

EMILCOTONI GREEN CHOICE



VOLUME 1

**BCI**

Better Cotton Initiative

*Emilcottoni*

# Better Cotton Initiative



# Up to us

When ancient Greeks used to talk about beauty, they meant a concept that was not only about appearance. *Kalos kai agathos*, they used to say: what is beautiful has also to be good. Form and substance are linked together so strongly that they form an unbreakable communion. There are still people who have not forgotten this lesson.

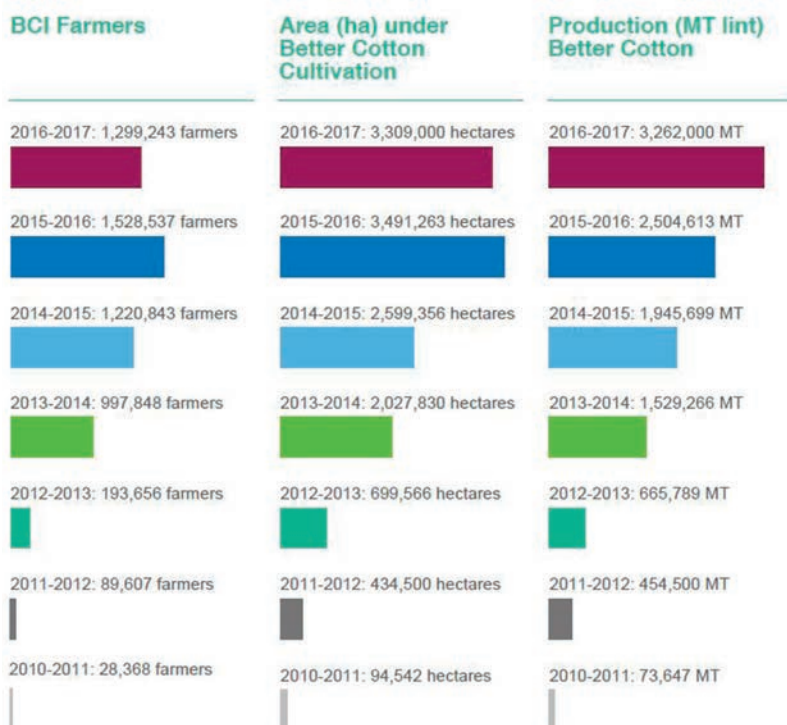
Thirty years ago our story began. At Emilcotoni we have always aimed to achieve a 360-degree excellence, which means that we are not concerned only about the qualitative side of our cotton but also the ethical one, as taught by ancient Greeks: we are 100% responsible for every choice we make.

As natural consequence of our long-term ethical need, over the years we have acquired many certifications that show concretely our commitment to constantly and accurately control the whole chain: from cotton cultivation to final product selling.

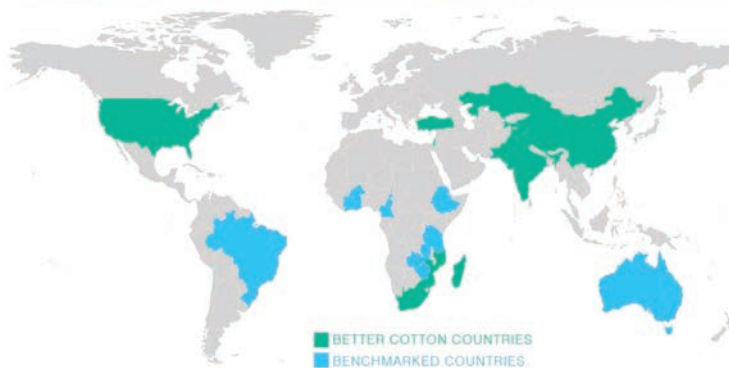
But there is something more: in 2016 at Emilcotoni we published a code of ethics where we put on paper all the values we believe in. These are the principles we want our company and all the people who work with us to respect.

It is hard work. Tough calls and sacrifices are our daily bread, but, with our eyes on the future, we keep going along the only path we know as true and fair. Aiming at a cotton product that could be qualitatively and ethically good.





## GLOBAL REACH FIGURES 2016-17



# What is BCI?

We can easily guess that, if we opened any wardrobe, we would find a lot of clothes made from cotton. Many things among the ones we use every day are made from cotton: towels, sheets and also the bank notes we have in our pockets. We consider it obvious and so we don't ask ourselves questions about it: cotton has always existed and it will be there for us forever.

But, even if cotton is a renewable natural resource, the future of cotton production is vulnerable to environmental degradation, poor working conditions and unstable markets.

In order to find a solution to all these problems, in 2005 a group of visionary organizations came together to found BCI (Better Cotton Initiative), whose aim is to make global cotton production better for the people who produce it, better for the environment it grows in and better for the sector's future. BCI has since made significant progress and now Better Cotton is grown in 21 countries by 1.3 million licensed BCI farmers and accounted 14% of global cotton production.

It is a brave and forward-looking project; that is why we have chosen to be part of it: because we hope in a more sustainable future, for us and for all the people who will come after us.

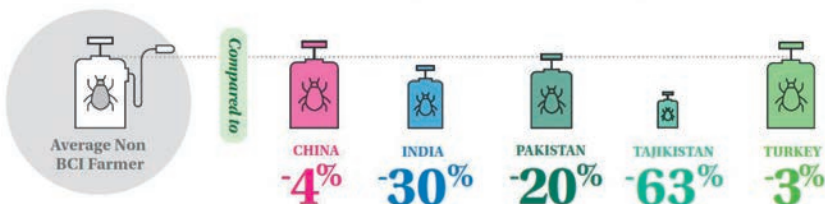
## Water m<sup>3</sup>/ha

BCI Farmers in all five countries used **LESS** water for irrigation than Comparison Farmers.



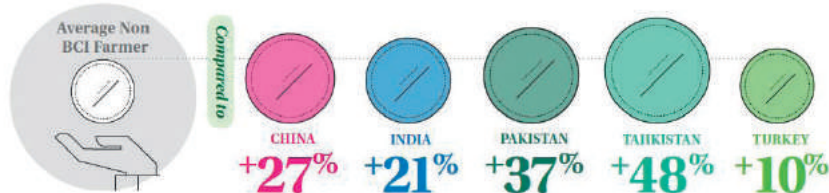
## Pesticide kg/ha

BCI Farmers in all five countries used **LESS** pesticide than Comparison Farmers.



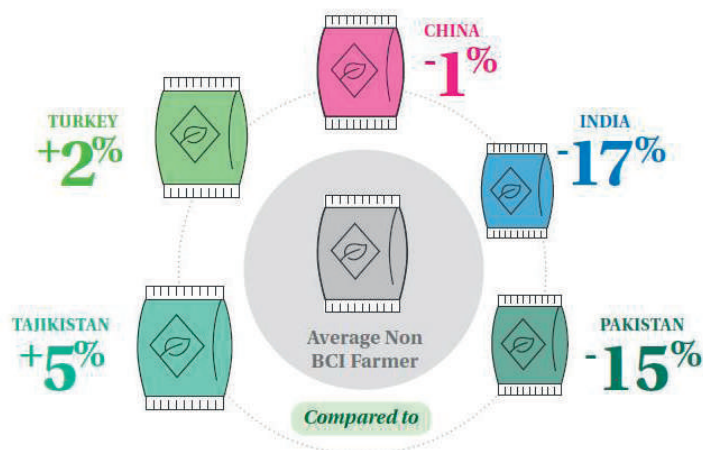
## Profit net income/ha

BCI Farmers in all five countries had **HIGHER** profits than Comparison Farmers.



## Synthetic fertiliser kg/ha

BCI Farmers used **LESS** synthetic fertiliser than Comparison Farmers in 3 of the 5 countries.



# Environmental respect

But how to put this project into practice?

Let's start from the green side.

The cultivation of cotton and its transformation into textile material require a lot of water, pesticides, fertilizers and many other chemical products. For this reason, people who work in this sector are supposed to know and use all the tools and techniques that have the slightest environmental impact.

So it is no surprise that BCI has identified some very clear principles all the farmers taking part in this initiative must be trained in:

✓ **Minimizing the harmful impact of crop protection practices:** BCI helps farmers in understanding and mastering all the techniques that reduce the potential negative effects of pesticides.

✓ **Promoting water stewardship:** BCI supports farmers in using water efficiently to consume and pollute less water; thus achieving greater yields and building their resilience to climate change.

✓ **Caring for the health of the soil:** BCI supports farmers in a better understanding and use of the soil. A healthy soil leads to significant increases in the quality and quantity of yields; to large cost reductions in fertilizers, pesticides and labour; and it is a main asset for climate resilience.

✓ **Enhancing biodiversity:** BCI helps farmers in conserving and enhancing biodiversity on their land and in adopting practices which minimize the negative impacts on habitats in and around their farm.







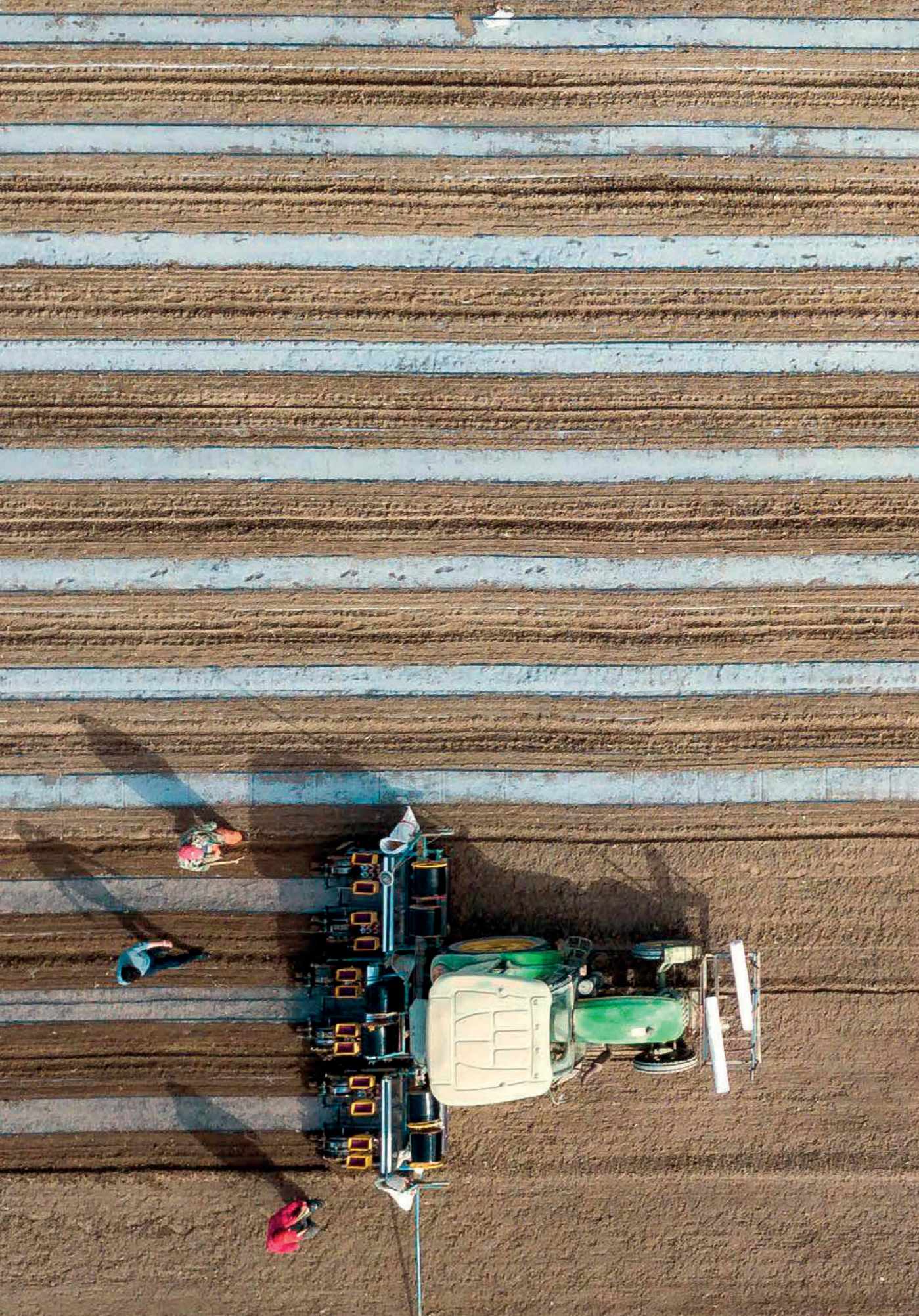
# High-quality fiber

Environmental respect is only one of the many things BCI is committed to. Another important principle that BCI has identified is caring and preserving fiber quality.

That is why BCI is supporting farmers in managing inherent fiber characteristics and avoiding man-made contamination and waste content, especially when it comes to harvesting, storing and transporting cotton. For example, in 2017 a new requirement was introduced by asking all the farmers who participate in this project to phase out synthetic bags during hand-harvesting and storage. The aim is to further reduce foreign contamination.

In this way, BCI cotton can guarantee a higher quality than non-BCI cotton. Moreover, reaching a higher quality in cotton production creates a virtuous circle that benefits both people and environment. If you produce quality cotton, you can raise prices and, if you raise prices, you will have much money to improve living conditions for your family and yourself. More savings can also lead to new farming investments. That's how a virtuous circle starts.







# Aiming at fair working conditions

All the good and noble criteria we have listed so far would make no sense, if we didn't talk about another principle either, the most important one: respect for human work.

BCI supports farmers in promoting fundamental principles and rights at work on employment and income opportunities, social protection, social security and social dialogue; based on international labour standards.

Looking at the data BCI has recently published, we feel free to hope, because they show us a world where serious problems like child labour and gender inequality are slowly but constantly decreasing, while, on the other side, awareness and sensibility about these topics are gradually growing.

In a world that is becoming more globalized each passing day, you can't pretend not to see. Every single cotton textile that comes to us has passed through many hands; BCI is committed to guarantee that these hands have worked under fair conditions and, above all, at right age.







# Eternal return?

Over the years many things have changed. Today, in the USA, plantations have become the perfect location for brides who want a country-chic wedding ceremony. It has been a long time since thousands of slaves worked there. If you go visiting ancient plantation houses, it is very likely that you will find them renovated into modern, luxurious hotels.

Nowadays slave labour is nothing else than a bad memory or a sad topic for a movie. Novels like Uncle Tom's cabin still shock us, but we tend to think that things like these could never happen again.

But we can't ignore that in many areas of the world cotton farmers continue working in a way that we would consider unacceptable. No one talks about them, no one writes about them. They work in silence, thinking that there is no way out.

Maybe nowadays slavery is not existing anymore, but how can we call something that deliberately violates human dignity? BCI helps us not to let our guard down.





# A constant training

Before joining the project, every farmer has to know all about BCI's principles and criteria and commits to take part in meetings and training sessions organized by BCI's partners.

From now on participating farmers maintain a Farmer Field Book, in which they record farm inputs and outputs such as irrigation method, pesticide use and yields. Only farmers who meet the core Better Cotton principles and criteria requirements earns a Better Cotton licence, which enables them to sell their cotton as Better Cotton.

In 2017 a lower number of farmers was licensed to sell Better Cotton as a result of many reasons including non-compliance with minimum requirements on pesticide application and producers not submitting accurate farm-level results data. The most notable reductions in licenses came from India and Mali.

But not everything is lost: these farmers will continue taking part in training sessions and the year after they will have another exam.



# A cotton story 1

We have talked about principles, displayed data, showed charts, but there is still something missing: behind all these numbers there are people and that is what matters most.

So let's meet Manuel, father of eight, who manages his 2.5-hectare cotton smallholding in Niassa Province, Mozambique. Thanks to BCI training, in 2016 he achieved a record crop of 1,500 kg of cotton per hectare: 50% higher than his 2015 crop. This result has led to him becoming lead farmer. In this role Manuel has assisted in training sessions for 210 BCI farmers from within his community, lending his own plot for best practices demonstrations, listening to their concerns and sharing knowledge.

Moreover, all his family has taken advantage from Manuel's higher earnings: he has been able to send his children to school and buy them new books; he has strengthened the construction of his house replacing the wooden branches with bricks and the grass roof with water-proof zinc plates. He has also bought a motorbike, which allows him to reach neighboring villages more easily and buy groceries for his wide family.





## A cotton story 2

Luckily Manuel's case is not a one-off: he has been joined by a brave young woman called Almas Parveen, who wasn't afraid to take over her family's farm, demolishing century-long traditions still surviving in rural Pakistan.

When her father died in 2009, Almas was only eighteen years old and, being a girl, she was supposed to leave her family's business management to her closest male relative, but Almas was not the kind of person who backs off. She began work tirelessly in her farm in order to improve her techniques and, with the help of BCI training, she managed to cultivate much and better cotton.

Thanks to the results she has achieved over the years, Almas has become field facilitator and now she offers her story and example to other Pakistani farmers, mostly men.

In this way, she acts as a role model for women and girls, encouraging them to follow their own path.

*By buying BCI cotton, we support this important initiative and so its slogan becomes a bit ours too:*

*Be part of something better.*

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