



INTERNATIONAL COTTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1629 K Street NW, Suite 702, Washington, DC 20006 USA

Telephone: (202) 463-6660 • Fax: (202) 463-6950 •

Email: secretariat@icac.org • Internet: <http://www.icac.org>

World Organic Cotton Production

THE ICAC RECORDER, December 1996

World Organic Cotton Production

Over fifteen thousand tons of organic cotton was produced in the world during 1995/96. Though most countries are producing organic cotton on experimental basis as a result of small scale projects to assess prospects for commercial production, organic cotton is produced commercially in only eighteen countries. The USA is the largest organic cotton producer in the world. Australia and the USA are the only countries where organic cotton is produced by farmers on their own initiative. In all other countries, organic production started as a result of motivational, financial or technical support, usually from outside. Agencies like the Pesticide Trust and Bo Weevil were involved in many countries at the same time. Some of these organizations provided technical know-how at no cost to the farmers and arranged for the profitable sale of organic produce, while others charged a fee to growers or arranged production for contract. Although such projects have been underway since 1990/91, the area under organic production has not increased significantly. Even in the USA, area is not increasing at the rate it did the first few years

in the early 1990s. The main reason for stagnation in area is related to complex marketing problems. The demand for organic cotton is not certain and potential buyers and sellers are not known to each other. On the production side, low yields and high production costs make it uneconomical to expand organic cotton production. Low yields and high per-unit costs must be compensated through attractive premiums, which are not always available.

In the USA, where about two-thirds of the world's organic cotton is produced and used, only a small quantity is exported. Almost all the organic cotton produced outside the USA ultimately ends up reaching the European countries. Roughly five thousand tons of lint is spun and woven in Europe. A recent study carried out by Mr. Peter Ton of the Netherlands, for the Dutch development organization Foundation Ecooperation, found that Germany is the largest importer of organic cotton in Europe. The study was conducted in connection with support for an organic cotton

World Organic Cotton Production (Tons)

Country/Region	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96
Argentina	NA	NA	81	2	75	75
Australia	NA	NA	479	500	750	400
Brazil				2	8	1
Egypt	1	11	38	140	598	600
SEKEM	1	11	38	140	598	NA
UGEoba						NA
Greece				3	3	500
India			206	268	398	929
Gujarat			200	200	200	200
Madhya Pradesh			6	68	190	463
Maharashtra						250
Srida					8	16
Israel			NA	NA	NA	NA
Mozambique						90
Nicaragua					16	20
Paraguay				100	75	50
Peru			400	700	924	*900
Pekucho			200	375	484	NA
Verner Frang			200	325	440	900
Senegal						2
Tanzania				15	33	100
Turkey	5	60	120	198	610	720
GFF/Bo Weevil	5	60	100	110	440	320
Rapunzel			20	88	170	400
Morgenland	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Uganda					150	250
USA	330	820	6,530	**5,387	**7,075	**5,250
Arizona	NA	NA	1,250	1,339	NA	NA
California	200	300	800	3,364	2,200	NA
Tennessee/Missouri	NA	NA	60	131	NA	NA
Texas	130	520	4,420	653	4,875	5,250
Zambia						35
Zimbabwe						20
Known Total	335	81	7,854	7,415	10,715	9,342

* The largest estimate of production in Peru for 1995/96 is 1,400 tons.

** The largest estimate of production in the USA from 1993-95 is 10,000 tons/year.

Source: *The European Market for Organic Cotton and Eco-textiles: A Market Survey*, a report prepared by Mr. Peter Ton for the Foundation Ecooperation, Herengracht 435-437, P. O. Box 2847, 1000 CV Amsterdam, Netherlands; and *Growing Organic Cotton*, ICAC, October 1996.

production project in Benin. With the current production trend, it is assumed that in the next few years the area under organic production will not increase significantly in any country, thus restricting organic production to less than 1% of world production. It is estimated that since 1990/91, about fifty thousand tons of organic cotton have been produced in various countries. Production for eighteen countries is given in the table.

Organic cotton production started in Turkey and the USA almost at the same time. Some data are available for 1990/91 but it is

possible that some area was under organic production in the late 1980s. Organic cotton production was begun in African countries in 1994. Egypt hosted the First International Conference on Organic Cotton Production and is the first country to start producing extra-fine cotton under organic conditions. Most of the data in the table are estimates based on the area planted and rough estimated yields. Except for the USA and Peru, all data are for normal white cotton varieties. Some organic cotton produced in the USA and Peru was also colored cotton. NA denotes production of unknown quantities.