

# 350% INCREASE IN ORGANIC COTTON FARMERS IN 2022 TO KEEP UP WITH FASHION BRAND DEMAND

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*New report makes business case for booming organic cotton sector and its benefits for farmers and the environment.*

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, March 30, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Organic Cotton Accelerator (OCA) worked with over 22,000 organic cotton farmers under its Farm Programme during the 2020/21 season, and is currently working with nearly 80,000 (in the season 2021/22), an increase of 350%.

OCA ensured its farmers earned 21% more on average than conventional (non-organic) local farmers in 2020/21; this continues the trend of sustained higher income for organic farmers within OCA's Farm Programme since its start in 2017.

Consumer demand for organic cotton is rising. BESTSELLER has set a target of sourcing 30% organic cotton by 2025 and to date, the H&M Group has introduced in-conversion cotton to their sustainable material portfolio to support farmers transitioning to organic agriculture.

Organic Cotton Accelerator (OCA) – a group of industry partners whose goal is to unleash the potential of organic cotton for farmers, brands and the planet – is seeing enormous growth in the number of farmers joining its programme, with as many as 80,000 farmer participants in the cotton season of 2021/22.

OCA's latest Farm Programme Impact report is released today, and underlines the business case for farmers to grow organic cotton. Brands and retailers participating in OCA's Farm Programme financially support the critical services provided to farmers, ranging from training in organic practices, supply of seed and bio-inputs and procurement at a premium price.

Last year, OCA's Farm Programme saw a 180% increase in farmer numbers compared to the previous season, and these farmers earned on average 21% more in net profit from their cotton per hectare than their local non-organic peers. A combination of farmer premiums and lower production costs compensated for the lower yields of organic farmers results in a better business case for programme farmers when compared to conventional farmers.

The demand for organic cotton is increasing among many fashion brands. For example, Danish

retailer BESTSELLER has set a target of sourcing 30% organic cotton by 2025 whilst the H&M Group introduced in-conversion cotton to their sustainable material portfolio with an ambition to support farmers during transition and accelerate capacity building in the organic cotton sector.

The report shares case studies of farmers who with ongoing support through OCA's Farm Programme are planting organically and are seeing the economic benefits. An example includes Ritesh Champalal Dhiran, an organic cotton farmer in Maharashtra, India who began planting organic cotton in 2008 and in the last season harvested over 5,000 kg of cotton from his 3.6 hectare farm for €3,315, on top of receiving a premium of €294.

Bart Vollaard, Executive Director at OCA, said:

“Organic cotton holds the key to a more sustainable fashion system and we see demand getting stronger. More farmers are switching to organic farming and more global brands and retailers are expanding their organic cotton sourcing and investing the support required for farmers to grow organic successfully.

That is good news for farmers and for the planet, but switching to organic cotton is a long haul. It takes up to [three years for farmers to convert to organic cotton farming](#), a necessary period to build up the soil fertility and re-establish the balance of the ecosystem and farmers must be supported during this time - which is one of the key roles that OCA plays.”

Why organic cotton holds the key to a more sustainable fashion system

Cotton is one of the most commonly used textiles in the fashion world: [in 2019](#), cotton accounted for a quarter of the total global fibre production. Cotton is also a chemically intensive crop, exacerbated by the vast majority (99%) of cotton currently produced under non-organic methods. Conventional farming methods contribute to climate change by releasing the majority of nitrous oxide that exists, a gas that has 300 times the warming effect of carbon dioxide. Land farmed in this way also contributes to habitat and biodiversity loss and degradation of soils, a non-renewable resource depleting at an alarming rate.

OCA's mission is to achieve a transparent, responsible and resilient organic cotton supply chain and takes a holistic approach to improving the organic cotton sector. OCA's new 2030 Strategy sets out how it seeks to accelerate systematic change by a focus on five key pillars - farmers' resilience and livelihoods, seed availability and diversity, scalability of organic farming, robust social and environmental farm-level data, and collaborative sector approach. Focusing on these areas helps to address challenges of a 'business as usual' approach to organic cotton. OCA unites the sector right through the supply chain to empower farmers, match supply with demand and create a healthier planet for future generations.

Danique Lodewijk, Senior Project Specialist at BESTSELLER, said:

“Organic cotton plays an integral role in developing a more sustainable fashion industry.

Partnering with OCA helps us reach our target of sourcing 30% organic cotton by 2025. We're proud to help OCA develop a transparent, responsible and resilient organic cotton supply chain that also transforms farming communities and promotes biodiversity."

Hitesh Sharma, Material Program Manager for Cotton at H&M Group, said:

"As one of the largest consumers of organic cotton, it's important for the H&M Group to invest in the development of the organic cotton sector. As a founding member of OCA, we've been working together to build a sustainable organic cotton supply and financially support cotton farmers. Since our first farm project with OCA in 2017, we have continued to scale the volumes we source through the OCA Farm Programme every year. The partners and farmers involved in these projects have continued to engage with us on this journey, demonstrating the commitment required from all parties if we are to realise the future of the organic cotton sector."

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