

July 2017

CottonConnect Forced Labour and Workers' Rights Statement

CottonConnect is committed to ensuring the labour rights of workers employed within its programs and on the farms which are a part of its projects. CottonConnect will not make use of or encourage any form of forced labour and spreads awareness within the communities against adopting such unethical labour practices. CottonConnect has developed a declaration of decent work which each farmer in a CottonConnect programme reads, signs and adheres to. This declaration respects the core ILO rights of workers as defined in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998).

As part of CottonConnect's REEL Cotton agricultural training programme with cotton farmers, the training module 'Decent Work Policy' educates implementation partners and farmers about its position on prohibiting forced labour and respecting workers' rights.

- Freedom from forced labour

CottonConnect prohibits any type of forced and compulsory labour as defined in ILO 29 and 105, including bonded labour and slavery. Forced or compulsory labour is described as work or service undertaken under threat of penalty or undertaken involuntarily. Therefore, workers only work voluntarily and are not intimidated or threatened to enforce employment.

- Freedom from child labour

Child labour as defined in ILO Convention Nos. 138 and 182 is prohibited. No labour is permitted from children below 14 years of age and hazardous work will not be given to children below 18 years of age. The worst forms of child labour as defined in ILO 182 are prohibited. (See CottonConnect's Child Labour Statement).

- Freedom from discrimination at work

The 'Decent Work Policy' stresses that there must be no discrimination amongst labour on the basis of nationality, caste, sex or religion. Workers are not to be subject to any form of corporal punishment, abuse, harassment or intimidation. Equal wages are paid to male and female farm labour as required by ILO 100.

- Freedom to form and join an association, and to bargain collectively

In line with ILO Convention 87, farm labourers are free to organize and join associations. They have the right to collective bargaining, without fear of discrimination or retaliation as defined in ILO 98.

In addition, the REEL Code requires written contracts, memberships and agreements be in place at all levels. The rights and benefits for workers also apply to sub-contracted labour. Wages, working hours and leave comply with, or exceed, applicable legislation and sector minimum standards.

Health and Safety

CottonConnect provides specific training and equipment to reduce risks to health and safety, ensuring that workers are adequately equipped, instructed and trained for their tasks, including safe use and handling of chemicals, as defined in ILO 184. The 'Decent Work Policy' specifically states there should be no pesticides sprayed by pregnant women and children; Personal Protection Equipment should be used while spraying pesticides in the farm; and the amenities of drinking water, toilet and sanitation must be provided for the farm labourers.

CottonConnect strictly advises the gins to address any grievances related to working conditions and workers' rights and assess those and, where appropriate provide compensation for occupational injuries. Working conditions are advised to be regularly monitored to identify potential health and safety risks at work and measures taken to avoid them.