DEVELOPMENT OF REEL CODES

COTTON CONNECT

REIMAGINING THE FUTURE FOR SUPPLY CHAINS

Development of REEL Codes

Beginning with the REEL Cotton Code in 2015, CottonConnect has developed three REEL Codes of Conduct – REEL Cotton, REEL Linen and REEL Regenerative – which define specific criteria for sustainable raw material production. The Codes of Conduct form the basis of the three-year REEL agricultural training programmes for farmers.

CottonConnect follows best practice guidelines in developing the REEL Codes, with a focus on creating positive impact for producers, and ensuring traceable, verifiable and sustainably produced fibres to connect into global brands' supply chains.

CottonConnect's Code Development Process

THEORY OF CHANGE
The Theory of Change outlines how implementation of the Code's criteria leads to the desired outcomes and impact. This ensures the requirements of the Code are directly linked to achieving the overall aims of the relevant REEL programme.

CODE OF CONDUCT PROTOTYPE
Working with sustainable code experts, CottonConnect develops a prototype with requirements for sustainable farming or processing practices. The requirements are based on expertise and benchmarking of comparable standards or codes.
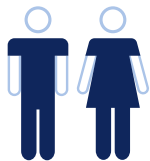
PILOT
Implementation of the draft Code is trialled in a pilot project with farmers and/or processors to test it in practice, and to assess current production against the Codes assessment levels. Results of the pilot are fed into the development of the Code.

VERIFICATION
CottonConnect works with FLOCERT to develop the assurance and verification of the REEL Codes, due to FLOCERT's experience of providing Fairtrade International certification and expertise in translating sustainability programmes into private codes.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION
Following principles from ISEAL Codes of Good Practice (Standard Setting), key stakeholders who will be directly impacted by implementation of the Code, and those who have relevant expertise or interest in the application of the Code, are consulted.

CODE REVISION
In line with best practice, the Codes are revised every few years to incorporate feedback from farmers and implementing partners, audits from FLOCERT, and wider stakeholder consultation. The current REEL Cotton Code is Version 3.0.

PUBLICATION
The final or revised Code is published on CottonConnect's website and introduced for use in the REEL sustainable agriculture programmes.

REEL Cotton Code

The development of the REEL Cotton Code included many elements of standard setting good practice, including comparative analysis of five different sustainable agriculture standards, risk analysis, a pilot of the code prototype, multi-stakeholder consultation, and regular versions.

2015 – PHASE 1:
The REEL Cotton Code of Conduct and respective draft assessment tool and conduct third party verification audit was developed through:

- Inputs gathering and analysis
- Risk Analysis
- Drafting the REEL Cotton Code of Conduct
- Development of Assessment Tool
- Stakeholder mapping and consultation
- Training of staff
- Verification of project in Gujarat, India

2015 – PHASE 2:
The final REEL Cotton Code of Conduct Version 1.0 was developed and third-party verification framework designed by:

- Inputs gathering and analysis of pilot audit results conducted in Phase 1
- Reviewing the REEL Cotton Code, incorporating feedback from stakeholders and observations from the pilot audit by FLOCERT
- Review of Assessment Tool incorporating the definition of Full Compliance, Partial Compliance, Needs (Non) Compliance
- Development of a process flow diagram and procedure for third party verification process

2016 REVISION:
The revision of REEL Cotton Code leading to Version 2.0 included strengthening the social criteria on employment conditions and health and safety.

2021 REVISION:
The revision of REEL Cotton Code leading to Version 3.0 included recommendations from a survey conducted with farmers and implementing partners; a review of the Delta indicators for sustainable cotton; enhanced health and safety for gins; and region-specific customisations. The revision included a stakeholder consultation in August 2021.

REEL Linen Code
Building on the success of the REEL Cotton Code, CottonConnect developed the REEL Linen Code in partnership with Kingdom, one of largest linen yarn manufacturers in the world. The Code was designed to assist brands and manufacturers seeking assurance of sustainably produced linen.

APRIL 2019:
Inception meeting held in France with representatives from CottonConnect, Kingdom, Farmer co-operative, flax broker, and sustainable agriculture experts.April 2019: Field study of linen farmers and scutching mill, Normandy, France.

AUGUST 2019:
Field study of spinning mill in Zhejiang, China.

APRIL – NOVEMBER 2019:
Prototype code development by experts and CottonConnect.

NOVEMBER 2019 – MARCH 2020:
Review of prototype and consultation on with farmers and other stakeholders; Pilot of the prototype and a sample audit.

MAY 2020 – APRIL 2021:
Pilot and sample audit of the Code with farmer co-operatives; Development of standard systems

MAY 2021:
Publication of the REEL Linen Code of Conduct Version 1.0

AUGUST 2021:
Stakeholder consultation on REEL Linen Code of Conduct Version 1.0.

REEL Regenerative Code
To meet the increasing desire from brands to introduce regenerative agriculture practices into raw material production, CottonConnect developed the REEL Regenerative Code. The REEL Regenerative Code is a complementary, optional addition to the REEL Cotton Code.

The REEL Regenerative Code is an impact code that draws a direct relation between regenerative farming practices and the expected impact on functional biodiversity, livelihood improvement and climate resilience.

2020/2021:
CottonConnect started a Regenerative Agriculture and Carbon Sequestration Pilot Project in Madhya Pradesh, India.

MARCH – JULY 2021:
The REEL Regenerative Theory of Change, and prototype REEL Regenerative Code of Conduct was developed by CottonConnect and sustainable code development experts. The Code includes practices to improve soil health, land and water management, and improve livelihoods, mitigate climate change and enhance agro-biodiversity.

2021/2022:
The REEL Regenerative Agriculture Programme, based on the REEL Regenerative Code, is being piloted in India and Pakistan. The pilot includes farmer training, soil testing, demo plots, vaccinating cattle, planting trees.

AUGUST 2021:
Stakeholder consultation with farmers, implementing partners, sustainable code development experts, sustainability and biodiversity experts.