sustainability

Nicaragua is a small country in Central America which once used to be a major producer of cotton until the indiscriminate use of pesticides-especially for controlling "weevils" *Anthonomus grandis* (Col.: Curculionidae) between 1990 and 1995-led to levels of resistance that ended up severely affecting the economy of the farmers and the burlers-that is, the entire system of cotton production and processing. Cotton farming became unprofitable, the burlers closed their doors, the farmers were no longer funded, and an important chapter in the history of Nicaraguan agriculture was closed.

After this crisis took place, several years went by until the NGO JHC (Jubilee House Community) promoted the project to produce organic cotton through the production and marketing co-op called COPROEXNIC. Its first cotton crop year was in 2007-2008, and gradually they have been building a chain of relationships with the goal of creating added value to the farmers, processors and marketers. The road has been anything but easy, as Raúl Machín (manager of COPROEXNIC), Rubén Fajardo (president of COPROEXNIC) and Michael Woodar (promoter of JHC) tell us.

These types of initiatives become more interesting given that, according to the ECLAC, in 2010 the economic growth in Nicaragua was 4.5%, a substantial increase compared to last year, which indicates a better economic outlook and innovative business possibilities such as the production of organic cotton and textile manufacturing. On the other hand, Nicaragua still has some comparative advantages, namely "the temporary disappearance of the weevil" due to the "window" of a period during which cotton was not planted for several years (technically known as a "clean field period", which in this case corresponds to several cotton crop years). Another important advantage is that there are fair-trade areas for the textile industry, which has enabled the companies of the sector to be more competitive. The planting of genetically-modified crops is prohibited in Nicaragua, which is an advantage because it avoids contamination of the fiber. Nicaragua is also a small country, which makes it somewhat comfortable to run an organic cotton production program, to visit the farmers and to have direct and ongoing contact.

COPROEXNIC (Cooperative of Organic and Traditional Farmers and Exporters of Nicaragua) is one of the driving forces behind the chain promoted by JHC, whose main objective is to sell cotton and other bulk organic products such as sesame. The organic certification is given by Mayacert, and fair trade certification is given by SCS (Scientific Certification Systems). The production is handled by producers who are members of the APRENIC co-op, which has its own independent organic certification given by Biolatina and which is the main ally of COPROEXNIC. In the 2011-2012 crop year, which has just begun with the planting of crops in July-August, there are plans to install 207.8 ha (186.4 ha APRENIC and 21.4 COPROEXNIC) which could produce an approximate harvest of 286.7 tons of raw cotton (approximately 100 tons of cotton fiber). This production will be burlled at the COPROEXNIC cotton gin, which, incidentally, is the only operating cotton gin in Nicaragua and only burls organic cotton.

*What are the main achievements of COPROEXNIC?*

*Raúl Machín: We have gone to great lengths to create an organic production chain. Thanks to the CEO, we have a good quality fiber that we hope to maintain. The farmers are owners, and that is an advantage as far as agricultural sustainability is concerned. We can continue to grow, but the farmers need funding. [jhc@jhc-cdca.org](mailto:jhc@jhc-cdca.org)*



There are other actors such as the Genesis co-op, a group of women who have put a lot of effort into building the infrastructure for a spinner, which is expected to be up and running in 2012 in order to start out with carding. Sara Narváez (coopgenesish@gmail.com) manages a group of 18 people, 15 of whom are women who have been working steadily for four years and have built a carding plant all on their own. They have suffered a great deal along the way and still continue to persevere. They were trained in Costa Rica and El Salvador, visiting spinning factories. This group needs a loan in order to begin its operations and to be able to spin the cotton fiber produced by COPROEXNIC.

The presence of the co-op COMMANUVI (New Life Co-op of Female Assembly Plant Workers) is also refreshing, which, under the name of FAIR TRADE ZONE (MASILI), has been producing and selling clothes made with organic cotton to the United States and some European countries. The co-op system is important in Nicaragua. The marketing of various products is somehow connected to the production of organic cotton, because some of these can be part of what is known as rotation crops, which are so important in the sustainability of the production chain. This co-op is a good example of the possibility of creating productive groups with self-management, and once incorporated into the market an entire ongoing learning process begins, with innovations and adjustments, which are part of the dynamic and evolution of the emerging companies.

*What are the main products produced in the Fair Trade Zone ("Masili")? Our co-op produces t-shirts, children's clothing, and also dresses for women. Competing in such a complex market has not been easy for us, but we have learned to innovate and adapt to the needs of the international market. zonafrancamasili@gmail.com  
www.zonafrancamasili.com*



The co-op company NICARAO promotes the marketing of organic products. The initiative is important because it can help supplement some of the crop rotation activities. Rotation crops are those that are planted before or after another different crop, in this case organic cotton. Because the cotton is certified organic, the rotation crops must also comply with the organic requirements. This is a "hot spot" in the process of sustainability of the organic programs such as cotton, given that many times these rotation crops are sold in the conventional market without any differentiation, and thus, the added value that they have is lost.

NICARAO and COPROENIXC are forming a business alliance which could help position the organic products of the crop rotations that are part of the COPREONIX program. Finally, some of the businessmen related to the textile sector are becoming interested in experimenting with the planting of organic cotton, which is something that could help to improve a system of sustainability.

*What products are put on the market by NICARAO? Moisés López, Manager of NICARAO, tells us that NICARAO is a co-op initiative that aims to help promote production in Nicaragua. We have the line "VIDA", with products that are sold at the local supermarkets, and in some cases the products are made for exportation. The main products that we promote are coffee, beans, sesame, marmalades and chocolates, among others. The products are quite popular because of their quality and presentation.  
moises@nicaraocoop.org www.nicaraocoop.org*



By Alfonso Lizárraga  
Regional Director for Latin America - Textile Exchange

## Feature - An Introduction to the University of Agricultural Sciences Dharwad

UAS Dharwad (UASD) is one of the reputed Agricultural Universities in India located in the Southern state of Karnataka. Established in 1986, the University's work covers several districts in North Karnataka, a region well known for long staple cotton. It is said that Karnataka was one of the states where American Hirsutum was introduced. Trials took place as early as in 1840 and that New Orleans seed was grown in Hubli near Dharwad with success in 1842.



UASD

UASD works in different agro climatic zones, diverse soil types and with different crops, most important being cotton, rice, pulses, chili, groundnuts, wheat and many horticultural crops. The University focuses on teaching, research and agricultural extension. UASD plays an

important role in bridging the technology gap by effecting transfer of technology to farming groups and research needs of farmers are met through work in Agri Research stations and projects funded by the World Bank, Department of Science and Technology, Indian Council for Agri Research etc, which has enabled UASD to increase their funding outlay from Rs 10 crores to Rs 114 crores in the last six years.

One of the big research projects in operation at Dharwad is the Organic Institute in the main campus which was established three to four years ago with funding support from the State Government of Karnataka, which is a state with a fairly advanced agenda for organic farming. At a sensitization program on organic farming organized by the Karnataka Vikas Grameena Bank, the Vice Chancellor of UAS Dharwad clearly stated that organic farming should become a part of agricultural policy and vision, particularly for States that are prone to drought. Dr Hanchimal said that organic farming was beneficial to farmers as it improved soil fertility and the agro eco system, required fewer funds as well as promoted self reliance.

The UAS Dharwad has also adopted two villages, Harugeri and Kamadhenu to demonstrate organic farming. The University has also started a diploma in organic farming. The University supports farmer clubs and helps them link with the Karnataka Grameen Bank, which has announced its intention of making organic farming an important part of the Banks Credit Policy. Some of the laudable contributions of UASD makes towards farmers' welfare includes sending SMS messages on critical issues to more than 5000 farmers in several districts, and its special efforts to empower farmers from the marginalized sections of society such as the Scheduled Castes and Tribes through training and technology transfer.

With reference to cotton, UASD has played a critical role in the development of new cultivars, which are location specific and suit different farming needs. In keeping with the country's efforts since independence to continuously improve the cotton sector; their research has attempted to address several issues such as improved yield, better ginning outturn and better resistance to disease and pests.

As most of us may be aware, there are 4 main cotton genotypes, *Gossypium Arboreum*, *Gossypium Herbaceum*, *Gossypium Barbadense* and *Gossypium Hirsutum*. India has been home to *G. Herbaceum* and *G. Arboreum* for many centuries, and the other two genotypes were introduced into India fairly recently. The UASD has introduced some excellent varieties of cotton and some of them are as follows:

### G. Herbaceum and G. Arboreum.

The typical characteristics of these two genotypes are shorter staple length and thicker fibres, though there has been much improvement through research. UASD has done considerable breeding work to improve the staple length of some Arboreum varieties. One of the most notable Arboreums released was DLSa- 17, whose staple length was improved to 27-29 mm, making it highly suitable for organic cultivation.

JAYADHAR was a highly successful Herbaceum released in the Fifties which still remains popular. DDhC-11 a new herbaceum with higher yield potential and disease resistance than Jayadhar which was developed for rainfed, low rainfall areas and RAhS - 14 which was developed for saline conditions and for the dry eastern zones of Karnataka.



Jayadhar	Yield (q/ha)	2.5% span length	Mic. value	Fibre strength	Spinning counts	GOT %
	8-9	23.9 mm	4.5	18 (g/tex)	22's	32

### G. Hirsutum.

UASD also released ABADHITA, the first bollworm tolerant G. hirsutum variety, well suited to rainfed ecology. Abadhita requires comparatively less insecticide spray, when compared to other varieties like LRA-5166. SAHANA was a multiple pest tolerant variety suited to both irrigated and rainfed situations, that became very popular among farmers.

### Inter-specific hybrids

VARALKSHMI was the first interspecific hybrid released by UASD which changed the ELS fibre quality

situation for India, which used to import ELS cotton at a huge cost for the exchequer. It continues to be hugely popular. DCH - 32 was another inter-specific hybrid released from UAS Dharwad with a staple to suit spinning of 60s to 80s counts capable of going up to 100s. It is still a very valuable hybrid.



DCH 32

### Intra hirsutum hybrids

These were developed when the Interspecific, hirsutum-barbadense, hybrids exhibited sucking pest susceptibility. DHH-11 was a successful, medium staple hybrid possessing higher boll weight, good opening of bolls, higher yield and tolerance to bollworms.

### Coloured cotton

UASD's cotton scientists have been working hard in researching and breeding naturally colored cotton with a focus on increasing spinnability and color stability. Shades of brown green and brown have been developed from a G. Arboreum variety DDCC -1 genotype. India has a great potential to commercially develop these varieties which would be highly suitable for organic, niche cotton products.

### Dr SS Patil

Dr S.S.Patil of UASD is a scientist and breeder with great enthusiasm for organic cultivation of cotton. He has steered the recent Non GMO seed workshop which was organized by Fibl and Bio Re at Dharwar and supported by Chetna and Textile Exchange. The workshop had several dynamic outcomes such as serious debate and action plans such as the Dharwar Declaration which clearly spelt out the crisis of non GMO seed availability in India and called for concerted action.

Dr Patil clearly states *"The whole process of breeding and trials for organic cultivation should be done only in an organic situation for best results. An organic situation is distinctively different from a conventional system whether rain fed or irrigated. The present scenario calls for immediate action*

*and time is very precious. We are here to help and support any interested organic production group in their seed program both within India and outside".*

Presently Dr SS Patil and his team are conducting trials in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh for Bio Re and Chetna. We are delighted that Dr SS Patil will be joining us on the 18th September at Barcelona for our pre conference cotton dialogues meeting.



Article by Prabha Naranjan,  
Regional Director, India Textile Exchange

## Your Farm Engagement Team

Hanna Denes, Program Development Manager

[Hanna@textileexchange.org](mailto:Hanna@textileexchange.org)

Alfonso Lizarraga, Regional Director, Latin America

[Alfonso@textileexchange.org](mailto:Alfonso@textileexchange.org)

Prabha Nagarajan, Regional Director, India

[prabha@textileexchange.org](mailto:prabha@textileexchange.org) or [prabhanagu@gmail.com](mailto:prabhanagu@gmail.com)

Silvere Tovignan, Regional Director, Africa

[silvere@textileexchange.org](mailto:silvere@textileexchange.org) or [tsilvere@yahoo.fr](mailto:tsilvere@yahoo.fr)

Liesl Truscott, Farm Engagement Director

[Liesl@textileexchange.org](mailto:Liesl@textileexchange.org)

Please visit our website: <http://farmhub.textileexchange.org/>

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