

Grower Introduction to BCI in the US

What is BCI?

The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) is a global non-profit and the largest cotton sustainability program in the world through the *Better Cotton Standard*.

Consumers are increasingly demanding more sustainable products and calling on brands and retailers to be more transparent about their supply chains and raw material sourcing. In turn, retailers and brands are growing their sustainability commitments **from dirt to shirt** that demonstrate their priorities to minimize environmental impacts and to improve the livelihoods of those involved in every step.

And that's where BCI comes in...

BCI works in 23 cotton-growing countries with both small-scale producers and large, mechanized farms. Alongside partners and growers, BCI works to: 1) apply the *Better Cotton Standard* to the specific growing context; 2) evaluate production practices in order to license cotton grown as *Better Cotton*; and 3) encourage continuous improvement in the cotton sector.

Benefits for Growers

Growers who meet the requirements of the *Better Cotton Standard* can expect the following benefits:

- Recognition of good farming and management practices through a globally recognized *Better Cotton* license.
- Increased market opportunities and marketability for licensed cotton up the supply chain.
- Access to BCI's global cotton sustainability network and potential learning and experience-sharing opportunities.

Meeting the Better Cotton Standard

Under each Principle, a grower must meet core criteria and indicators relating to specific practices. See some examples of the criteria below.

In the field...

- Integrated pest management and limiting the use of highly hazardous pesticides¹
- Proper handling of chemicals
- Use of personal protective equipment
- Efficient irrigation water use
- Prevention of runoff and leaching

In the shop...Decent Work (Labor) & Management

- Preventing child labor especially for hazardous work
- Appropriate disciplinary measures
- Clear policies on discrimination and equal pay for equal work
- Workers' rights, such as collective bargaining
- Record keeping
- Monitoring continuous improvement

The *Better Cotton Standard* defines what *Better Cotton* is.

Better for...

- the people who produce it.
- the environment it grows in.
- the sector's future.

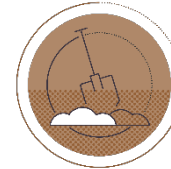
Better Cotton's 7 Principles



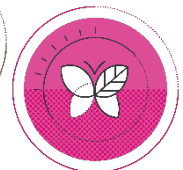
Crop Protection



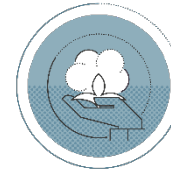
Water



Soil Health



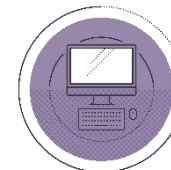
Biodiversity



Fibre Quality



Decent Work



Management System

¹ For a list of highly hazardous pesticides and targeted phase-out dates, download it [here](#).

US Licensing Requirements

BCI works with Implementing Partners (typically a merchant or cooperative) to license farms.²

Since 2020, the US program uses a three-year license cycle. In that time, the grower commits to complete the following steps for licensing.

Each step is critical to maintaining the integrity and credibility of the Better Cotton license.

Grower Commitments	Timeline	Year 1	Years 2 & 3	
			Renewal	Renewal
1. Self-Assessment Survey on farming practices	Late Winter to Spring	Enrollment ~90 min.	Renewal ~30 min.	Renewal ~30 min.
2. Farm Visit/Assessment 30% of participating farms receive a visit to verify that practices are implemented in the field.	During growing season before harvest	<i>If selected</i> 2-4 hrs.	<i>If selected</i> 2-4 hrs.	<i>If selected</i> 2-4 hours
3. Submit Post-Harvest Data Total yield, acres, water, and inputs (fertilizers, chemicals)	After harvest Winter to Early Spring	Required 1-2 hrs.	Required 1-2 hrs.	Required 1-2 hrs.
BCI notifies growers about licensing decisions in the winter of their first year				

Multiple Entities

BCI licenses cotton growers based on their farming practices, and often, this means more than one entity (even if they operate under different tax ID or farm numbers) are grouped together under the same license.

One license may apply if the entities share the same management and practices for crop protection, soil and water management, and labor.

This structure helps to reduce paperwork for the grower(s) and streamlines farm visits and data reporting. If you are not sure if you should register as one farm or more than one, please reach out to the BCI US Team.

More Questions? Contact the BCI Team in the US

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You can also visit BCI's website: www.bettercotton.org

² If a grower is unsure about who their Implementing Partner might be, or if a grower wants to learn about enrolling without an Implementing Partner, please contact BCI. Enrolling without an Implementing Partner may require self-funding / contracting an independent verifier in each three-year license period.