THE BUSINESS CASE FOR SUSTAINABLE COTTON

BENEFITS FOR FARMERS

www.cottonupguide.org
What are farming the benefit from producing (more) sustainable cotton?

In addition to the environmental and social benefits of growing sustainably grown cotton, there are strong business benefits. All sustainable standards benefit farmers in several ways; these vary depending on the standard and where the cotton is grown, and how the standard is implemented.

These are summarised in the following slides.
Sustainable standards and programmes reduce or eliminate farmers’ use of hazardous chemicals, and promote safer practices. This creates safer conditions for farmers and labourers in the fields, reducing pollution and enhancing biodiversity.

Cotton can be a thirsty crop. Sustainable cotton standards connect farmers with training and capacity building in sustainable farming practices and appropriate technologies, reducing use and contamination of water.
WINS

- Improve farmers’ and workers’ health
- Improve health of local ecosystem, particularly water systems
- Reduce costs of inputs
- Build capacity for sustainable farming techniques
The future of cotton farming is threatened by our changing climate. Although standards and the organisations that help implement them can’t address this threat directly, they do equip farmers with the knowledge and skills to make their farms more resilient.

Most standards provide farmer training in sustainable water, soil and environmental management, which all help build greater resilience amidst impacts such as water scarcity and drought. These skills are useful and important in the short term, but will become even more so in the face of a rapidly changing climate.
WINS

- Training that enhances resilience
- Increase fertility of the land in the long term
- Benefit future generations of farmers
COTTON PREMIUMS IMPROVE LIVELIHOODS AND COMMUNITIES

When a farmer starts producing cotton according to a sustainability standard’s guidelines, it can have far-reaching benefits for his or her livelihood, their family’s wellbeing and the wider community.

The range and scale of these benefits depend on the standard and the farmer’s geography, but typically improve yields and promote fairer trading conditions. These, in turn, empower producers to combat poverty in their own lives and communities. The Fairtrade standard has a particularly good track record for improving livelihoods and communities.
Many cotton standards create premium opportunity for farmers

Ripple effect of increased farmer income felt in local community

Support gender equality – improving opportunities for women in farming communities

Prevent the use of child and forced labour
Alongside sustainability standards, implementing partner programmes usually provide guidance and training for farmers on more sustainable farming practices, such as water and soil management techniques, as well as wider skills such as setting up farmer collectives.

Farmers that start producing more sustainable cotton often benefit from training opportunities that increase their wider skills sets and long-term earning potential.
Educate and skill up smallholder cotton farmers

Build Capacity for long-term sustainable farming
SOURCES AND FURTHER READING:

- Companies that rely largely on cotton as a raw material play a crucial role in securing the future of sustainable cotton market: Sustainable Cotton Ranking 2017
- 2025 Sustainable Cotton Challenge: Textile Exchange, 2018

Take a look at how a project M&S funded in India has improved farmers’ livelihoods, enabled them to send their children to school, build homes and generate increasing yields, while using less water, pesticides and fertilisers.