



WWF

CASE STUDY

DEC
2014

WORKING
TOGETHER TO
DELIVER MORE
SUSTAINABLE
PRODUCTS

M&S

EST. 1884

Case Study

BETTER COTTON IN INDIA



"We're determined to reduce our impact on the environment and, through Plan A, we're making great progress. But we can't achieve our ambitious goals on our own. We need experts by our side and we are delighted to be working with WWF. The support and advice we receive is invaluable."

Marc Bolland, Chief Executive, Marks and Spencer

Business has a huge impact on the natural world. It's critically dependent on it too. Our natural resources such as forests and fish stocks are diminishing, carbon emissions are on the increase, and vital freshwater in our rivers and lakes is under increasing pressure.

Our current way of doing business doesn't stack up.

Only the smartest, most sustainable companies who value nature will continue to thrive in the future. That's why WWF uses its knowledge and insight to help companies make a positive contribution to the planet.

We've worked with M&S for more than 10 years, forming a challenging and constructive relationship that is set on driving real, lasting change in key areas such as seafood and cotton supply chains, and freshwater stewardship. We have shared a focus on Better Cotton in India, making substantial progress towards M&S' target to deliver 50% of cotton from more sustainable sources by 2020.

Cotton: one of the world's most important natural fibres

Cotton represents nearly half the fibre used to make clothes and other textiles worldwide. It can take around 11,000 litres of water to make 1kg of final cotton textile. 2.5% of the world's crop land is planted with cotton and yet it accounts for 16.5% and 5.7% of the global sales, by value, of insecticide and pesticides respectively. We need to ensure that cotton production is safe for both people and planet by minimising the damaging health impacts on workers and ecosystems.

WWF and M&S started working on sustainable cotton in India in 2009, supporting farmers to develop ways of producing cotton that use less water and fewer chemicals. In the 2010 cotton season, the project produced its first harvest of [Better Cotton](#).

In an effort to deepen understanding of cotton farming in the M&S supply chain, WWF and the retailer published a report in 2013 on 'Cutting Cotton Carbon Emissions.' This identified fertilisers as the major factor of greenhouse gas emissions in cotton cultivation and provided additional evidence to support better management practices over conventional cotton production systems.

The impact of this collaboration has seen 18,522 farmers certified as Better Cotton farmers with 19,520 hectares of cotton production areas in the Warangal and Karimnagar districts now registered under the Better Cotton Initiative during the 2013-14 cotton seasons. Their net income is 114% higher than that of conventional farmers while on average, they used 22% less commercial fertiliser, 18% less chemical pesticides and 16% less water.

WWF has also provided ongoing expert advice on water stresses in cotton production, especially in relation to regions where there are water shortages. M&S now has a significant focus on its water footprint in the supply chain with a comprehensive water resource vulnerability study. A hydrology risk study is due to be completed by April 2015, which will assess current and future water availability and identify the risks of less water for the agricultural sector. It will also assist in formulating a tool to prepare for such risks.

In addition, insights gained into more sustainable farming practices have seen M&S invest in the development of the Cool Farm tool, which enables growers and retailers to measure the potential for agricultural practices to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Given the success of the tool, WWF-India has now adopted it and is applying the methodology to help substantially reduce the greenhouse gas impact of Indian agriculture.

Leaving a legacy

The lasting ambition of this partnership is to ensure the Better Cotton programme becomes self-sustaining with an aim of strengthening the Cooperative Societies formed through the project. It will also ensure responsibilities to comply with the Better Cotton Standard System are handed over. The skills and expertise of both WWF and M&S can help farmers develop a strong sense of purposeful, impactful and successful business practices that are good for people and nature.

Find out more about the M&S / WWF partnership: wwf.org.uk.



More sustainable products available to consumers: in 2012, 2,000 pairs of 100% Better Cotton chinos hit M&S stores and sold out immediately.



Better Cotton farmers: In the 2013-14 season, Better Cotton farmers participating in the project used on average 22% less commercial fertiliser, 18% less chemical pesticides and 16% less water than that used by conventional cotton farmers.



Positive impact on biodiversity: Better Cotton Management Practices have also improved the soil arthropods, flora, amphibian and reptile populations in the region.

WWF and M&S

Delivering better cotton

11,000 litres of water are needed to produce 1kg of final cotton textile

2009: M&S and WWF begin working together to source more sustainable cotton



2013-14 season: Better Cotton farmers use on average 22% less commercial fertiliser, 18% less chemical pesticides and 16% less water than conventional farmers

114%: In the 2013-14 season the net income of Better Cotton farmers was 114% higher than that of conventional farmers

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact:

Lesley Urquhart, lurquhart@wwf.org.uk

Amy Langridge, alangridge@wwf.org.uk



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.
wwf.org.uk

WWF-UK charity registered in England and Wales number 1081247 and in Scotland number SC039593, a company limited by guarantee registered in England number 4016725. © 1986 Panda symbol and © 'WWF' Registered Trademark of WWF-World Wide Fund for Nature (formerly World Wildlife Fund).