



74th Plenary Meeting of the INTERNATIONAL COTTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES EIGHTH BREAKOUT SESSION

Organic, Naturally Colored and Other Specialty Cottons

16:00 hr. Thursday, December 10, 2015

Chair: Mr. K.F. Jhunjhunwala, Past President, Cotton Association of India

Speakers:

Dr. B.M. Khadi, University of Agricultural Sciences, India, "Colour Cotton: Status and a Road Map for Success."

Mr. Mani Chinnaswamy, Appachi Eco-Logic Cotton Pvt. Ltd., India, "Suvini: The Jewel in the Indian Cotton Crown."

Ms. Anita Chester, C&A Foundation, India, "Organic Cotton Value Chains: Drivers of Innovation."

Naturally Colored Cotton

Archeologists have determined that naturally colored cotton was growing in the Caribbean 5,000 years ago. Today, naturally colored cotton (colored cotton) could form a niche market for fiber that does not need to be dyed. Dark brown, medium brown and cream (light brown) and green colored cottons in about 22 shades are found occurring naturally. The colored cotton industry enjoyed a brief burst of excitement about 20 years ago but then failed because lint quality was too low for spinning. However, newer breeding techniques have been used to produce colored cotton with longer, stronger fiber characteristics suitable for spinning.

Natural colors deepen with washing, and the scouring and mercerization processes applied to yarn and fabric increase strength and deepen colors. New techniques of metabolic engineering and biotechnology may be able to broaden the range of hues produced with naturally colored cottons by transferring color genes from other plants to cotton. Imagine borrowing red or blue hues from flowering plants.

However, segregation of colored cotton from white cotton is necessary in fields, because white will contaminate the naturally colored cottons. Segregation is also necessary during harvesting and ginning to avoid dilution of colors. Popularization will require the development of a broader range of colors with increased intensity. The Southern India Mills' Association is experimenting with 2,000 hectares of colored cotton in 2016.

SUVIN

As noted in the Open Session with retailers, consumers increasingly want to know the story behind a product. SUVIN cotton, the finest cotton grown in India, and one of the best in the world, has a fantastic story to tell. From its origins as Sea Island Cotton in the Caribbean to its production in Southern India today, SUVIN has a legacy as exciting as any pirate novel, involving wars and smugglers, kings and farmers. Modern SUVIN is derived from Sea Island varieties introduced by the British during the colonial period and improved by Indian breeders following independence. SUVIN fibers exceed 50 mm in length with extraordinary strength of more than 40 grams per tex and fine micronaire between 2.7 and 3.1. SUVIN can be used to produce yarn counts of 240 and greater.

Annual production of SUVIN is approximately 200 metric tons per year, which is about equal to market demand at current prices. Being a Barbados variety, SUVIN requires 7 months to mature. Weed and insect control are difficult over the long growing season, making it an input-intensive crop.

Organic Cotton: A Viable Alternative for Resource Poor Farmers

Organic cotton production offers farmers a healthy and sustainable future with healthy soils and balanced control of weeds and pests. World production of certified organic cotton was less than 120,000 tons in 2014/15, and 80% came from India. Organic production techniques make sense for small holders, especially those who are resource

poor, and advocates hope for growth in production. To scale up production from the current level, price premiums cannot be the focus. Rather, improved profitability through lower input costs and assured markets may offer incentives for more farmers to follow organic practices.

There are four dominant models of organic cotton production:

Integrated Production - farmer contracting. Under this system, a brand or retailer contracts with farmers to grow organic cotton. Farmers are in essence employees of the buyer and follow organic production practices as instructed.

Integrated Production - farmer partnerships: Under this system, a brand or retailer agrees to buy all the organic cotton produced at a set price. Farmers are self-employed, but they have a guaranteed market at fixed prices, and they follow all organic production requirements.

Farmer Cooperatives: Under this system, farmers form cooperatives to learn together, support each other, share duties and market their resulting cotton together, thus achieving economies of scale. This is common in India.

Farmer-Owned Trading Company: Under this system, organic cotton is grown by individual farmers, but marketing is done cooperatively. This system is used in Texas, USA.

Organic cotton is not in competition with other identity cotton programs, such as BCI or Cotton Made in Africa. The identity cotton programs are working toward the same goals of sustainable, healthy, profitable cotton production.