

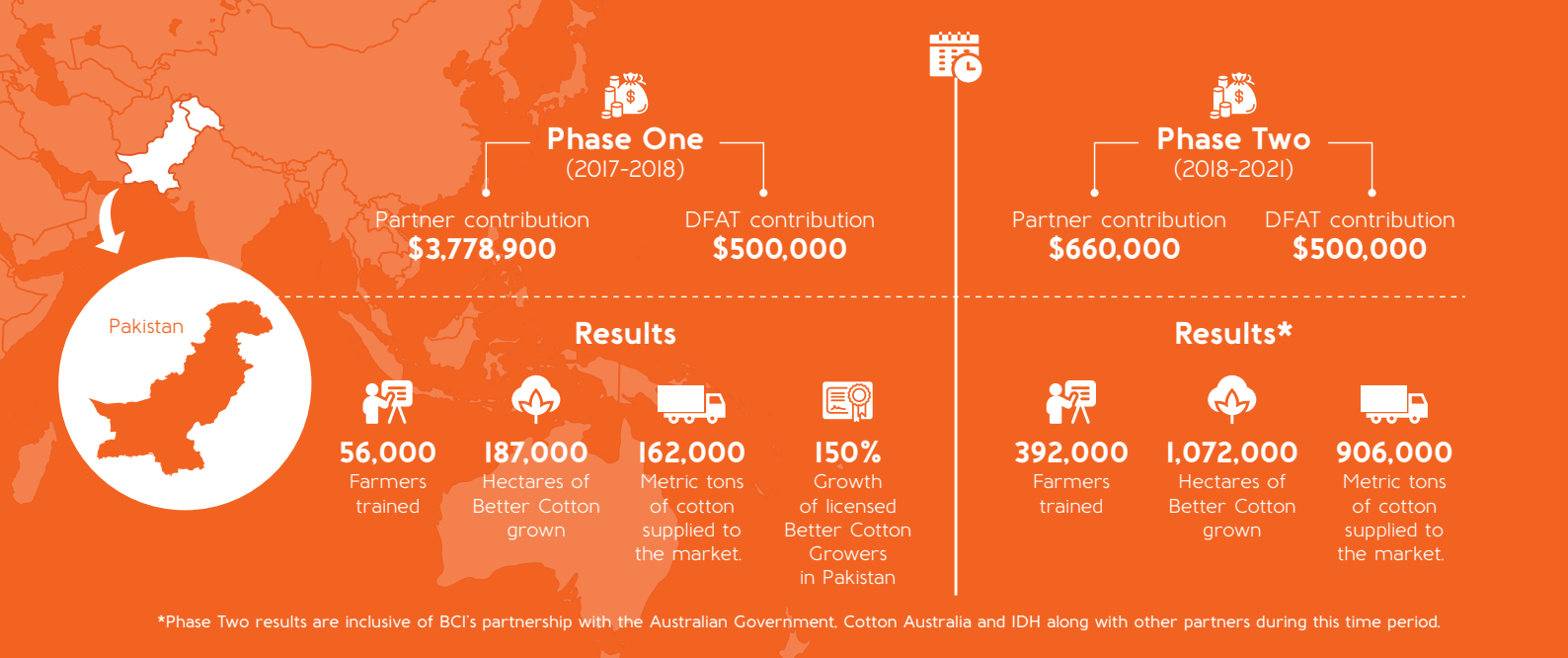


Expanding sustainable cotton production in Pakistan



Punjab, Pakistan.

Photo credit: ©Better Cotton Initiative/ Khaula Jamil



*Phase Two results are inclusive of BCI's partnership with the Australian Government, Cotton Australia and IDH along with other partners during this time period.

About the initiative

In Pakistan, a BPP partnership with the largest cotton sustainability program in the world, the **Better Cotton Initiative (BCI)**, the peak representative body for the Australian cotton growing industry **Cotton Australia**, **IDH** - the Sustainable Trade Initiative and the **Australian Government** supported the training of farmers in Pakistan to grow cotton more sustainably and become part

of the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI). Once accredited, farmers can access the growing market for sustainably produced cotton. This Partnership Summary provides an insight into the benefits of sustainable cotton, the complementary skills and experience of the partners and the results they achieved from working together.



Results



The BPP partnership helped BCI to scale its impact in Pakistan.

The catalytic funding supported the training that resulted in hundreds of thousands of cotton producers becoming Better Cotton producers that can now access a higher price for their cotton. The first phase of the partnership focused on farmer training and the second phase was broadened to include a knowledge exchange, women's empowerment and scoping for further tailoring and improving the BCI program in Pakistan.



The partnership created an opportunity for a knowledge exchange between Pakistan and Australia.

Regular contact between Cotton Australia and BCI in Pakistan allowed the exchange of sustainability expertise, practices and science. In addition BCI staff and farmers from Pakistan traveled to Australia on a study tour to engage with farmers, researchers, ginners and retail brands. Both Cotton Australia and BCI Pakistan benefited from these exchanges, with farmers directly sharing their knowledge with each other.



A knowledge platform set-up at the onset of COVID-19 proved an effective means to support farmers during the restrictions on movement.

The BPP partnership supported a master Agronomist who in turn set-up a helpdesk for farmers, operating through Whatsapp and online.

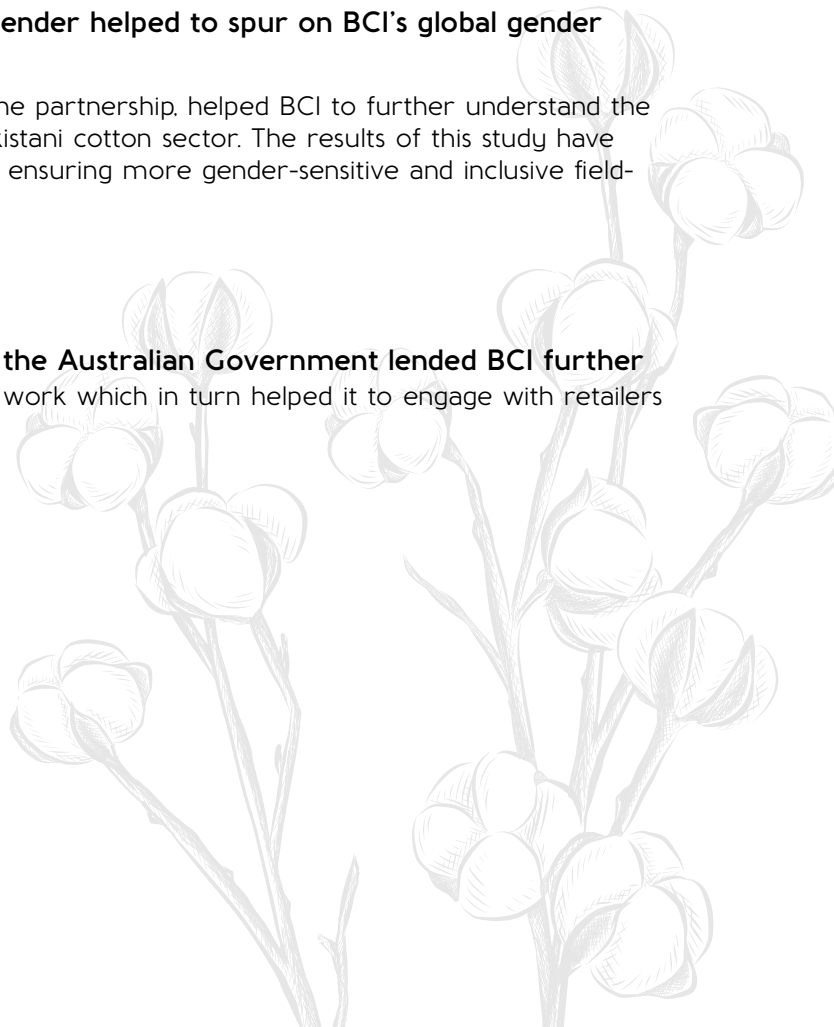


The BPP's support to partners on gender helped to spur on BCI's global gender strategy.

A 2019 gender study, funded through the partnership, helped BCI to further understand the underlying gender dynamics in the Pakistani cotton sector. The results of this study have contributed to the gender strategy for ensuring more gender-sensitive and inclusive field-level implementation activities.



Furthermore, the partnership with the Australian Government lended BCI further credibility and endorsement for their work which in turn helped it to engage with retailers and brands.





Climate impacts

Better cotton accredited farmers have a more sustainable approach to cotton farming when compared to an average cotton farmer.



Pesticide Use ↓ 15%



Synthetic Fertilizer Use ↓ 19%



Water Use ↓ 18%



Organic Fertilizer Use ↑ 87%



Context



The global average water footprint of seed cotton is 3,644 cubic metres per tonne, the equivalent of nearly 1.5 Olympic swimming pools.¹



Cotton is sensitive to changes induced by climate change (e.g. increased CO₂ and heat stress) which has already led to price volatility.²



In Pakistan, women comprise around a quarter of the labour inputs to cotton however receive lower wages than men for the same job (mainly picking), and almost 60% report working more than 50 hours a week compared to 27% of men.³



Pakistan is the fifth biggest cotton producer in the world.



Smallholders bear the brunt of the risk of growing cotton yet receive relatively low rewards.

¹ <http://cottonupguide.org/why-source-sustainable-cotton/challenges-for-cotton/>

² <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-climate-change-cotton-farming-trfn-idUSKCN2DZI5D>

³ Batool, S. 2017. Cotton Value Chain in Pakistan: a Preliminary Assessment of Climate Vulnerabilities. <https://sdpi.org/sdpiweb/publications/files/Cotton-value-chain-in-Pakistan-A-preliminary-assessment-of-climate-vulnerabilities.pdf>



About the Better Cotton Initiative

BCI was founded with the specific goal of addressing the most pressing sustainability issues in cotton cultivation globally, including pesticide use, water efficiency, and social concerns such as gender inequity and child labour in some countries.

BCI Farmers:



Minimise the harmful impact of crop protection practices



Promote water stewardship



Care for the health of the soil



Enhance biodiversity and use land responsibly



Care for and preserve fibre quality



Promote decent work



Operate an effective management system



*Better cotton farmer
in Pakistan.*

Photo credit:
©Better Cotton Initiative



Key contributions from partners

The aim of the partnership was to support the training of farmers to become licensed Better Cotton growers and create mutual learning, promotional and reputation building opportunities for the partners.



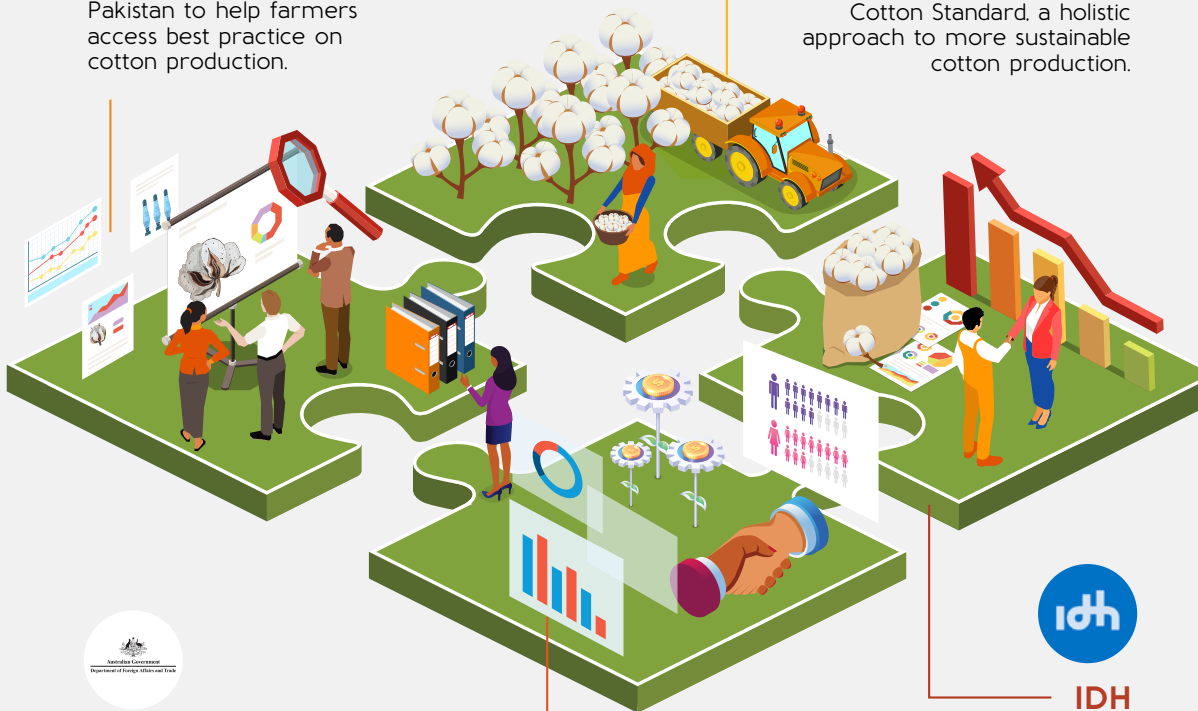
Cotton Australia

Facilitated linkages between researchers in Australia and Pakistan to help farmers access best practice on cotton production.



Better Cotton Initiative

Managed the farm-level implementation of the Better Cotton Standard, a holistic approach to more sustainable cotton production.



Australian Government

Contributed catalytic funding, partnership brokering, expertise and access to a wide network in country through the Australian High Commission.



IDH

The Sustainable Trade Initiative managed the Growth and Innovation Facility that pools industry and donor funding to finance the projects.



Ghulam Dastgir,
Farm worker

Photo credit:
©Better Cotton Initiative
Khaula Jamil



Promoting gender equality

The BPP supported BCI to further address imbalances between women and men and improve the lives of women and girls. In 2019, a gender study was conducted by BCI to understand the underlying gender dynamics in the Pakistani cotton sector. The results of this study have contributed to the development of BCI's Gender Strategy for ensuring more gender-sensitive and inclusive field level implementation activities.

Women tend to be under-represented in training groups yet over-represented in field labour, including picking. Separate training sessions were organized for women, and some implementing partners also provided additional training on seed distribution and kitchen gardening. By creating access to training for women, female farmers and workers were able to gain a better understanding of the practices implemented at field level. This enabled women to contribute to decision-making and share insights with their community. However, gender equality continues to be very challenging to address within the local cultural context and has to be integrated into the design of each project/program from the very start. Change will require continued targeted and purposeful implementation.



Almas Parveen,
Better cotton farmer and
field facilitator

Photo credit:
©Better Cotton Initiative



Study tour

The partnership facilitated knowledge sharing between Australian and Pakistani cotton farmers. On the study tour, a delegation of BCI staff and farmers from Pakistan visited cotton fields and research facilities in different areas of Queensland and New South Wales. The visit shared in-depth explanations of best practice and engaged the best scientists to give an overview of the pioneering research being carried out. The delegation was also introduced to cotton retailers and brands. The study tour gave the delegates tangible and practical insights and knowledge to take back to their farms in Pakistan.



We were able to visit Australia to learn how the Australian cotton growers can achieve some of the highest crop yields in the world and at the same time reduce their pesticide and other input usages to a very low level. Thank you very much Australia.

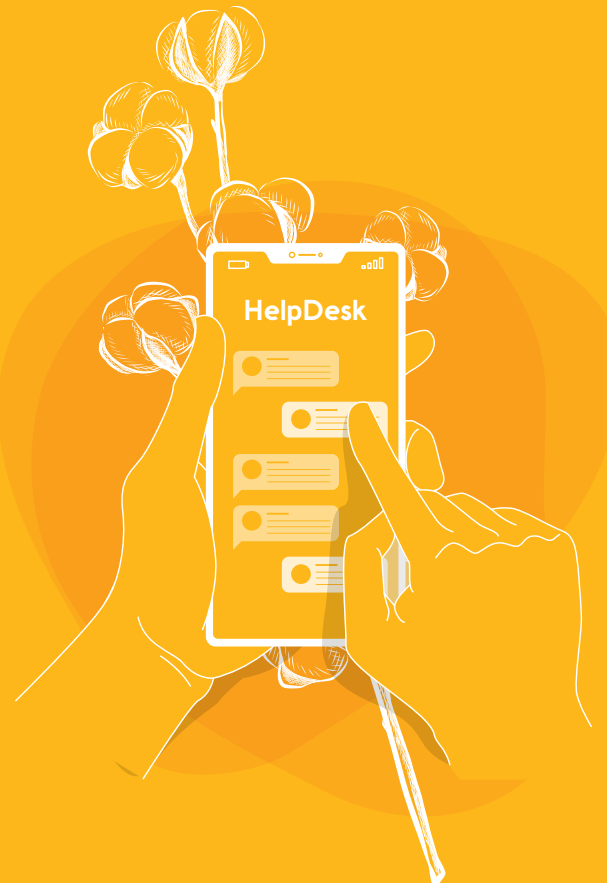
Bilal Khan, cotton grower and member of the BCI.



Farmer HelpDesk

BCI recruited a Master Agronomist in Pakistan who served as a focal point and liaison with Cotton Australia. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan banned gatherings of groups larger than three which stopped face-to-face farmer training. During this time, the Master Agronomist led the development of digital training material for the Implementing Partners and managed a remote help desk via email and WhatsApp.

Together they developed an online library and direct support line for farmers and BCI's implementing partners, managed a technical helpdesk, conducted a hotspot analysis of key issues in BCI / sustainable cotton implementation, gave implementing capacity-building workshops based on its findings, and developed new training material to improve the knowledge and skills of field facilitators. The HelpDesk was an easy to access resource and helped farmers with on the spot advice and guidance specific to their situation.





» What's next?

BCI will continue to build farmer capacity building in Pakistan as part of its 2030 strategy. The digital learning material developed with the support of the Australian Government will be available on a digital learning management system to supplement training to field facilitators.

All material will be made available to BCI implementing partners, to ensure that all field facilitators have a uniform understanding of the BCI program and can provide farmers with the necessary support at field level.

With regard to gender empowerment, the Fund is considering new partnerships to support 100,000 women in cotton production and improve their access to knowledge and training.

🌐 About the BPP

The Business Partnerships Platform supports partnerships between the Australian Government and inclusive businesses to create lasting social and environmental impact. With BPP support, businesses are creating sustainable change by:



Developing and adapting products and services that improve lives.

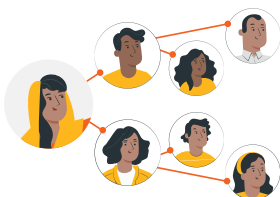


Creating more inclusive and productive value chains.



Expanding inclusive business practices.

Partnership is the key defining feature



Partners bring their unique skills, contributions and resources together to address key challenges.



We believe the urgent challenges of climate change and COVID-19 recovery require government, business and NGO partners to forge new and enduring partnerships.

