



CottonConnect's **Organic Cotton Farmer Training Programme** covers multiple aspects of agronomic interventions with a focus on good agricultural practices, organisation of farmer collectives and enhanced biodiversity.

CottonConnect works with organic cotton farmers to boost the production of organic cotton and support their communities. We connect major brands to organic cotton farmers and empower farmers to deliver with transparency, consistency and integrity.

CottonConnect launched the Organic Cotton Farmer Training Programme (OCFTP) in 2014/15 to support smallholder cotton farmers in adopting organic cotton production practices over a three-year conversion process. The programme components deepen the skills and knowledge of the farmers, and empower them with the tools to make a more sustainable future.

CottonConnect, through its local implementation partners, has been able to reach over 85,000 farmers across various regions through programme components like organic production training, organic input production centres, verification, testing and assurance, supply chain linkage and traceability service support to farmers, as per organic standard protocols.

FARMER TRAININGS

The programme farmers are trained on both agronomic and programmatic aspects. The training is conducted across the season with topics relevant at each crop stage.



TESTING INTEGRITY AND ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

Organic integrity is the core of any organic program. CottonConnect, has not only developed a comprehensive strategy on how to prevent contamination of organic cotton with GMO (genetically modified organism), but has also successfully implemented it on the ground.



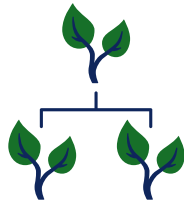
This is ensured by taking the following steps:

- Development of comprehensive standard operating procedures on GMO integrity.
- Mapping seed demand and supply.
- Training for farmers, and everyone involved on issues of integrity.
- Implementation of multi stage GMO testing across various crop stages: pre-sowing and post-sowing, leaf, seed cotton and cotton lint.

We also ensure that, the local partners have valid organic scope certificate after following due processes as per established organic certification standards.

SEED LINKAGES AND ORGANIC SEED RESEARCH TRIALS:

The market is dominated by GMO seeds and it is difficult to source good quality non-GMO seeds. To ensure that our partners are able to provide good quality seeds to the farmers we map the demand and recommend and help procure seeds from tested and trusted seed cultivators.



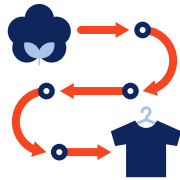
To increase availability of non-GMO seeds, CottonConnect works to identify suitable seed varieties. We engage partners to conduct pilot trials with different varieties with the aim to find and adapt new varieties of non-GMO cotton seeds for organic growers.

CUSTOMIZED SERVICES FOR OUR BRANDS:

The OCFTP is customized as per the brand requirement. The CottonConnect organic team works with the brands/partners to identify their need and then design and deliver services as per the agreed plan. Based on the requirement, OCFTP can also be integrated with gender-based initiatives, livelihood women empowerment programs and regenerative program.

TRACEABILITY

CottonConnect works with global brands and manufacturers to run sustainable cotton programmes, and the cotton grown by these farmers, including organic cotton, is traceable via TraceBale (CottonConnect's bespoke, proprietary traceability software tool which provides dynamic and potentially real time source information and chain of custody of any apparel product produced in a CottonConnect's supply chain) all the way up to the final product.



Traceability through TraceBale starts from the farm, where the field officers record all the vital information about farmer, farm, and the cropping pattern and can be fed with data from farmers, ginners, spinners, and other processors in the chain.

CottonConnect has made significant advances to improve the integrity of organic cotton, particularly in India. Through a team of organic cotton and seed experts we have successfully established and implemented procedures and processes on the ground to help strengthen the sector. It is important that farmers or producers of cotton become self-sustaining and look at organic farming as a viable business model. Our specialist teams, with their local knowledge, work on the ground to build the skills, capacity and understanding of thousands of farmers by giving them the training and tools they know will succeed in boosting incomes, profitability and productivity.

For more information visit:

www.cottonconnect.org/sustainable-practices



FARMER STORY: IMPROVING SOIL HEALTH THROUGH ORGANIC FARMING

Parasram, a programme farmer from state of Madhya Pradesh in India, switched to organic farming six year ago and became a certified organic farmer in 2018-19. The initial years of the switch were difficult. However, the positive results that he saw in his farm strengthened his confidence in organic cotton farming. He became part of CottonConnect's Organic Cotton Farmer Training Programme in 2019. The training sessions influenced him to re-evaluate his cotton growing practices and adopt organic methods of cotton farming. The organic farming practices have helped Parasram significantly improve his income. The immense benefits that organic farming brings to soil health and overall biodiversity are yielding results for him in many other ways too.

As was the general practice, Parasram used to practice mono-cropping which led to problems ranging from lower production of crops, soil health deterioration and rising crop diseases. Today, he grows legumes along with cotton. This practice of intercropping has improved soil nutrient levels of his farm. Also, the legume produce serves as an additional source of income. He prepares his own farm bio-inputs such CPP (Cow Pit Pat) manure, digested bio-gas slurry, and vermi compost. These practices have reduced his expenditure on pesticides and fertilizers and provide additional benefits such bio-gas plant produces methane gas which is used for cooking.



CottonConnect is a company with a social purpose to reimagine the cotton supply chains and help textile producers and farmers enjoy better livelihoods.

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