



# Cotton production – on the road to greater sustainability

Higher incomes for smallholding families with sustainable cultivation

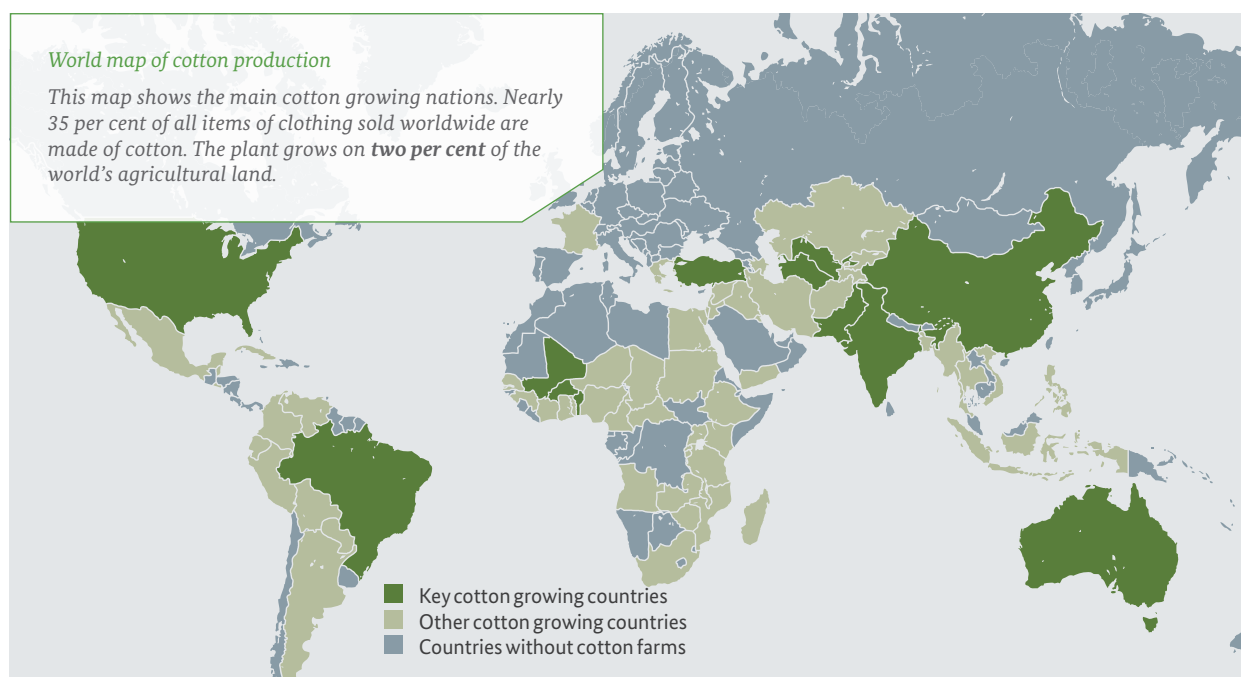
## Did you know that ...

... 19 per cent of global cotton production already comes from sustainable farming? And that more than **90 per cent** of clothes sold in Germany are produced abroad? In sub-Saharan Africa alone, the livelihoods of roughly **20 million people** depend on cotton. The centre of production is western Africa, with Mali, Benin and Burkina Faso being the largest cotton producers of Africa. About **65 per cent** of producers worldwide are **smallholdings**. The majority are living in poverty. One consequence of poverty is exploitative child labour. In addition, the excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides threaten soils and water quality. Climate change, pollution and the loss of acreage are jeopardising the livelihoods of smallholders.

- ➔ Cotton is imported to Germany mainly in the form of textiles and clothing, more than 800,000 tons in 2018 alone.
- ➔ At the same time, Germans throw away around 40 items of clothing per year.
- ➔ Processing cotton is more profitable than growing cotton.
- ➔ Roughly 90 per cent of African cotton are spun in China, India, Bangladesh and Vietnam.
- ➔ Only just under **three per cent** of cotton grown in Africa are actually processed in Africa as well.

### World map of cotton production

This map shows the main cotton growing nations. Nearly 35 per cent of all items of clothing sold worldwide are made of cotton. The plant grows on **two per cent** of the world's agricultural land.



The map illustration does not constitute any statement on the legal status of territories or borders. January 2020 © BMZ

## What BMZ does

Cotton is an important source of income in many nations involved in German development collaborations. It is often farmed in remote rural areas. Especially in Africa, the cotton industry can help to include rural households in economic cycles. This can contribute to raising the incomes of smallholding families and improving their living conditions.

In an effort to support sustainable cotton production, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has been working closely with private businesses since 2005.

## In the partner countries

- ➔ As part of the project “**Competitive African Cotton Initiative (COMPACI)**”, **926,000 smallholding families in 12 nations** of sub-Saharan Africa received training, for example on good production practices and farm organisation. As a result, they were able to increase their household incomes by an average of 65 per cent by 2017.
- ➔ In addition, BMZ financed the sustainability standard “**Cotton made in Africa**” (CmiA), which has since been successfully established on the market.
- ➔ Since 2017, around **160,000** smallholders have been trained on sustainable production practices in the follow-on project “Support of African Smallholders through Sustainable Cotton Cultivation”.
- ➔ Since 2019, BMZ has been promoting sustainable production and local processing of cotton in **Burkina Faso, India, Cameroon and Uzbekistan**. The goal is to increase the incomes of farmers and to promote the creation of job opportunities in the cotton sector and in cotton processing, especially for young people.

## In Germany

In order to bring about improvements in the textiles and clothing industry, BMZ initiated **the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles** with representatives of business and civil society in October 2014. The partnership aims to improve the conditions in textile production worldwide – from the production of raw materials all the way to disposal. ([www.textilbuendnis.com/en](http://www.textilbuendnis.com/en))

### GREEN BUTTON

To help consumers deliberately buy sustainable clothing, the state textile seal Green Button (“Grüner Knopf”) was established in 2019. The Green Button indicates textile items like clothes, bedding or backpacks that were manufactured to particularly demanding social and environmental standards.

For further information please visit:  
[www.bmz.de/en/issues/textilwirtschaft/gruener\\_knopf/index.html](http://www.bmz.de/en/issues/textilwirtschaft/gruener_knopf/index.html)



The support of sustainable cotton production contributes to achieving these global sustainable development goals:



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