



INTERNATIONAL COTTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

Telephone (202) 463-6660 • Fax (202) 463-6950 • e-mail Terry@icac.org

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Report of the Inaugural Meeting of the Expert Panel on Social, Environmental and Economic Performance (SEEP) of Cotton Production September 11, 2007, Lubbock, Texas, USA

The 1st meeting of the Expert Panel on Social, Environmental and Economic Performance (SEEP) of Cotton Production was held in Lubbock, Texas, USA on September 11, 2007 during the World Cotton Research Conference – 4.

Mr. Allan Williams, Technical Coordinator of the Better Cotton Initiative, and Dr. Francesca Mancini, Specialist, Sustainable Agriculture & Farmer Education, FAO, serve as Chair and Vice Chair of SEEP.

Members present:

Dr. Sheng-Fu Chiu, Director, Center of Industrial Economics, Intelligence and Training, China (Taiwan)

Mr. Fatih Dogan, Chairman of the Board, Mediterranean Textile and Raw Materials Exporters Union, Turkey

Dr. Michel Fok, Project Coordinator, Cotton & Societies Research, CIRAD, France

Ms. Elke Hortmeyer, Manager, Economic Research and Publications, Bremen Cotton Exchange, Germany

Mr. Subhash Chander Grover, Manager Director, The Cotton Corporation of India

Dr. Bill Norman, Vice President, Technical Services, National Cotton Council of America, Executive Director of the Cotton Foundation

Dr. Patricia O'Leary, Senior Director, Agricultural Research, Cotton Incorporated, USA

Mr. Jens Soth, Coordinator for Research & Implementation Activities, Organic Cotton Value Chains, Helvetas Organic Cotton Centre, Switzerland

Mr. Wilfried Yameogo, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Business Promotion and Artisan Enterprises

Members Absent:

Mr. Savio Rafael Pereira, Secretary of Agricultural Policy, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply

Mr. Christopher Ward, General Manager/Partner, Rainha da Serra, Brazil. Mr. Ward sent his regrets in advance and indicated a strong interest in participating in the work of SEEP.

Observers present: Ed Barnes, Neal Gillen, Kater Hake, Rachel Holloway, Andy Jordan, Suresh Kotak, Tina Gray Teague, Allen Terhaar, and Phil Wakelyn.

Terry Townsend, executive director, and Rafiq Chaudhry, Head of Technical Information, ICAC, served as Secretariat.

Next Meeting:

The date and location of the 2nd Meeting of SEEP will be Monday, October 22, 2007 in the Hilton Hotel in Izmir, Turkey. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for 8:00 AM in the Secretary General's Conference Room.

Background: The ICAC formed an Expert Panel on SEEP following discussions during the 65th Plenary Meeting in Brazil in 2006. Information was provided indicating that agricultural production, including cotton production, can lead to degradation of soil and water, exposure of workers to harmful chemicals, and other negative impacts. Speakers at the plenary meeting provided information on both positive and negative aspects of cotton production. This information, as well as articles in the popular press, highlight

that there are areas of disagreement and uncertainty regarding the impacts of cotton production. It is also apparent that there is not agreement on how to measure progress in improving industry performance, and there is little baseline information specific to cotton production from which to judge empirically the performance of the industry.

Terms of Reference: The Standing Committee approved the following terms of reference for the Expert Panel on SEEP:

1. Provide the ICAC with objective, science-based information on the negative and positive social, environmental and economic aspects of global cotton production;
2. Gather information from around the world on costs of agricultural labor and the factors that affect those costs to assess their impacts on the social performance of cotton; and
3. Make recommendations for further action as appropriate to improve the social, environmental and economic performance of the cotton industry.

The Standing Committee instructed that when the Expert Panel is formed, one of its first tasks would be to further define its own terms of reference and plan of work, within the guidelines established by the Advisory Committee at the 65th Plenary Meeting. As a starting point, the Panel will need to identify areas of agreement and disagreement, and topics on which data need to be gathered. It is understood that the world cotton industry is highly diverse, and it is possible that an Expert Panel could get enmeshed in a multitude of parochial issues. The Panel was instructed to identify international issues for concentration.

Report of the First Meeting

I. General discussion of the Terms of Reference

Allan Williams outlined the following broad objectives for this first meeting of SEEP:

1. Identify the specific areas about which information should be collected, and to identify which countries should be the focus for collection of that information,
2. Develop ideas for how the information can be collected,
3. Assign responsibility for collecting information to members of the Panel,
4. Discuss timetables for collection of the information.

The following points were also made:

- That the primary role of the Panel is gathering information,
- That the Panel currently has limited resources to hire external support to assist in the gathering of data on the agreed areas,
- Once information has been collected, areas of disagreement, gaps in knowledge, areas requiring research, what could or should be measured, can be discussed by SEEP

A. Discussion: Terms of Reference 1 “Provide the ICAC with objective, science-based information on the negative and positive social, environmental and economic aspects of global cotton production”

The panel discussed a list of environmental issues and agreed that information on the following themes will be sought:

- Pesticide use (noting that pesticide is to be defined broadly so as to include insecticides, herbicides, growth regulators and defoliants)
- Water use and management
- Soil management
- Production efficiency and energy usage
- Green house emissions
- Biodiversity

For social issues, the panel agreed that a literature review should be conducted before the Panel develops a more specific list of issues for data gathering.

For economic issues, the panel agreed that the starting point would be current ICAC information on economic performance.

With respect to which countries should be the focus for the collection of the information, it was considered that the first step would be to ascertain what information was available and could be provided by members.

B. Discussion: Terms of Reference 2 “Gather information from around the world on costs of agricultural labor and the factors that affect those costs to assess their impacts on the social performance of cotton”

The Panel agreed that it would start addressing this term of reference by seeking information on the following countries:

Brazil
Burkina Faso
India
Kyrgyzstan
Turkey
United States of America

C. Discussion: Terms of Reference 3 “Make recommendations for further action as appropriate to improve the social, environmental and economic performance of the cotton industry”

It was agreed that it was premature to discuss recommendations at this stage.

II. Presentations

A. Francesca Mancini provided an overview of the approach adopted by FAO to reducing the risks related to pesticide use. The FAO approach has three main components:

1. Working on international agreements and policies, such as the International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides
2. Instituting Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programmes through Farmer Field Schools (FFS)
3. Identifying and promoting Good Agricultural Practices (GAP's)

The presentation concluded with some suggested activities for the Panel:

- New patterns in pesticide use (type and quantity) in cotton, with a focus on countries where:
 - a) Bt cotton has been adopted; and
 - b) World Health Organisation class I pesticides have been phased out
- Global review of the health effects of pesticides, with a focus on organophosphates

Francesca suggested that if there is a 'SEEP Phase II' it could look at modules for cotton GAP.

B. Patricia O'Leary advised the Panel that Cotton Incorporated is putting together a database of literature on the environmental themes identified by the Panel to assist it in addressing myths and misconceptions about cotton farming. The initial focus of the database will be the United States. She also said that Cotton Incorporated will be seeking to identify areas where there are gaps in knowledge or information, and will work to fill those gaps via research. This information will be made available to the Panel.

C. Bill Norman introduced Andy Jordan, retired from the National Cotton Council of America and now working as a consultant for the cotton industry. Andy gave an overview of an initiative, "Future

Generation Agriculture” being conducted by the Keystone Center titled “Creating Sustainable Outcomes for Production Agriculture”. The overall objective of the initiative is to “Create a single platform which can be used throughout the agricultural supply chain to improve the overall sustainability of production agriculture, rather than any one entity”.

The initiative is seeking to

- Be outcomes based, that is measure outputs, not judge specific practices or technologies
- Have grower participation: so as to help form the content of the system as well as how the system will best be implemented in the field
- Take a pragmatic approach, that is focus is on what can be accomplished, not on theoretical agreements

The initiative will start with the major crops (corn, soybean, and cotton) in the U.S. with a view to expand as success is achieved.

III. Miscellaneous points made during the meeting

The following issues were also discussed or raised by the Panel during the meeting:

- The term ‘employment’ should be broadened to ‘contribution to livelihood’
- Reporting on the Terms of reference, and the various themes will present a challenge due to their dynamic nature; it was suggested that the SEEP could adopt a narrative approach that identifies experiences that contribute to a positive outcome
- That the issue of human capacity needs to be addressed when making recommendations
- The role of SEEP is not to respond to specific criticisms leveled at cotton production; rather it is to provide information to ICAC/Governments
- It was suggested that each issue could have a fact sheet developed that could then be added to and enhanced as the Panel continues its work. Such a fact sheet could include a description of the issue, a list of the available data (including its source, and its range), solutions and areas of agreement and/or disagreement

IV. Allocation of tasks

The Panel members agreed to contribute the following information:

Jens Soth offered to provide information on greenhouse gas emissions and labor costs in Kyrgyzstan. Jens noted that he might be able to provide the panel with various unpublished reports that would be relevant for the environmental themes, providing copyright issues could be resolved with the authors.

Elke Hortmeyer agreed to look for information on the environmental themes from Greece and Spain.

Patricia O’Leary and Bill Norman advised that the US industry was seeking information on all the environmental themes discussed, and would share this with the Panel. They also agreed to gather information on agricultural labor costs for the United States.

Michel Fok agreed to look for information on pesticide use and poisoning reports for Cote d’Ivoire, and that he would endeavor to also source information from Mali, Burkina Faso and Benin (in collaboration with Wilfried Yameogo).

Wilfried Yameogo agreed to seek information on the costs of agricultural labor in Burkina Faso. He also offered to provide contact names in the Department of Agriculture who may be able to assist with providing information on the environmental themes.

Grover Subhash agreed to seek information on the costs of agricultural labor in India.

Francesca Mancini agreed to initiate the literature review on the health effects of pesticide use in cotton; she also agreed to be the focal point for collating the data on pesticide use.

Allan Williams agreed to seek information on water use and soil management, and to initiate the literature review on the social impacts of cotton farming.

Sheng-fu Chiu agreed to seek information on the costs of agricultural labor in China.

Fatih Dogan agreed to seek information on the costs of agricultural labor in Turkey.

V. Report to ICAC plenary meeting, Izmir

Allan Williams advised that for the report of the SEEP meeting to be made to the ICAC plenary meeting in Izmir he would base the report on the notes of the meeting to be circulated and agreed by the members of the panel. In particular, the report would note the list of environmental themes to be considered for data collection, the intention to collect data on pesticide use patterns, the intention to conduct a literature review on the social impacts of cotton production and the list of countries chosen to gather information on the costs of agricultural labor. The report will also highlight that the process of data collection will be a dynamic one (so that the list of themes may be modified), and some of the challenges that the Panel will face, such as cotton normally being part of a farming system.

VI. Next steps

As all SEEP members present at the meeting indicated that they were intending to attend the ICAC plenary meeting in Izmir on 21-26 October, it was agreed that the next meeting would take place during the ICAC meeting in Izmir, with the specific date and time to be advised.