



Engage

Connecting organic cotton farming communities

Issue: July, 2011

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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 the new look of e-ENGAGE! After a full year of our farm engagement bulletin, our readership has tripled and we want to make sure Engage is easy and convenient for you to access - and quicker for us to get it to you.

This month we have some exciting updates to share. To start of with, I must tell you a little about our "Love. Organic Cotton." campaign. We want to get organic farm leaders from around the world to our conference and stakeholder meetings in

Barcelona, Spain this year. To help us raise the funds to do this we have produced a fundraising T-shirt. Our fabulous partners for this project in Tanzania (bioRe farmers, Sunflag garment manufacturers) and in the United Kingdom (Mantis World and Gossypium) have helped us create a high-quality fully organic and fully fun collection for men, women and kiddies. Please take a look on our Farm Hub for details and great pictures! We now await the sales...!

Other news this month includes the release of our first midyear Predictions Report to complement our annual Farm & Fiber review. We hope you find it a useful snapshot of current activities and predictions for the upcoming season.

Prabha, our India regional director, provides an excellent round-up of the seed situation in India. It's exciting to hear that momentum is building. Alfonso gives an in-depth account of Peru's decision to resist GM seeds, and Silvere brings you up to date with activities in West Africa. Lazare's article on the Neem tree certainly opened my eyes to the value and pressures on this extraordinary plant.

Also in this issue, we catch up with friend and ex-TE colleague Doraliz Aranda and celebrate the success of Pachacuti in the latest ethical awards. I had a chat with one of the world's most well-

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respected experts on organic agriculture. It's all in Engage this month!

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

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 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.

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

New Farm & Fiber Predictions Report



New this month is our first midyear predictions report. As an organization Textile Exchange is always looking for ways to better support our members. Our new predictions report is an attempt to provide more timely and subsequently more useful information for you.

The report provides a brief up to-the-minute snapshot of activities in the sector and forecasts for the next harvest and beyond. There is both a concise overview of the global picture and a deeper look at regional activities. As always, we provide comments on opportunities and challenges facing the organic cotton sector. Later in the year we will produce our signature Farm & Fiber Report for 2011, giving you a thorough account of organic cotton production for the 2010/11 year.

To download the report, go to the Farm Hub ['New this Month'](#)

Launch of 'Support a Farmer' campaign

Textile Exchange has partnered with ethical clothing leaders Mantis World and Gossypium to produce its first limited-edition T-shirt collection for men, women, and children.

"Funds raised will pay for farmers to attend the Textile Exchange Global Conference in Barcelona in September 2011." says Liesl Truscott, Farm Engagement Director, Textile Exchange. As the biggest global meeting of textile brands and retailers with an increasing number of

manufacturers, the Textile Exchange annual conference provides an excellent opportunity for people within the industry to meet, and network, as well as learn about more sustainable textile products and processes. This opportunity to connect can result in long-term business relationships.

By making farmers a part of the stakeholder discussions and allowing them to see for themselves where their organic fiber ends up, future trade relations are improved and mutual understanding and respect is built between growers and retailers. [Find out more](#)

The limited edition T-shirt comes in sizes for men, women, and children, with a special discount for students. To view the T-shirts beautifully captured 'in action' in a small organic allotment in Bath, United Kingdom by photographer, Calvin Talbot please [click here](#). To directly purchase your Love. Organic Cotton. T-shirt visit [Gossypium](#).



Pachacuti wins Ethical Award

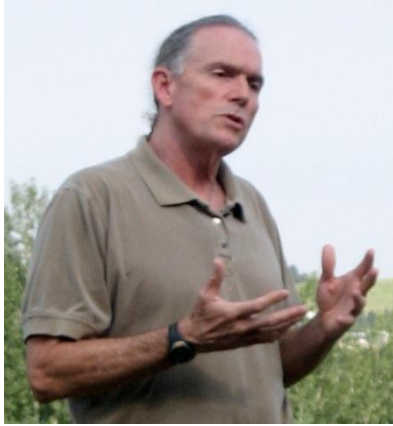
Many of you will fondly remember Doraliz Aranda who left Textile Exchange in March to work for Pachacuti, the ethical Panama hat retailer. We are pleased to bring you the news that Pachacuti was recognised for its excellent ethical and sustainability credentials by winning the Fashion and Accessories category in the recent Observer Ethical Awards 2011. Pachacuti was founded in 1992 and combines British design with sustainable production in the Andes by women who are socially, geographically, and economically marginalised. Their trademark Panama hats epitomize slow fashion.

Read more on:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/observer-ethical-awards-2011>

<http://www.pachacuti.co.uk/>





Interview - Talking with John Reganold

Dr John Reganold is Regents Professor of Soil Science at Washington State University. He is one of the premier scientists in the world in sustainable agricultural research. Here he talks to Textile Exchange Farm Engagement Director, Liesl Truscott, about the role of organic farming in global food production, genetically modified crops and climate change.

Liesl: There is a current theme in rural development about bringing projects to scale. A lot of people say organic is not the solution because it is a niche product. What do you think about that?

John: I think it is one of our better solutions for the future of agriculture. We have a number of solutions and I think organic is one of the best ones. I think organic might be more of a niche market in some developing countries, certainly in developed countries it's here. In the US we are probably still behind European countries but in the US, 4% of our food and beverage market is organic so if you go back 20 years that was probably a small 0.1 or 0.2% so it has really grown. It is in all the stores and I think it is going to continue to grow. In developing countries, I think there is a desire, it is just going to take longer to get established and I think the place where organic can really have an impact is with the practices themselves. Even if growers don't totally go organic, if they are using some of the practices, the soil building practices in particular, if they become more integrated that is a very big jump because that means they will be limiting their synthetic fertilizer use, they will be limiting their pesticide use by using biological pest control mechanisms and for fertilizers because they will be building the soil using organic amendments, using green manure crops, that means they can cut down on synthetic fertilizers and that will have a big impact.

Most people think that it is either one or the other, either organic or conventional. I think that is the wrong view. There is middle ground and in some ways one of the biggest impacts organic has in agriculture is that it is pulling conventional towards the center, where you have conventional growers using organic practices and that is significant.

Liesl: What are your views on biotechnology?

John: With GM food, especially corn and soybean, they are already here, they are dominant in the States. We didn't have much of a choice in testing them but they are here. To me they are just one tool in the box and I don't think they are going to save the world but they are one of many tools we have. There are other mechanisms that farmers can use. They need to be good farmers and e.g. crop rotate. Crop rotation can improve yield and how you irrigate and apply fertilizer also matters. All those mechanisms improve yields. You need to use the full toolbox. To say one thing is really going to save us I have a problem with that ... we need to use the full arsenal.

There are other obstacles that are greater than genetically modified crops. For example, if you look at developing countries we know that about 30% of the food is going to waste, and that is a huge deal. They don't have the market, the infrastructure, the refrigeration, or the roads to get that food out so it gets wasted. The interesting thing is if you look at developed countries, the figure is the same but for different reasons. We have a lot of food. We have large servings in restaurants, we throw food away, we have expiration dates and throw away sometimes too early and waste it that way. If we could reduce that waste even by half to 15% it would have a much more dramatic impact than say for example GM crops or even other mechanisms so that is one area we really need to concentrate on.

Liesl: Can you tell us a bit about the benefits of organic agriculture in an age of climate change?

John: One of the issues with climate change we are concerned about in certain areas is drought. We have had droughts in the U.S. for example, and what we find in those areas is that organic farmers tend to be more resilient to crop pressures, and yields tend to be pretty good during drought times and often they even do better on organic farms than conventional farms. Normally yields would be lower on organic farms but during periods of stress, organic farms tend to do better. So I think, with climate change here possibly getting worse, I think ... Organic farming is one of the weapons we have to neutralize [the impact of climate change]. Organic farmers have a part to play in combating climate change and I think that will pay off with benefits when there are periods of drought.

To listen to the full audio recording of the interview [click here](#)

Regional Focus : Africa

French Cooperation's regional program revives the "West African Organic and fair trade cotton platform"



Youssef Sidibe,
APROCA

In 2009, TE had strongly supported, thanks to the ICCO fund, the establishment of the organic and fair trade cotton stakeholders platform in West Africa. During the inception workshop in Segou (Mali), an action plan was set up with a follow up committee under the coordination of the African cotton growers association (APROCA). Since then, the committee has met only two times. Due to lack of funds the platform did not reach full operational capacity and the action plan was not fully realized. In April 2011, APROCA took the opportunity at the launch of the French Cooperation program for organic and fair trade cotton in West Africa (see below) to gather all the actors of the platform for a third meeting.

French development agency supports organic and fairtrade cotton in Africa

On the 11th of March it was made public that the French development agency (AFD) has approved a 4.7 million Euros as subsidy to APROCA (African cotton growers association) for the development of organic and fair trade cotton in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali and Senegal.

The program aims to increase the supply of organic and fair trade cotton at regional level and to promote the market of this cotton in Europe. This project will help farmers to benefit from the advantages of the mounting fair trade and organic market. The project will last five years with an estimated total cost of 11.9 million Euros. Direct beneficiaries are 140,000 farmers who will work on an area of 170,000 ha.

Extract from OE Africa Newsletter (March 2008)

During this meeting, participants observed the low functionality of the platform and reviewed the strategic plan. Unanimously, participants recognized the effort made by the follow up committee and have voted to renew its mandate without change. The reviewed plan focuses on certification costs, marketing and price of organic and fair trade cotton and actions (with each participating actor making a commitment) have been identified to build capacity of actors and lobbying to improve farmers conditions.

After the platform meeting, APROCA proceeded to officially launch the French development agency's regional program for organic and fair trade cotton in West Africa. This program is supposed to have started in 2008. Some aspects of the program, like the coordination and technical assistance in the field has started early. The field activities will be executed mainly through existing projects and under the leadership of conventional cotton grower structures in each participating country. This coordination framework was the strategic choice of APROCA to strengthen the

position of its member organizations in each country. In Benin, the CCNPC which is the national council of cotton grower cooperatives (for conventional cotton) urged organizations involved in organic and fair trade cotton to set up an operational action plan for the program. This was done in May with the participation of Helvetas, OBEPAB, Avigref, and Textile Exchange. The targeted actions were set up for three years with a very strong focus on the capacity building of field staff and farmers to improve production of organic and fair trade cotton in terms both of quantity and quality.

For more information about this program, please contact Youssouf Djimé SIDIBE who is the regional coordinator of the program for APROCA.

Article by Silvere Tovignan, Textile Exchange, Regional Director Africa

The 2nd West African Summit on Organic Agriculture

After the first West African organic summit held in Nigeria three years ago, the organic agriculture movements are organizing the second summit in Senegal to take place at the end of August 2011. The organic agriculture movement from most ECOWAS countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Niger, Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Ghana, Liberia, Gambia, Guinea, Bissau Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cap Vert) are expected to be represented at this summit. The summit is being organized under the big umbrella of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). Subjects to be discussed during the summit include:

- Contribution of organic agriculture to food security/sovereignty in Africa
- Challenges on the introduction of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) in West Africa
- Land Grabbing in Africa

The summit will deliberate a motion for better participation of African smallholders at the Organic World Congress and IFOAM General Assembly. Importantly, the summit will lead to the official inception of the West African Organic Agriculture Network (WAOAN).

As organic cotton is an important organic crop in west Africa, Textile Exchange is organizing and supporting farm groups from Mali, Benin, and Senegal to give their voice at this important meeting.



For more information please contact Silvere Tovignan,
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Fairtrade cotton stakeholders meeting in West Africa

Fairtrade cotton stakeholders in West Africa met in Bamako (Mali) for a workshop on the 14th and 15th of June. This workshop was organized by Fairtrade Africa and Fairtrade International to discuss issues regarding the revision of the Fairtrade Standard and the minimum guarantee price. Textile Exchange's Silvere Tovignan, Regional Director for Africa, reports.

Analyzing the situation of fair trade cotton, participants noticed that the certification costs, insufficient commitment by cotton companies, and insufficient local processing facilities are among the factors limiting the growth of fair trade cotton production in Africa. Having recognized many advantages of their engagement in the fair trade initiative, the farm groups observed that a better mechanism of price fixation, reduced delay in payment to farmers, a clear buying contract before planting, and capacity building of farm groups to improve product quality would be valuable actions that will highly impact working conditions and living standards.

The workshop gave Fairtrade Africa and Fairtrade International the opportunity to consult farm

groups, through a questionnaire, about the changes they would like to see on the fair trade standard and the minimum guarantee price. The results of this consultation in Africa will be analyzed together with that in other regions such as India and Latin America, and will help make decisions on how to improve the Standard and the pricing of fair trade cotton (extract from the report made by Malick N'Diaye from Senegal).



Above: Meeting of Fairtrade stakeholders in Bamako, Mali

Feature - The role of the Neem tree in organic farming in West Africa



Above: Tree planting by the Peuhl producers, Benin

Native to India, the Neem tree also known as Indian Lilac (latin name: *Melia Azadirachta* or *Azadirachta Indica*) grows in tropical regions and is evergreen. It belongs to the Meliaceae family. This tree grows well on poor soils and can tolerate high temperatures and low rainfalls. It can live for several decades and can reach heights of up to 10 meters. Two times a year (in March and August), the tree produces small oval fruits, yellow in color when ripe, with a sweet pulp harmless to humans, animals and birds. The Neem tree is full of virtues and all parts of the tree are useful (the leaves, the flowers, the fruits and seeds, the bark, and the roots).

In pharmacology and cosmetics, for example, Neem oil is used to treat stomach pain (as an antihelminthic or vermifuge - medicines that dispel intestinal worms), and malaria, and acts as a mosquito repellent. It is also used increasingly in the composition of soaps and creams. In the poultry industry, the burned meal is spread on the ground to help with disinfection. In the plant production, the liquid obtained during the maceration of the fruits or the seeds as well as the meal have bio-pesticide and fertilizing properties. In the soils, the meal repels worms (nematodes) and when spread on the leaves and the flower buds of the cultures, it repels pests, and it affects their growth and morphology. For this reason, it is called a bio-pesticide.

When the NGO Helvetas was introducing the organic and fair-trade cotton in Mali, the Institute for Rural Economy (IER) of Mali was conducting studies on the usefulness of different parts of the Neem tree. For a sustainable action on preserving the environment and conserving the habitat, the Neem seeds were selected for pest control not only for cotton production, but also for other agricultural products such as: sesame, soy, cowpeas, corn, sorghum, vegetables, etc. Since then the Neem seeds and the pits or stones of the fruit (endocarp) were recommended to producers and especially to those involved in organic and fairtrade cotton programs. The seeds and pits are readily available for purchase at low costs, depending on the country.

For the last two seasons, thanks to the communication system developed by Helvetas and run by their regional technical advisor, the organic producers in Benin were able to purchase neem seeds from their neighboring country, Burkina Faso. The recommendations are to use 4 to 5 kg of seeds per hectare and for each treatment. Depending on the level of the attack and the weather conditions, 4 to 6 treatments are necessary. In extreme cases, the producers can carry on up to 12 treatments. To make the extract richer, some additives are added to the preparation: in Mali, oil from Koby (*Carapa procera*) or M'peku (*Lannea microcarpa*), in Benin Shea butter oil and soaps from natural potassium, with additional spices, and crunched garlic, and in Senegal Shea butter oil, spices, and soap with natural potassium.

Because of a significant increase in the number of participants in the organic cotton programs led by Helvetas in West Africa, the demand for neem seeds is in net increase. For this season (2011/12), the forecasted needs are of 252 tons of neem seeds, more than double the amount used for the 2010/2011 season (109 tons). The input product is very efficient and cheap for the small producers, but the product is progressively getting rarer. The degree of depletion is not noticeable to all the organic producers to the same extent, as it depends on the country. While in Mali, Senegal and Burkina Faso there are many Neem tree plantations, in Benin, there is not enough to satisfy the growing demand.

The provision of this important agricultural input (to the same extent as the cottonseeds) is part of the priorities of the managers of the organic cotton programs. This situation could hinder the further implementation of the organic agriculture in West Africa, if steps are not undertaken to manage efficiently this natural resource and to invest in the development of new bio-pesticides, efficient, easily accessible and cheap for small producers. To prevent a shortage, since the 2009/2010 season Helvetas in Benin has encouraged the producers who are members of the union of cooperatives of organic cotton producers (UCPCB) to do a civic act through the campaign "one producer - one Neem tree." More than 500 Neem trees have been planted since, making also a landmark for the organic production areas.



above: Neem tree branches with fruit



Written by Lazare Yombi,
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Regional Focus : Latin America

Feature - GMOs in Peru: an ongoing story

One of the most controversial topics in the forums related to the development of technologies, agriculture, and rural development is, without a doubt, that of GMOs (genetically modified organisms). There are both supporters and critics of their use and growth, which has somehow led to further research, much controversy, and has revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the social, academic, and commercial actors-be they government or private-directly or indirectly related to GMOs.

According to the ISAAA (International Service for Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications) , 148 million hectares of GMO crops have been planted worldwide (Table 1). However, Peru is one of the countries in Latin America that still prohibits the planting of GMO seeds (Table 1). According to the ISAAA, with regard to GMOs, it is a technology that contributes to food safety, increases the

farmers' productivity and economic profits, conserves biodiversity (because it avoids deforestation), contributes to reducing poverty and hunger, reduces the environmental footprints of agriculture (less use of pesticides and reduced release of CO₂), increases the efficiency of the use of water, and helps to mitigate climate change, thereby reducing the greenhouse effect.

Table 1
Main countries of Latin America that sow fields with biotech crops

Country	Area (millions of hectares)	Crops	Country with organic cotton program ^a
Brazil	25.4	Soy, corn and cotton	Yes
Argentina	22.9	Soy, corn and cotton	Yes
Paraguay	2.6	Soy	Yes
Uruguay	1.1	Soy and corn	No
Bolivia	0.9	Soy	No
Mexico	0.1	Cotton and soy	No
Colombia	<0.1	Cotton	No
Chile	<0.1	Corn, soy and canola	No
Honduras	<0.1	Corn	No
Costa Rica	<0.1	Cotton and soy	No

^a Textile Exchange Database – Latin America
Source: ISAAA (2010)

On the other hand, critics of genetically modified crops and seeds, such as Dr. Miguel Altieri, maintain that 1) there is no relationship between the prevalence of hunger in a given country and its population; 2) the majority of the innovations in agricultural biotechnology have been profit-driven rather than motivated by need; 3) the integration of the seed and chemical industries seems to be aimed at speeding up increases in spending per acre of seeds (increased amount of chemical products), which generates significantly lower returns for farmers; 4) GMO seeds do not necessarily increase the crop yields; 5) there may be some potential risk for consuming food produced with these seeds (i.e. they could generate new allergens); 6) pests continue to build up resistance; 7) it could cause genetic erosion; 8) there are possible ecological risks; 9) funds for agricultural research are being diverted to this issue when they could be used in studies that examine another conception of rural development; and 10) their contribution to the rate of return is not significant.

In April 1999, Law 27104 "on prevention of risks derived from the use of biotechnology" was passed, since there were not any laws that regulate GMOs in Peru. Law 12033 on Biotechnology was later passed on July 11, 2006, virtually without any debate. In October 2007, Monsanto sent its representative for Latin America to visit President Alan García, declaring the company's interest in producing seeds in Peru.

On April 15, 2011, Supreme Decree 003-2011-AG "Approval of internal sector regulation on the safety of biotechnology in the engagement of activities with living modified agricultural or forestry organisms and/or their derivative products" was passed. A few days ago, the Peruvian Congress passed a law declaring a "10-year moratorium on the entry of living modified organisms (LMO) into the country," although it still needs to be signed by the President of Peru. This piece of legislation supersedes the previous law 003-2011-AG.

The issue of GMOs in Peru has transcended the areas of the environment related to technology, academia, and the economic interest. It was to be expected that at some point the debates about GMOs would eventually become political. The Regional Government of Cuzco (2007) was the first to declare that it is a GMO free region. This type of initiative was later followed by the regional governments of Ayacucho (2009) , San Martín (2009) , Huánuco (2010), and Lambayeque (2011) . On Thursday, June 16, 2011, the Lima Metropolitan Council approved a city ordinance, declaring Lima a territory free of genetically modified organisms, although the farming area is of relative importance. However, the competent body that regulates transgenic seeds is the National Institute for Agricultural Innovation (known by its Spanish acronym as INIA). This situation of ambiguity and contrast of roles is an effect of the polarization of the different government entities regarding an issue that is not only technical, but also crosses into social, economic, cultural, and commercial areas, among others, which is why we might consider that a comprehensive approach must be

taken in analyzing this issue.

In a study by Dr. Antonietta Gutiérrez-Rosati, a senior lecturer at the National Agrarian University - La Molina, her results indicated the presence of NK603 and Bt11 in corn crops in the Barranca Valley.

In 2002, concerns were raised about delays in approving and implementing the regulations specified in Law 27104 as part of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. These results were the proof that the authorities needed. The INIA later refuted this study, which led to a controversy among academics.

In 2011, just weeks before the end of the current presidential term, the biotechnology specialist who advised the former Minister of Agriculture was removed from his duties. A few days later, the Minister of Agriculture, whose position on GMOs was well-known and widely covered in the media, also resigned from his position. It is worth mentioning that in 2008, the "advisor" represented the country in the IV Cartagena Protocol Meeting on Biosafety, held in Bonn, Germany. During the meeting, Peru, Paraguay, and Japan were the only countries, among a total of 140, to refuse to sign an international regulation that ordered paying compensation for damage caused by GMOs in agriculture, the environment, and health.

In the debate on genetically modified seeds in Peru, there are various levels of discussion regarding the academic, economic and political environments, and finally, in terms of development. From an academic point of view, all that is required is scientific evidence that shows the benefits or the negative effects that could be caused (biodiversity and health are two relevant issues); the economic analysis cannot be static, but must be projected in time (for the positive and negative effects) considering the characteristics of biodiversity, the rural environment, and the markets to which Peru exports, among others. The political aspects and development go hand in hand, given that the rural development model and the strategies for dealing with the domestic and foreign markets are not limited exclusively to the particular interests of the companies or other actors interested in promoting GMO seeds.

Peru used to be a huge cotton-producing country, but its production has now decreased due to the dynamic of the market and the changing of the agricultural map. The varieties of cotton that are planted in Peru (Pima, Tangüis, Mountain and Rough) require specific policies for their development, connecting them properly with the textile industry and looking at the domestic and foreign markets with a comprehensive vision. In this sense, special attention should be placed on organic cotton, because this is a growing market, and the current textile industry in Peru can increase the consumption of a fiber with these characteristics. The government policies are what will help to raise the profile of a product with environmental benefits that are plainly evident. However, we must honestly ask whether GMO seeds, for example, are truly necessary and essential, as some proponents claim. This will be an important task for the next government, which will take office in July 2011.

For a full list of references for this article please contact: [Hanna](#)



By Alfonso Lizárraga
Regional Director for Latin America - Textile Exchange

Regional Focus : India

Feature - Crisis and Solutions -The Non-GMO cotton seed issue in India

Textile Exchange in India has been at the heart of a number of initiatives aimed at easing a key bottleneck in organic cotton production. Through effective advocacy, discussion, and research, Textile Exchange and its partners have created a framework which should see a step-change in the availability of non-GMO seeds for organic cotton farmers.

If you track the global organic cotton movement, you will have watched India's progress in this sector with varied emotions. India has been global leader for the last three years, and contributing to 80 percent of the world's supply has been no mean achievement. For Indian organic cotton producers, one of the biggest challenges over the last couple of years has been the shortage of non-GMO seeds, one of the essential inputs for organic cotton production.

How has this situation arisen? To understand, we need to briefly examine India's cotton history, the way seeds were sourced by farmers in the past, and the dramatic changes in the role of the key players.

It is well known that India has more than a five thousand year history of cotton production, has the largest acreage under cotton cultivation in the world (30.4 percent in 2008/09 according to ICAC), is home to *Gossypium Herbaceum* and *Gossypium Arboreum*, and one of the few countries that cultivates all four species of cotton, including *Gossypium Hirsutum* and *Gossypium Barbadense* along with the two native species. India is also one of the few countries using a high percentage of Hybrid cotton seeds.

From the mid nineties, the species used underwent a gradual change and the situation altered even further with the introduction of Biotech (Bt) Hybrids in 2002. Today more than 90% of India's cotton is of the *Hirsutum* species with *Herbaceum*, *Arboreum*, and *Barbadense* accounting for the balance. Contrast this with the situation at the turn of independence when *G. Herbaceum* and *G. Arboreum*, India's native species, between them occupied around 87% of India's cotton acreage. From this one can get an idea of the rich heritage that India once possessed that has since been lost due to the demands of commerce and lopsided planning.

As for the source of seeds, until the late nineties, the public sector played a dominant role, catering for almost 55 percent of the acreage, with the private sector and farmers' own sources providing for the balance of 35 percent. Today the private sector accounts for almost 90 percent of the cotton seed market and most of these seeds are *Intra Hirsutum* proprietary hybrids. This rapid and dynamic growth of the private sector can be attributed to their investment in technical research, their spirit of commerce, and marketing skills. One of the keys to their success was the development of good quality, shorter duration Hybrids that appealed to the farmers who faced constant threats from pests, droughts, and floods and were keen to plant seeds that could be harvested early.

The rapid promotion of Bt Hybrids by the Government of India since 2002, combined with the aggressive marketing techniques adopted by the private sector companies producing them, the endorsement of their performance by officials, and their eager adoption by Indian cotton farmers has almost sounded the death knell for the once popular non-Bt Hybrids and varieties from the public sector institutions such as the State Seed Corporations. Popular and respected cultivars such as MCU5, LRA 5166, and hybrids such as Varalakshmi and DCH32 are not easily available. Further there is a dearth of further research and improvement in the public sector, with a resultant deterioration in performance levels. It appears that the public sector has all but abdicated its responsibilities, leaving farmers who wish to plant conventional hybrids and varieties high and dry.

In this emerging scenario, organic cotton producing groups have faced a big challenge in seed sourcing, and the problem has gotten much worse in the last couple of years. Over the last two to three years, Textile Exchange has been at the forefront of highlighting this issue and bringing it to the awareness of policy makers and stakeholders.

Our Annual Conference in Aurangabad, India in January 2008 was attended by policy makers including Dr. PVSM Gouri from APEDA and Dr. Anupam Barik from the Directorate of Cotton Development, along with senior scientists from the Central Institute of Cotton Research in Coimbatore, breeding experts, and cotton seed companies. These experts assured a large gathering of farmers and producing groups that support, expertise, and cooperation were available, but that organic cotton producing groups needed to be proactive in taking advantage of it. Dr. KR Kranthi and his team of eminent scientists from CICR in Nagpur, again reiterated this point at a two day cotton seed workshop, organized by Textile Exchange in mid-2010, where they highlighted the excellent gene pool available from their organization, and also outlined contamination issues to the group. In Dr. Kranthi's memorable words "*We are here to support you, but the direction of this support has to be steered by you*".

In addition, when Indian organic cotton was facing integrity issues in 2009/10, Textile Exchange, along with other Consortium members ICCO and Solidaridad, identified the shortage of non-GM seeds as one of the critical factors affecting the integrity of Indian organic cotton. At a meeting initiated by the Consortium and organized by Textile Exchange (then Organic Exchange) held in Indore in May 2010, organic cotton stakeholders were presented with our findings and they resolved to be proactive. The formation of an Organic Cotton Producers' Forum was proposed, with Textile Exchange offering to support this move. Building a sector-wide pressure group, we thought, was crucial to moving this issue forward.

Once the problem was identified, it was heartening to see action being taken by private groups, the organic cotton sector, and the Government of India. A few production groups, notably BioRe in Madhya Pradesh, Chetna in Andhra Pradesh, MP and Maharashtra, and groups producing for C&A such as Pratibha in MP and Ecofarms in Maharashtra (the latter two with the support of Cotton Connect), have taken steps over the last two years to initiate field trials and start the journey to self-sufficiency in seed supply.

BioRe India, along with FiBL of Switzerland, organized a two day workshop at the University of Agricultural Science in Dharwar, with cooperation from Chetna and Textile Exchange on the 21st and 22nd June 2011. Dionys Forster of FiBL and Rajeev Baruah of BioRe with great support from Dr. SS Patil of UAS in Dharwar did an excellent job of bringing stakeholders together and highlighting the issues. The press release can be read [here](#).

Day one of the workshop highlighted the critical nature of the issue, followed by presentations of seed initiatives by the producer groups and research bodies such as Centre for Sustainable Agriculture. Scientific presentations were made by Dr. Patil and his colleagues and by Dr. Barik of the Directorate of Cotton Development. At the end of the day, participants jointly signed a resolution to move the issue forward through active participation and this was aptly called the "Dharwar Declaration".

Day two had more in depth discussions, and committees were formed for the various activities including shaping policy, collecting, and disseminating information on seed varieties etc. A decision was made to speed up the formation of the Producer Group body, led by Textile Exchange, and a target date of the end of August has been set for a meeting.

On the policy front, the Government of India has recognized the need to address the issue of the severe shortage of non-Bt seeds and recommendations for funding and private public partnerships were made in the Organic Cotton Advisory Board - of which Textile Exchange is a member - as early as 2009 /2010. There is a move to revive this Board to address these burning sectoral issues. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture has allotted funding for two important agricultural

universities to lead the work on supporting the non-Bt seed sector, namely UAS Dharwar and the Tamilnadu Agri-University, Coimbatore.

Another key development has been the recommendations made by a Sub Group for Organic Cotton (under specialty cottons) for the Formation of Fibre Policy under the 12th Plan for India. Textile Exchange India had the privilege of also being a member of this Committee, which produced an impressive plan in collaboration with Dun and Bradstreet as a knowledge partner. The first critical issue mentioned in its recommendations was the severe shortage of seeds for the organic sector. Demand was estimated at 1,500 MTs of fuzzy variety seeds and 225 MTs of delinted hybrids for the current acreage and projections for growth were also made.

The success of the existing Silk Board underpins the recommendation to establish a mission mode approach for organic cotton, with the formation of a Board on the lines of the Silk Board, which has been very successful. The mission mode approach would ensure action in research and technology, and transfer of technology, with a focus on the production and distribution of breeder, foundation, and certified seeds. Mission mode would also ensure the compilation of accurate statistical data and the effective promotion, marketing, and quality control of organic cotton.

The recommended investment by this Sub Group for production of certified non Bt seeds is Rs 100 crores (roughly USD 220,000) and for distribution 20 crores (USD 44,000) for the period from 2010/11 to 2015.

This report is pending review by Parliament, and it is expected to be approved. If so, this will mark the beginnings of a new era for organic cotton production in India, and establish leadership methods and business models which other countries might well want to emulate.

Textile Exchange is proud to have been at the centre of these important developments which will make a difference to non-Bt seed availability and the success of organic cotton farming in 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.