

COTTONCONNECT

Development of the REEL Cotton Programme

The REEL Cotton Programme was created in 2010 by CottonConnect as a three year agricultural programme providing farmers with training on sustainable cotton practices. To meet branded manufacturers and retailers' need for a third party verified programme, CottonConnect worked with FLOCERT to develop a code of conduct that is third party verified by FLOCERT.

CottonConnect chose to work with FLOCERT due to its experience of providing Fairtrade International certification and expertise in translating sustainability programmes into private codes.

REEL Code multistakeholder consultation

The first phase was to develop a draft REEL Cotton Code of Conduct, test it with a pilot group in Gujarat, India and conduct a multi-stakeholder consultation.

1. Relevant content was gathered and analysed for inclusion in the Code of Conduct from
 - a. CottonConnect's Sustainable Agriculture Handbook
 - b. Sustainable Agriculture standards already available
2. Comparative analysis of five different sustainable agriculture standards was conducted against the REEL Cotton Sustainable Agriculture Practices (SAP) Handbook

The analysis specifically compared standards on

- a. Pest Management
 - b. Soil and Fertilisers
 - c. Water
 - d. Ecosystem
 - e. Land use
 - f. Waste
 - g. GMO
3. A comprehensive risk analysis was undertaken, including mitigation and action for all risks.
 4. The first version of the REEL Code of Conduct was drafted, and an accompanying Assessment Tool was developed to record compliance of the code.
 5. Relevant international and local stakeholders were identified, leading to a multi-stakeholder consultation via a pilot of the code prototype. Stakeholders included:
 - a. Brands supporting the REEL Cotton programme
 - b. Implementation partners and producer groups
 - c. Government Agricultural University/Regional Resource centres
 - d. Non-Governmental Organisations training implementers
 - e. REEL Cotton farmers
 - f. Non REEL Cotton farmers
 - g. Ginners
 6. FLOCERT conducted a pilot of the code prototype in Gujarat, India in December 2015. Trained REEL Cotton producers and ginner were compared with a respective non-trained group. Stakeholders and local NGOS were invited to provide feedback.

REEL Cotton Code of Conduct

1. Post the multistakeholder consultation, the final REEL Cotton Code of Conduct was developed, based on eight principles:
 - a. Management skills
 - b. Plant and field management
 - c. Soil nutrient management
 - d. Pest management
 - e. Water management
 - f. Ecosystem protection
 - g. Waste management
2. A third party verification checklist including compliance criteria, checklist and verification process to record compliance against the code
Year 1 – self assessment by 1st party; local partner, with support from CottonConnect
Year 2 – assessment by 3rd party FLOCERT
Year 3 - assessment by 2nd party CottonConnect
3. Standard operating procedures for verification
4. Third party verification fee system

The code of conduct comprises of the following:

- REEL Cotton Code of Conduct 1.0: Third party verification standard operating procedure
- REEL Cotton Code of Conduct 1.0: Compliance criteria
- REEL Cotton Code of Conduct 1.0: Application form for REEL Cotton producer groups