Our Vision

At OCA, we believe organic cotton is the catalyst for a truly sustainable textiles sector.

We envision a future where, every time a farmer switches to organic cotton, there is a ripple effect of positivity; farmers earn more and their land and soils are fertile for future generations, protecting our planet. We call this the Organic Cotton Effect.

We’re committing to enabling this future by creating a transparent, responsible and resilient organic cotton supply chain that prioritises delivering farmer prosperity and meeting the sector’s shared sustainability goals.

As an accelerator, we want to get to this future, faster.

Our Mission

OCA unites the sector to unleash the organic cotton effect - organic cotton’s potential for positive impact, from field to fashion, for people and the planet.

By working together, we can realise the Organic Cotton Effect.
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Message from the Chair of OCA’s Board of Trustees

2021 signified continued disruption for the organic cotton sector due to the coronavirus pandemic alongside a sky-high demand for organic cotton. Balancing stability in the sector, whilst developing an adaptive approach was key for OCA and its Contributors. I am proud to see continued and close collaboration with our Contributors, Implementing Partners, organic farmers, and staff during a difficult year.

Consumers are more and more aware of the impacts of their purchases and are adjusting their buying habits accordingly. The surge in demand for organic cotton has given farmers the confidence to switch to organic production and we’ve seen an uplift in farmers participating in OCA’s Farm Programme. OCA plays a critical role in reshaping the organic cotton sector to make it more transparent and accountable – ensuring that farmers benefit from the increased demand.

We welcome the focus we see on regenerative agriculture, which in its nature is organic, as it spans the elements of OCA’s Farm Programme: promoting and teaching crop diversification, crop rotation and expanded organic crop and farming self-sufficiency practices.

Building on the Farm Programme this last year, OCA has laid the foundations for key milestones, that speak to the pillars of the 2030 Strategy. I’m pleased to see increased support for thousands of conventional farmers wishing to switch to organic with a committed in-conversion programme developed. OCA is also leading the charge with its partners in Seed and Innovation initiatives as well as collaborating with key sector players in kicking off the creation of an industry training curriculum, which you can read in this report.

These farmer-centric, sector changing actions in 2021, will support the drive towards a transparent, responsible, and resilient organic cotton supply chain that promotes farmer prosperity and advances shared sustainability goals.
Message from the Executive Director

Back in 2016, a small group of committed organisations had a new vision for the future of organic cotton. One that challenged the status quo, demanded more for organic cotton farmers, and prioritised protecting our planet. It was the year OCA was established. Its mission: To unite the sector and realise organic cotton’s full potential for positive impact.

In 2021, we celebrated 5 years of progress. We turned talk into action and established OCA as a growing global organic cotton platform. One that delivers change on the ground through programmes that prioritise farmer prosperity and invest in field-level solutions. But we also recognised it was time to take learnings and successes from the previous five years and carve out a path of new priorities to respond to what our planet needs now. With the world facing the ongoing pressures of the pandemic and the incrementing impacts of climate change, we felt a real urgency to step up our game.

That’s why last year was such a big year for us. We presented our 2030 Strategy to our Contributors; the roadmap that will help us unleash the powerful impact of organic cotton for people and planet. It is the result of a collective exercise and our response to some of the most pressing issues of our time. Throughout this annual report, we will take you through the five pillars that form the foundations of our 2030 Strategy and use them to announce and celebrate our collective achievements of 2021.

Looking back at the amazing growth we saw over the past year, we see a rise in the numbers of farmers we reached, an array of new Contributors joining our mission, and important funding secured to support more and more producers to successfully shift to organic farming and maximising their regenerative practices. I truly believe OCA is in the best possible shape to spearhead the transformation of a transparent, responsible, and resilient organic cotton supply chain, one that creates tangible and lasting benefits for farmers, their lands and soils, and our future generations.

Bart Vollaard
Executive Director
Looking back

The Organic Cotton Sector 5 years ago

Before OCA was established in 2016, the organic cotton sector was siloed and fragmented.

Various players wanted to progress the sector, but there was no common vision for how to scale organic and make organic cotton farming pay.

At the source, cotton farmers had

Limited monetary reward – and therefore, incentive to pursue organic techniques.

No security from premium payments or committed offtake from buyers.

Limited knowledge of chemical-free solutions.

Difficulty accessing non-genetically modified and bio-inputs.

At the same time, there was a lack of investment in

Training focused on improving the knowledge around organic practices.

R&D and knowledge-sharing for non-genetically modified development or support for seed producers.

Exploring diversified income streams for farmers.

Accelerating progress in in-conversion cotton.
LOOKING BACK
THE ORGANIC COTTON SECTOR 5 YEARS AGO

OCA was set up to fix a broken sector. Various systemic challenges such as lack of incentives for farmers, poor quality non-GMO seed, and lack of transparency and integrity in the supply chain, kept organic cotton production stagnant at less than 1%. Confidence in the sector was poor but global demand increasing. This serious imbalance needed to be fixed and industry efforts aligned. OCA was established by like-minded organisations to enable a more collaborative approach which allowed key players (producers, processors, manufacturers, and buyers/brands) to work together to address these challenges and build a sector vision and actionable agenda that would lead to a thriving sector.

In 2016, when OCA was formed, the sector had quite some challenges. With farmers being very important stakeholders in the entire supply chain, making organic cotton a business case for them was very essential. To ensure the integrity of organic cotton, it was vital to secure the availability of non-GM cotton seeds. OCA did this by bringing all stakeholders onto one platform to address these common challenges. Additionally, they developed visible financial benefits for the organic cotton farmers.

The creation of the Organic Cotton Accelerator brought together a focused group of brands and farm groups that has become a nucleus driving the transformation of the organic cotton industry. This joint approach has addressed needed investments in infrastructure and resources, for example, the need for non-GMO seeds. OCA has leveraged and coordinated investments for seed-breeding and protocols to support farmers’ access. Another core investment has been greater visibility into the needs of the farmers and farm groups regarding economic viability.

HOW ARE WE DOING?
THE ORGANIC COTTON SECTOR NOW

OCA has been instrumental in reviving credible interest in organic cotton, and putting organic back on the agenda, with more and more brands willing to contribute. Today, OCA reaches over 70,000 farmers and accounts for 20 percent of global demand for organic cotton, representing nearly 40 brands, retailers, supply chain partners, implementing partners and civil society. With OCA leading the way, and a robust sector agenda for coordinated investments, we are optimistic that the future of organic cotton will be bright.

Though successful in their objectives the journey presented some challenges to overcome and setbacks to address. By working together with OCA, a lot has been done during these years to address all challenges. The biggest one is the commitment of procurement of cotton from farmers at a fair price in the beginning of farming season. Subsequently, sampling and testing at all stages of the cotton growing season by third party ensured integrity of the cotton. Validation of premium payment to farmers has also further led to transparency in the system.

An ongoing and significant factor continues to be investments in farmer training regarding best practices for organic production systems that focus heavily on biologically intensive agricultural practices. It is both personally and professionally rewarding to see the positive impacts that OCA is making in our community.
HOW ARE WE DOING?
ORGANIC COTTON FARMERS SHARE THEIR VIEWS.

Receiving a premium for my other organic crops would increase my household income by almost 20%. I also think that access to a premium rate for other crops would ultimately also motivate other farmers in the village to practice organic cultivation, beyond just cotton.

Alongside organic cotton, I also grow different inter and border crops in an organic way which helps to support my family’s health due to the improved nutrition of organic foods. I get a better price for the organic seed cotton as well, in the form of a premium. I want to continue growing organic cotton as it will help improve my income over a period of time and it will preserve the soil health of my land.

I believe that if conventional cotton farmers make the efforts to transition to organic methods, they will resolve a lot of their existing challenges, especially those pertaining to degrading soil health and low income due to reduced crop yields.

I see the overall improvement in both my land’s soil health and in my economic situation due to organic farming coupled with the ROC project. Like others in the village, this project has given me an opportunity to increase my income from growing cotton and other crops organically including the inter, border and cover crops.

Latabai Somnath Turewale
Maharashtra

Kalibai
Madhya Pradesh

Ritesh Champalal Dhiran
Maharashtra

Chhatru Garwal
Madhya Pradesh
Looking Forward
The Organic Cotton Sector Future

The world is asking more from all of us.
To drive improvements.
To address new priorities.
To take action.

There’s Still A Long Way To Go...
Introducing OCA’s 2030 Strategy Plan

We know what we want to achieve by 2030: a transparent, responsible and resilient organic cotton supply chain that promotes farmer prosperity and advances shared sustainability goals. To get there, we have defined five strategic priorities:

- Farmers’ resilience and livelihoods
- Seed availability and diversity
- Scalability of organic farming
- Robust social and environmental farm-level data
- A collaborative sector approach

Focusing our efforts in these areas, we can scale organic cotton supply to meet demand, creating flourishing communities where farmers earn more and a healthier planet for future generations. This strategy is not net new – we are building on our existing work and accelerating those efforts. But we have also carved out a path for new priorities in response to what the world needs now.

Our way forward is clear, but it’s not something we can achieve alone. Realising our vision for the future requires a united sector. One where we collaborate to deliver positive change for farmers, brands and customers who want to know their purchases are backing a fair and sustainable industry.

Our building blocks
These key beliefs form the cornerstones of our strategic direction

- We believe in the life-changing effect of organic cotton.
- We believe organic cotton is the catalyst for a truly sustainable textiles sector.
- We understand the challenges of switching to / sticking with organic cotton.
- We believe in being honest about these challenges so we learn and adapt together.
- We believe farmers have the right to grow organic cotton and everyone has the right to buy it.
- We believe change isn’t happening fast enough. This is our last chance to create a sector fit for tomorrow.
OCA’s Theory of Change

OCA’s Theory of Change (ToC) model defines what we want to achieve and the steps we believe will get us there. It establishes our strategic priorities and the activities by which OCA will accelerate change through meaningful partnerships, programme creation, research and development and continuous improvement.

At the same time, the ToC highlights the pivotal role Contributors play – supporting the adoption of organic practices, improving resource access and providing stable demand for organic cotton.
Our 2021 Achievements

1. Farmers’ Resilience and Livelihoods
2. Seed Availability and Diversity
3. Scalability of Organic Farming
4. Robust Social and Environmental Farm-Level Data
5. A Collaborative Sector Approach
One of the main priorities of the OCA Strategy Plan is Growing Farmer Resilience and Livelihoods, the key lynchpin of our mission. We start with farmers, the guardians of the land, and incentivise their work in organic cultivation, prioritising their prosperity.

This is actioned through the Farm Programme, where organic cotton farmers receive an improved income through premium payments and guaranteed orders. OCA believes it’s important that farmers are compensated for their efforts and for safeguarding the earth’s resources.

**Objectives**

Teaming up with global brands and securing long-term commitments, to make meaningful impact on uptake for organic cotton and farmers’ premiums.

Rapidly improving farming practices through training and improved inputs.
2020-21 Farming Season - Results

- **22,146 farmers**
- **22,388 hectares** of organic cotton production
- **31,290 metric tonnes** of seed cotton procured
- **€1.7 million** in premiums paid to Indian organic cotton farmers
- **€635 per hectare** average organic cotton net income
- **21% higher** net income/ha compared to conventional peers
- **6 brands**
- **10 implementing partners**

Results taken from the OCA Farm Programme Impact Report, 2020-21. To access the Report and find further information on reporting methods and third-party validation, visit the website: organiccottonaccelerator.org
How multi stakeholder engagements can drive impact

H&M Group x OCA

Our journey of direct farm sourced projects in India together with OCA has been really enriching and motivating. Working with OCA and implementing partners provides a platform to understand the systemic issues, on ground challenges and address it with a common direction.

We are a proud founding member of OCA, and initiated pilot projects back in 2017 with an ambition to support the farmer business case and managed to reach a total of 7,530 farmers during 2020-21 with OCA through our constant investment, commitment and capacity building initiatives.

On The Ground

The geographical representation of our direct farm sourced projects is widely spread. We work with implementing partners operating in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan in India.

These projects include both organic and in-conversion farmers who are mostly small land holders.

A diverse portfolio really helps to maximize the scalability potential, average out the risk and enable supply chain flexibility.

Securing Farmer Livelihoods

Committing farmer premium and buy back volume agreements well ahead of sowing season is the key to long term engagement with farm projects and motivating farmers to continue organic agriculture practices.

In 2020-21, our validated farmers under OCA Farm program reported a 14% difference between average market price and price paid, including premiums.

This is a clear example of how multi stakeholder engagements can drive impact in terms of farmer livelihood and resilience.

Supply Chain Transparency

The industry is going through a big shift in terms of supply chain transparency and traceability. Knowing the supply chain partners right from the source is the best way to enable transparency and hence our investments in direct farm sourced projects adds a great value.

The model also organically brings in cost transparency in supply chain which is important not just for brands but also supply chain partners.

Hitesh Sharma
Material Program Manager Cotton, H&M Group
Better farming practices begin with training

Origins of the Training Curriculum

A need assessment conducted by FiBL and OCA in 2020 brought forth various challenges being faced by the agricultural extension teams and farmers on the ground pertaining to farming practices and lack of proper capacity building tools. As a result, the Organic Cotton Training Curriculum (OCTC) was developed. OCA in partnership with FiBL, supported by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) created a harmonized training curriculum for agriculture extension teams who train and support organic cotton farmers in India. The aim is to strengthen the knowledge of the field staff on organic cotton farming practices and improve their training and engagement skills.

Implementing at Field Level

The Curriculum has been designed to allow a flexible training approach, combining online self-study with physical workshops and field exercises. The design and content of OCTC has been based on a detailed need assessment conducted by FiBL and OCA at the inception of the project in 2020 followed by multiple rounds of consultation with various sector partners and farm groups during 2021 to make the curriculum most relevant for its end users. The modules making up the curriculum address the topics and training needs of both established organic farmers and those in-conversion.

Detailed Organic Farming Principles

Important agronomic topics like soil health and fertility, water management, pest, and disease control amongst others are included to help both organic and in-conversion farmers shift towards better organic farming practices. It offers a good understanding of the organic farming principles and should help the agricultural field teams to provide thorough capacity building support to the farmers. The agricultural field teams and in turn the farmers will learn about farming best practices to improve the quality of the crops and yield as well as to use locally available resources for farm input preparation. The curriculum will be available to all interested stakeholders free of cost in two languages – English and Hindi. The OCTC can also be used by other actors who support organic cotton projects, e.g., consultants, governmental agencies. NGOs supporting organic cotton projects, market partners etc. for training of field staff or learning more about organic cotton, and will launch externally during 2022.
The next priority of the OCA Strategy Plan focuses on Enhancing Seed Availability and Diversity, a key input that’s critical for scaling organic cotton. Since 2017, with the creation of the Seed Programme, OCA has been investing in boosting the development and production of locally adapted organic cottonseed in India.

Driven by a sector-approved strategy and clear progress metrics, we have achieved much in the past few years.

**Objectives**

Ensure farmers have supply and access to genetically diverse non-genetically modified cottonseed.
Since 2017, OCA and the Mercator Foundation provides the largest joint investment in the participatory development of diverse & climate resilient seed cultivars adapted for organic farming by supporting FiBL’s Seeding the Green Future Programme. In 2021, we supported the development of FiBL’s Manual for Participatory On-Farm Breeding of Cotton to extend the learnings and best practices from this programme to the wider organic cotton sector.

The content is primarily based on the experience of FiBL staff from ten years of implementing participatory plant breeding of organic cotton – notably under the Seeding the Green Future programme that we have been proudly supporting.

The Manual aims to assist trainers in conducting instructional and practical training courses on Participatory Plant Breeding (PPB) in their respective communities and focus areas. It also serves as a facilitator handbook to train farmers in plant breeding and help organise their cotton breeding programmes in a participatory manner. The workshops and trainings outlined in the breeding manual are not just limited to the cotton crop, and can be followed by any institution, small group or an individual working on participatory plant breeding. This coupled with the potential to translate the manual into different local languages will truly maximise its widespread adoption by different audiences.

"We are thrilled to see FiBL’s technical experience in participatory cotton breeding and cultivar evaluation of the past decade translated into a manual of best practices. This shared knowledge will greatly benefit the organic cotton sector in India by providing trainers and farmers with practical tools for developing and identifying locally adapted cotton cultivars."

Mathilde Tournebize
Seed and Innovation Programme Manager, OCA
In 2021, OCA has released the Non-GM Cottonseed Production Guidelines, which aim to create a standardised industry approach for the production of non-genetically engineered (non-GM) seed marketed to organic cotton farmers, and as such improve the integrity of the entire organic cotton value chain from seed to shirt.

By developing the Non-GM Cottonseed Production Guidelines, OCA wants to help seed producers monitor and prevent GMO presence in different contexts and countries all over the world, from early breeding stages up to the final production, processing and packaging of planting seed.

Under our Seed Assurance programme in 2021/22, we have been helping 3 Indian seed producers implement these guidelines with the support of bioRe India and verify their compliance to these best practices using second-party verification audits.

This gave participating seed producers an opportunity to differentiate themselves in the marketplace, while farm groups could feel more confident when sourcing reliable non-GM seed for their organic cotton production.

Additional visibility to OCA’s farm group partners and access to capacity building support under the Seed Assurance Programme are just two of the benefits to seed companies who work with OCA. In the coming years, we also aim to support seed producers in estimating the forecasted seed volumes demanded by organic cotton farm groups one season ahead, to limit the risks and challenges linked to the under- and over-production of seeds.

Under OCA’s Seed Trial Network, partnering seed producers will also get the opportunity to have their seed varieties tested and evaluated directly by their potential clients under local organic farming conditions and therefore obtain the feedback they need to continuously improve their product portfolio.

Each Indian Farm Group has long been seeking its own remedy for one and the same challenge: procuring reliable non-GM seed for their farmers. By strengthening and validating seed producers’ capacity to implement standard practices for preventing GMO presence in their cottonseed lots, OCA’s Seed Assurance Programme significantly reduces the risk of GMO contamination in seed lots marketed to farm groups and limits the need for repeated GMO sampling and testing by farm groups.

Vivek Rawal
CEO and Director, Remel India Ltd
Supporting the seed procurement decisions of farm groups and farmers

The seed cultivar chosen by organic cotton farmers significantly impacts productivity and economic gains and is key to the farmer’s business case for organic. As organic farming conditions are not artificially buffered through synthetic inputs, farmers must be able to access the right quality and type of seed aligned to their local environment and way of farming.

Sharing seed performance data across farm groups can assist farming communities in their seed procurement decisions. At the end of the 2021/22 cotton season, 4 years of seed performance data collected via FiBL’s research trials on station will have been made available to OCA’s Farming Community via the OCA website.

Building on this solid basis, we will be engaging our network of Farm Partners in a joint seed cultivar trial network in the 2022/23 season. Cultivar trialing directly on-farms and the sharing of seed performance data across farm groups will help them choose which seed cultivars to plant, boost the adoption of organic cultivars by farmers while also providing breeders and seed producers the incentives to develop locally adapted seed.
3. **Scaling Organic Cotton Farming Sustainably**

One of the greatest challenges facing the sector is scalability. With the growing desire for genuine organic cotton products from consumers, demand in sourcing the raw material increased significantly. Scaling organic cotton farming sustainably means to increase the number of farmers, in existing and new geographies, participating in organic cultivation the right way, while providing the conditions to grow organic successfully.

In 2021, OCA launched its In-conversion programme, under the umbrella of our established Farm Programme and set about creating the right conditions for growth. The aim is to boost the number of in-conversion farmers in the Farm Programme from 30,000 per year to 48,000 per year by 2030.

Scaling up also meant looking further to territories where both the Farm and In-conversion Programme elements could make an impact. Through OCA’s network and agricultural alliances, the investment and momentum towards organic agriculture was evident in Pakistan.

2021 also signified a leap forward to external funding and partnerships that will accelerator OCA’s farmer centric efforts. Long term investment will boost In-conversion, decent work and regenerative focused projects throughout OCA’s operations.

**Objectives**

Create the right conditions to accelerate the growth of organic cotton production.
Creating the right conditions for growth

In-conversion became part of the expanded OCA Farm Programme which celebrated its 5-year anniversary during 2021 to support growers as they switch to organic practices. By helping farmers navigate the challenges of the in-conversion period, OCA can improve their livelihoods, reduce the environmental impact of intensive farming systems and increase the supply of organic cotton.

Developed with input from key sector players, the in-conversion projects kicked off in 2021 and has gained support from brands and retailers. Their investment alongside external funding awarded, has enabled OCA to address the huge demand for organic cotton and most importantly, guide and support farmers who wish to transition to organic agriculture.

The key principles for in-conversion include a multiyear agreement for brands and farmers, a guaranteed offtake and a farmer premium, the rigour of a robust data validation framework and the acceleration of target setting.

The sector is also keeping pace with this new demand; the leading Chain of Custody standards for organic cotton, the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), and Textile Exchange’s Organic Cotton Standard (OCS) have updated their labelling and claims guidelines to include in-conversion/transitional cotton to help brands make claims on finished products containing organic and/or in-conversion cotton.

Currently, OCA has secured 20% offtake lint commitments for In-conversion cotton produced in the 21/22 season, and reports that 26% of the 80,000 farmers in the Farm Programme are in-conversion farmers.

The three year in-conversion period, when the farmer undertakes all the actions required to achieve organic certification, is a period of uncertainty and often unrewarded challenges for farmers. Therefore it is vital they receive the necessary support from seed, to bio inputs, financing and secured procurement, but most importantly training. With the right encouragement and guidance in place, we can safeguard their livelihoods, their land and their contribution to reduce the impact of chemicals and intensive farming practice on our planet.
Building on Pakistan’s Momentum

After several years of pioneering work by Laudes Foundation, WWF Pakistan, Artistic Milliners and Soorty in Balochistan province, southwest Pakistan, the first certified organic cotton was produced, procured and distributed in 2021. Stemming from an in-conversion project, the founding project grew to 8,000 organic farmers. As the largest province in terms of land area but the least populated, the potential for organic cotton farming was clearly evident. The next steps would involve a farmer business model that connects brands to the procurement directly, which can be scaled up and replicated, increasing supply and creating long term commitments for potentially many thousands of farmers.

Through it’s close ties with the pioneering organisations, this region of Pakistan had been identified as a new territory for OCA’s Farm Programme expansion and towards the end of last year, the research phase kicked off. Working with CABI, (Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International) based in Islamabad, OCA commissioned a Market Entry Study to understand the national organic growers’ challenges and opportunities across the new and existing cotton growing regions.

The report, delivered in early 2022, details the status of the agriculture sector of Pakistan in general and of the cotton sector in particular, at the national or country level. Additionally, the study reviews the existing situation of organic agriculture and recent initiatives to support the production organic cotton in Pakistan.

Over the course of 2022, OCA will begin to connect with local farm partners in Pakistan to build out a network, as well as recruiting a Programme team and coordinate seed trials and multiplication projects. Focus will also be on research and development of potential bio-input production and creating access to bio pesticides and bio fertilisers for the organic farming community. OCA aims to work with local government and agricultural specialists to support the establishment of a National Programme in Pakistan and drive transparency and integrity of organic cotton in the market.
Impact Funding at Farm Level

By working with donors and funders, OCA brings additional investment to farmer centric programmes, sustaining existing organic farming and enabling conventional farmers to join the organic movement. Expanding the number of organic farmers, increasing the volume of organic cotton and supporting regenerative practices will help us in our mission to unleash the positive impact of organic cotton, from field to fashion, for people and the planet. In 2021, we welcomed the support of two new partners in this mission: the Partnership of Sustainable Textiles and the Regenerative Fund for Nature.

OCA became a strategic partner with the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles (PST) in the summer of 2021, and together developed an initiative named the Partnership Initiative Organic Cotton in India. The initiative formed with the aim of building a fair, environmentally friendly, and economically viable organic cotton supply chain secured funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Over the course of the year and into the following year further funding was secured with the confirmed participation in the initiative by brands and organisations spanning the textile and fashion industry.

In September 2021, Kering and Conservation International announced OCA as one of seven grantees under their Regenerative Fund for Nature, designed to drive the transition of 1 million hectares of land to regenerative practices in textile supply chains through promising and innovative projects. OCA’s focus on environmental and market linkages, targeting 50,000 smallholder farmers will support supply and capacity building. The funding will boost in-conversion efforts and grow the number of certified organic cotton farmers, thereby increasing the hectares of organic land. Additionally, investments will be made into training and development to increase farmer skills and foster regenerative agriculture practices maximising the potential of their organic land.

“By entering into a strategic cooperation with OCA, the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles strives to increase the leverage for change in organic cotton supply chains and increase production and availability of certified organic cotton. Building more and stronger links between supply and demand plays an important role in this endeavour as this will reduce risk at farm level thus enabling more small-scale farmers to convert their production to organic and sell their produce at a premium.”

Jürgen Janssen
Head of the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles Secretariat
4. Robust social and environmental farm-level data

The fourth priority demonstrates organic’s contribution to the global issues of our time. By developing methods to collect and understand robust social and environmental farm-level data, we can better manage the industry.

Through the Innovation Programme, that develops and tests solutions to create health and resilience for the sector, OCA works with partners and experts to invest in research, traceability innovations and industry standards to drive organic and regenerative practices.

Objectives

Clearly showing the positive social and environmental impact of organic cotton farming – for OCA Contributors and beyond.
Regenerative Organic Cotton boosting farmer earnings

During 2021, we worked with Patagonia on Regenerative Organic Cotton (ROC) projects and provided powerful data and insights showcasing the benefits for farmer and the land from this combined approach.

What were the business case indicators from these projects?

The data collected this year supported one of our key hypotheses for the benefits of regenerative organic agriculture for farmers. We were hopeful that regenerative practices would have economic benefits for the farmers.

The research this year supported that theory! We saw that the multi-cropping systems implemented as a result of the ROC certification enabled farmers to make more money from the same plots of land, with the same inputs. From the data, we saw that the farmers profits increased by an average of 35% across our two projects because of the income from these additional crops. This is very encouraging, and we plan to continue tracking that progress and supporting the farmers in the program.

What do the results tell us?

This data confirms that regenerative agriculture is not only good for the soil, but also for the farmers’ bottom line. We plan to continue collecting data in this area to track progress over time for the farmers.

We are excited by these results – it’s always helpful to have impact data to support the continuation of the program. We remain committed to the principles of regenerative organic agriculture and to the farmers who are growing the regenerative organic certified cotton. We hope other brands will join us in promoting regenerative organic certified cotton projects.

Rachel Kepnes
Manager of Supply Chain Social Responsibility, Farms and Special Programmes, Patagonia
Healthy soil is a key ingredient for the production for bountiful yields of high-quality organic cotton. Without a healthy soil plant health can degrade and cotton yields can suffer under difficult weather conditions. Such weather conditions have been commonplace in Northern India recently, were there have already been five heatwaves since March 2022 and record-breaking temperatures registered in a country that supplies much of the world’s organic cotton. Given the impacts of extreme heat stress – and other factors – on soil quality it is becoming more pressing to assist organic farmers with measuring and managing their soil quality.

Healthy soils also play another role beyond providing farmers a stable livelihood. Additional benefits include reducing soil erosion, ensuring the soil is less reliant on external inputs, and enhancing biodiversity within the soil. Furthermore, many of the practices which are often practiced within smallholder organic farming, such as crop rotations and reduced tillage can also substantially increase the carbon stocks sequestered within the soil, having a positive impact in mitigating global climate change.

Given the importance of measuring and managing soil health, in the last year OCA has started measuring Soil Organic Carbon (SOC). OCA has chosen to measure SOC as it is a quantifiable component of soil health, with SOC itself being a major contributor to both soil health and carbon sequestration.

Through OCA’s participation within the Delta Framework we piloted collecting SOC within the Farm Programme during 2020-21. From these pilots we learned how to overcome certain data collection and analytical challenges and have provided us with the springboard onto conducting more widespread SOC sampling through the Regenerative Fund for Nature Grant by Kering and Conservation International. Within this work OCA will measure and monitor soil health and carbon sequestration within four different states and with over 400 individual farmers as they take their first steps in transitioning to organic agriculture.
Collaboration driving integrity

Back in 2019, OCA joined forces with GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standards) and Textile Exchange to develop the ISO IWA 32:2019 protocol. The aim was to create a common language among laboratories worldwide to screen for the potential presence of genetically modified (GM) cotton along the organic cotton value chain.

The collaboration of like-minded organisations resulted in an annual proficiency test of global laboratories and published results. This work now provides the sector with an up-to-date overview of global labs that can currently conduct GMO testing as per the ISO IWA 32:2019 protocol, and will contribute to improved transparency and integrity.

I am glad to see a high level of interest from laboratories across the world and results showing competence from producing and buying countries. We shall continue to further advance this collaboration with like-minded organisations to further develop the standardisation of GMO testing in cotton fibre products. We remain committed to ensuring that GOTS goods are free from GMOs.

As a global platform, we are committed to increasing the clarity and reliability of GMO screening for the organic cotton sector. We are proud to be working in partnership with both GOTS and Textile Exchange as we are united in our belief that this proficiency test will contribute to standardising GMO testing along the organic cotton value chain. Our ambition is to reach out to more laboratories and geographies to increase the widespread use of the ISO IWA 32:2019 protocol.

The success of standardised testing methods depends on adaptability and uniformed results. Labs achieving a successful outcome in the proficiency test indicate both lab performance and the effectiveness of this method. We are glad to see that this initiative shows that the global ISO IWA 32 testing method gives consistent outcomes, and we look forward to more labs joining the next round of the proficiency test.
5. Collaborative sector approach

OCA works to unite the sector to accelerate change for a thriving organic cotton world. The fifth pillar of the 2030 Strategy Plan is Working As A Collaborative Sector. Through the Platform, OCA unites the organisations that champion, grow, supply, and buy organic cotton and we facilitate their collaboration to accelerate change and deliver real impact at farm level.

By uniting key players in the supply chain around a common mission, OCA and it’s Contributors empower famers, increase supply and provide a future looking, farmer centric roadmap.

Objectives

Unite the sector to drive change through strong engagement and results.
Convening the sector

We are proud to bring our group of industry partners together reflecting the global supply chain and driving real change across the textile industry.

During 2021 we continued to hold virtual Contributor meetings, public facing webinars and participate in dynamic panels discussions to continue to drive sector collaboration and knowledge sharing.

In March to launch OCA’s Crop Diversification Report, we organised a webinar with a wide range of our partners and agricultural experts. We launched two major reports, the 2020 Annual Report in July last year and the Farm Programme Impact Report which was published publicly in early 2022. Over the course of the year, OCA made contributions to a range of sector publications and events such as a Pakistan focused webinar, the Organic Cotton Market Report and a World Economic Forum report.

In November last year we successfully produced and managed the Organic Cotton Summit online conference, a public facing event with many key and influential sector speakers and panelists that can be watched on OCA’s Vimeo channel. The lively discussions, with almost a total of 300 participants centred on the growing importance and relevance of organic farming in addressing the world’s most pressing issues of our time, on the ground insights from an implanting partner, how organic relates to regenerative agriculture, futureproofing supply through in-conversion programmes and OCA’s 2030 Strategy Plan. The insights from these discussions will help magnify our theme of ‘Pushing Past the 1%’ and as a result we will work more effectively and collectively in driving for real and urgent change.

Additionally, OCA linked up with Textile Exchange to co-host the Southeast Asia Organic Cotton Roundtable as part of the Summit schedule. Scaling up organic cotton supply was the theme which focused on in-conversion cotton and its role in addressing the surge of interest in the raw material. Joining the hosts were panelists from manufacturing, implementing partners and agricultural research and support.
An expanded community

During 2021, we made a significant increase in the size of our OCA community with 9 new Contributors championing our farmer first mission. They are committed to OCA’s mission and share our belief in the Organic Cotton Effect, the powerful and positive impact that organic cotton can have on people, planet and prosperity. Their investment, commitment and input powers OCA to expand and evolve our Farm, Seed and Innovation programmes to involve more and more farmers each year.

We warmly welcomed the following organisations as new Contributors to our global platform in 2021: Adidas, Arvind, Esprit, Insignian Home, Interloop, KIABI, OSCEP, Soorty and WWF International.

We are delighted to have these organisations join our community, and our movement to build a healthy and prosperous organic cotton sector.
A unified sector voice

Punit Lalbhai is Executive Director of Arvind Limited, one of the biggest manufacturers in the fashion world, joined the OCA Board in late 2021, and represents manufacturers and suppliers. He leads Arvind’s Advanced Materials, Engineering, and Agribusinesses and also spearheads initiatives in sustainability, CSR, and Innovation.

He shares his thoughts on Arvind joining OCA and what it means to him to be active on the Board of Trustees.

“Once Arvind associated with OCA as an Implementing Partner, we learnt of the value it creates in bringing cohesion, a strong unified voice, and collective resources in solving problems faced by all stakeholders in the sphere of organic cotton. This made the decision to join the OCA board easy. Personally, as a member of the board, I am looking to both share my experience and perspectives our learnings as a farm project manager, as a large manufacturer and as the connecting link between the farm and brands. I am looking to learn from the wealth of experience that resides within the board and the wonderful staff at OCA.”

Punit Lalbhai
Executive Director of Arvind Limited
OCA Governance and Organisation

The Board of Trustees, formed from a wide cross section of the sector, such as Brand and Retailers, Suppliers and Manufacturers, Civil Society Organisations and Implementing Partners has evolved and grown with OCA. We welcomed new Board members during 2021 and into 2022 increasing the expertise within the organisation. In late 2021, OCA held its first democratic elections for two board seats representing the Brand and Retail sector, and overseen by OCA’s Governance and Nominations Committee. Four candidates presented themselves to our Contributors during the election process, and votes were cast online, resulting in two new Board members, who officially took their seats in early 2022, creating a stronger and more diverse governance of OCA

As a global platform, we improved transparency and accessibility by making our policy and strategy documents more readily available on our new website launched in early 2022. Within the resources section, we have included monitoring and evaluation information, guidelines and verification manuals showing how we work and measure within our programmes as well as full public reports.

OCA’s Board of Trustees include

Keith Tyrell, Director, Pesticide Action Network UK (Civil Society), Chair.
Anita Chester, Head of Materials, Laudes Foundation (Philanthropy), Treasurer.
Harsha Vardhan, (Independent) extended his Board term as Secretary.
Isabelle Roger, Senior Policy Advisor, Solidaridad Network (Civil Society).
Matt Dwyer, VP Product Impact and Innovation, Patagonia (Brand & Retail) succeeded Cara Chacon, VP Social and Environmental Responsibility, Patagonia.
Catherine Louies, Head of Transparency and Circular Innovation, C&A left the OCA Board in January 2022.
Shreyasker Chaudhary, Managing Director, Pratibha Syntex left the OCA Board in January 2022.
Hammad Naqi Khan, Director General and CEO, WWF Pakistan (Implementing Partner) joined in November 2021.
Nanda Bergstein, Director Corporate Responsibility, Tchibo (Brand & Retail) was elected by OCA Contributors in January 2022.
Germán García Ibáñez, Head of Sustainable Product and Supply Chain at Inditex (Brand & Retail) was elected by OCA Contributors in January 2022.
Punit Lalbhai, Executive Director, Arvind Ltd (Supplier & Manufacturer) joined in January 2022.
Ashis Mondal, Founder Director, Action for Social Advancement (ASA), (Implementing Partner) joined the OCA Board in early 2022.
How to support OCA

Realising the Organic Cotton Effect requires a united sector, where collaboration delivers positive change for farmers, brands and customers who want to know their purchases are backing a fair and sustainable industry.

OCA is ready to lead the sector, acting as the catalyst, meeting point, guide and resource for the actors that are able to make a difference and ready to seize this crucial moment to transform the future of cotton.

We’ve outlined how our Contributors and Partners do to help us drive the systemic change that will make a tangible difference to the prosperity of our farmers and the future of our planet, but are you willing to play your part?

Join us, by contacting secretariat@organiccottonaccelerator.org to receive introductory information and request a meeting.

Donate by visiting onepercentfortheplanet.com to make an individual or company donation to OCA.
Thank you

We would like to thank our community, who by supporting and participating in OCA are helping us to drive meaningful change in the sector.

We thank the farmers in our Farm Programme who are the true catalysts of this meaningful change. They are the stewards of the land and we know that by supporting them, we strengthen the sector and safeguard the planet.

We thank all the OCA Contributors who are working with us to fully realise the Organic Cotton Effect. Together, we are working towards unleashing the potential of organic cotton – from field to fashion.

**Founding Partners**

![Founding Partners Logos]

**Contributors**

![Contributors Logos]